



Theories of World Politics

- Concepts
- Liberalism
- Realism





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- Realism
- Neorealism
- Neoliberalism





Concepts

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- Paradigm: dominant way of looking at a particular subject; structures patterns of inquiry and interpretation
- Theory: set of hypotheses postulating relationships between variables; used to describe, explain, and predict; must be falsifiable and stand the test of time





Concepts (cont)

- State: legal entity with permanent population, well-defined territory, and government able to exercise sovereign authority
- Nation: collection of people who identify with one another on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, or cultural affinity
- Power: ability of one actor to get another actor to do what it otherwise would not have done





Liberalism

- holds that reason and ethics can overcome international anarchy to create a more orderly and cooperative world
- stresses the importance of international institutions
- also associated with “idealism”





Aspects of Liberalism

- unity of humankind more important than national loyalties
- importance of the individual and promotion of human rights and civil liberties
- using ideas and education to promote world peace
- free international trade





Aspects of Liberalism, cont.

- an end to secret diplomacy
- terminate interlocking bilateral alliances
- self-determination of nationalities
- promotion of democracy
- associated with President Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points





Realism

- Anarchy characterizes the international system.
- World politics is a struggle among self-interested states for power.
- Each state pursues its national interest.
- “Realpolitik”--states should be prepared for war in order to preserve peace





Realism's Tenets

- People are selfish and ethically flawed and compete for self-advantage.
- People have an instinctive lust for power.
- Eradicating this instinct is not possible.
- International politics is a struggle for power.
- The prime obligation of the state is promoting the national interest.





Realism's Tenets, continued

- Anarchical international system requires states to acquire military power.
- Military power is more important than economics.
- Do not trust allies.
- Resist international efforts to control state protection and institute global governance.
- Seek flexible alliances to maintain a balance of power





Criticism of Realism

- could not explain increased cooperation after World War Two
- many of its propositions not easily testable: criticized by behavioral scientists
- disregards ethical principals
- focuses on military might at economic and social expense of states





Neorealism

- accepts much of realism
- states' behavior determined by differences in relative power
- all states have same objectives, but different capacities to realize them
- distribution of capacities determines structure of the international system
- global level of analysis





Neoliberalism

- developed by critics of realism/neorealism
- focuses on how IGOs and other nonstate actors promote cooperation and peace
- examines how states cooperate with other and de-emphasize conflict
- points to regional integration, especially the European Union





The Quest for Theory: Realism

- Key Units: Independent States
- Core Concern: War and Security
- Major Approach: Balance of Power
- Outlook on Global Perspectives:
Pessimistic/stability





The Quest for Theory: Realism (cont.)

- Motives of Actors: National interests; zero-sum competition; security; power
- Central Concepts: Structural anarchy; power; national interests; balance of power; polarity
- Prescriptions: Increase national power; resist reduction of national autonomy





The Quest for Theory: Neorealism

- Key Units: The International System's Structure
- Core Concern: Struggle for position and power under anarchy
- Major Approach: Balance of terror; military preparedness and deterrence
- Outlook on Global Perspectives: Pessimistic





The Quest