International Relations Theories Comparison

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Introduction

International relations is a subject that aims to use several theories to provide an understanding of how nations relate with each other. It is intended to account for behaviours and results in the international field. The most outstanding four approaches are realism, liberalism, constructivism, and feminism. Whereas realism and liberalism make bold and specific predictions about the direction of international politics, constructivism and rational choice are more methodological approaches that focus on specific types of social explanations of phenomena. International relations theories help to see how systems work and how states interact. The spectrum of theories runs from Realism, which suggests that states resort to power development and that the states with developed powers defeat others. Realism provides validity for the proposition that no government could be morally superior to the rest; in doing so, deception and violence could be powerful tools to determine national discourse.

Similarities between the International Relations theories

Liberalism, alternatively known as “liberal internationalism,” is a political ideology that postulates that there is a basis for cooperation among nations and a peaceful world order. Liberal politicians have changed the political paradigm inconceivably since they are more interested in economic and social power to further their political interests in the present-day complex world dynamics (Arntz et al.,2021). Thus, the liberalist schools of thought by and through the USA have become the most influential international actors on foreign affairs, having a well-recognized set of values and institutions that form regulating bodies. Constructivism holds that a nation’s global choices are shaped by multifaceted values such as culture, society, and history instead of economic calculus (Lamont, 2021). This mode of theorizing has gained ground because of the way non-state actors like international organizations such as Amnesty International, OXFAM, and Greenpeace now exercise state power. These organizations are comprised of counterparts working to make this the international standard for human rights in business markets.

Marxism, suggested by Karl Marx, a philosopher and an economist from Prussia, is about solving class struggle and economic issues by restricting private property and advocating cooperative ownership to meet human consumption needs (Liu and Song, 2021). The issue has not been eliminated; instead, it

still exists today, with the suggestion of Prime Minister Tan Dung Nguyen that students read Marx without being charged. With a world population that is constantly increasing fast and profit instead of sustainability, Marxism appears as a relevant issue devoted to promoting human needs before private profit (Bahoo et al.,2021).

The feminists in international politics work towards the feminization of power, where one's gender makes all the difference in their position in politics and society. They are the ones standing up against such social norms that have been used for a long time to discriminate against women. Women leaders such as Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice have had considerable involvement with the empowerment of women through legislative initiatives, such as co-sponsorship of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the start of the One-Woman Initiative (True, 2022). The feminist policies also ensure women's political participation, which is evident in Iceland, where they have been elected to the highest cabinet positions. The role of feminism in domestic and foreign policy is huge, and knowing that policy starts with international relations specialists in domestic and foreign policy is necessary for international relations specialists. A master's degree in international relations must be obtained (Burchill et al., 2022). However, a deeper understanding of theories is also advised for actual involvement in diplomatic practices on a global scale.

Comparison of the theories

Realism versus liberalism

Realism and liberalism differ in their approach to the structure of international systems. According to realism, the global system is anarchic because there is no central authority that controls it. The main actors are states, and their actions are driven by their self-interest, power, and pursuit. Security is very important, and nations are willing to improve their power to be more powerful compared to others (Liu and Song, 2021). According to liberalism, anarchism is also accounted for in the system of international relations. Still, liberalism puts the accent on the possibility of cooperation and the role of international organizations, norms, and regimes in building peace and promoting stability. States can benefit by using diplomacy, trade, and collective security arrangement mechanisms.

Realism and liberalism also differ in regard to their approach to human nature. According to realism, states are imagined as rational units of action primarily motivated by their security and interests (True, 2022). The trust among states is weak, and being suspicious is the prevailing attitude. On the other hand, according to liberalism, though seeing the existence of self-interest, liberalism also pays attention to the capability of cooperation and notes that norms, values, and shared interests are the main things that determine the conduct of states. Some common efforts, such as confidence-building measures and mutual benefits, can even promote cooperation among competitive actors.

The view of conflict differs between realism and liberalism. As per realism, conflict ensues due to the very existence of the international system; conflict is the first thing that emerges with the process of

states struggling for power and security. War is considered one of the main byproducts of this struggle, and thus, states emphasize military capabilities to defend their interests (Väyrynen, 2023). According to liberalism, conflict is not inevitable, and diplomacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution tools can be applied in peacemaking. The dialogue and cooperation elements are no less important than international institutions and norms as peacekeepers in preventing and resolving conflicts.

The roles of international institutions differ between the theories of realism and liberalism. Realism describes international institutions as being regarded with great suspicion; their legitimacy depends on whether they are used by strong states as a tool to pursue their interests or to restrict the actions of weak states. The realists are of the view that institutions are the secondary features that should be regarded after power considerations (Yao, 2021). On the other hand, according to liberalism, international organizations are viewed as major tools for cooperation with the purpose of creating platforms for negotiations, conflict resolution, and mutual activity. They help lower the levels of uncertainty, increase mutual trust, and reduce intra-state coordination costs.

Realism and liberalism differ in their view of economic independence. According to realism, economic issues are overlooked in terms of the effect of security factors. While realists stress that economics plays quite a role in state relations, they contend that these states look at security and military technology rather than interdependence on the economic front. However, according to liberalism, the source of stability and peace is seen by the international community as being economic interdependence, as states with well-established economic ties are less likely to resort to conflict (Liu and Song, 2021). Commercial interactions, investments, and economic exchange can help to meet common interests and provide a basis for reducing the tendency to fight.

Constructivism versus Marxism

Constructivism and Marxism have different views of the international system. Constructivism states that the international system is socially constructed, within which norms, identities, and practices influence the behaviour of states and their interactions. It gives meaning to the role of intangible factors in determining international relations (Galal, 2020). It suggests that national interests are not a product but might change over time through social processes. On the other hand, according to Marxism, the current international system has inbuilt inequality and exploitation of the weak by the strong, with states and actors pushed by economic interests and class struggles. It is the theory that underscores Capitalism, imperialism, and the classification of the world into “core” and ‘periphery’ states in the formation of international relations.

The nature of power is different between the theories of constructivism and Marxism. According to constructivism, power is more than just military and economic capabilities; it is the influence that one can wield over discourse, norms, and identity creation. Countering this view, constructivists assert that relations of power are fluid and can be shifted by societal processes and group activity (Moravcsik, 2023). On the other hand, Marxist theory describes power as an economic concept, and

its central basis is class struggle. Marxist theory highlights the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie in one's home state and the exploitation of weaker states by stronger capitalist states in an international context.

The value of ideas and ideology differs between the theories of constructivism and Marxism. Constructivist theory stresses the significance of notions, ideas, beliefs, and identities as the main determinants of state behaviour defined by international outcomes. For the constructivists, the norms and values that affect state interests and shape the way states behave depend on shared understandings. Marxist theory, however, describes ideology as a reflection of the class-interest standpoint, that of the ruling ones in particular (True, 2022). The Marxist notion is that dominant ideologies are a mechanism of justification and perpetuation of the capitalist system. Nationally and internationally, there is the same.

The value of change is different between the two theories. Constructivist theory emphasizes the value of faith in the capacity of social development through the transformation of norms, identities, and discourses. Constructivists claim that states can re-orient the international rules, and non-state actors can promote alternative narratives, which, finally, may cause a change in international relations by challenging existing norms (Liu and Song, 2021). Marxist theory, on the other hand, supports overthrowing the capitalist regime and the establishment of a classless order. From the viewpoint of Marxist theory, contradictions within Capitalism are irreversible, and Capitalism is going to be replaced by a socialist and communist world.

The analysis of global inequality differs between constructivism and Marxism. Constructivist theory brings global inequity to the forefront and examines the power dynamics, norms, and identities that create and support it and its continuation. The proponents of this approach believe that the solution to inequality involves destabilizing the prevailing power relationships and redefining global norms (Liu and Song, 2021). Marxist theory is different since it ascertains that the capitalist mode of production is responsible for global inequality and is monopolized by the fingers of a few capitalist elites. Marxist theory involves the abolishment of Capitalism all over the world and the transfer of wealth and resources to create equality for all.

In short, both constructivism and Marxism provide distinctive views of international relations. Still, their differences emerge in the attribution of the nature of the international system, the place of power and ideas, social change strategies, and the explanation of global inequality. For constructivism, what matters is how ideas and social processes affect international relations, while for Marxism, it is the economic relations, class struggle, and overthrow of Capitalism.

Realism versus Feminism

The view of power and security differs between the theories of realism and feminism. According to realism, the diplomacy of power politics and the security race as the main factors guiding states' international behaviour are the focus of the proposed approach. Realists stress the importance of

military capabilities, alliances, and the balance of power. However, according to feminism, discourses about power and security are reviewed, which often reflect masculine values and tacitly sustain patriarchal structures (True, 2022). Feminist IR scholars focus on expanding the wider understanding of security to implement diversity issues, women's rights, gender-based violence, economic inequality, and reproductive rights.

The two theories have different views of the state-centric vs. people-centric perspective. According to the realist viewpoint, state action is assumed to be driven by the rational pursuit of interests. As a result, realists usually don't consider individuals and non-state actors in their analysis. On the other hand, feminist proponents of a perceptive people-centric approach take into consideration the experiences and views of the people, mainly women and marginalized groups, in the process of analyzing international relations (Liu and Song, 2021). Feminist IR focuses on the need to represent different categories of people and acknowledge the agency of non-state subjects.

The concept of security differs between the theories of realism and feminism. Security, according to realism, is defined narrowly by military threats and state sovereignty. Realists, first of all, advocate for the preservation of sovereignty and national interests over others. However, according to feminism, the meaning of security is extended to include human security, which is much wider and includes economic well-being, health, environmental sustainability, and gender equality, which are foundations of human security (True, 2022). Feminist IR advocates for the fact that security cannot be exclusively obtained through military means but also requires dealing with the causes of insecurity, such as gender-based violence and discrimination.

Realism and feminism have different perspectives on the role of gender and patriarchy. According to realism, most often, this does not account for the role of gender in the construction of international relations and the influence of an oppressive patriarchal culture. The analysis of this subject by realists usually serves to uphold traditional gender order and pattern. On the other hand, according to feminism, there is an emphasis on the importance of gender being the social construct and the way patriarchy works to keep inequalities in global politics running (Heiskanen, 2021). Feminist IR investigates how gender norms, discourses of power, and gender relations intersect in the realm of conflict, peacebuilding, and development and suggests gender-sensitive policies and measures.

The concept of conflict resolution differs between the theories of realism and feminism. Realism frequently selects military options and considers the equilibrium of forces as tools for regulating state-level conflicts. Realists concentrate on balancing and preserving the status quo of the international system while creating advantages for themselves. On the other hand, feminism supports non-violent, inclusive solutions to conflict resolution, which focus on the root causes of violence in peacebuilding implementation and prioritize the participation of women and marginalized groups in peacebuilding processes (True, 2022). The feminist-oriented IR pays special attention to gender inequalities as part of a sustainable development strategy.

Eventually, both realism and feminism have various views on international relations, though realism

and feminism highlight power and security differently, as well as gender and conflict resolution strategies. Realism has a power-driven state-centric analysis as its core idea compared to feminism, which underlines traditional concepts and calls for a gender-sensitive approach.

Conclusion

International relations theories assist people in knowing how diplomatic systems function and how countries get saturated. From realism to constructivism, it ranges from realism, which asserts all states are competing for power, to constructivism, which indicates that cultural, social, and historical values drive foreign policy decisions. The liberal international order thesis, which maintains that world peace must be based on cooperation between nations, is currently the greatest international proponent of Marxism, which Karl Marx expounded; it seeks to address class violence and financial crisis by limiting private property and voting cooperative ownership based on people's real needs. The feminists persistently highlight the power inequalities that are derived from gender, and they do so through the channelling of internalized power structures. For international relations experts, an essential concept is to comprehend the effect of various theories on global diplomacy initiatives.

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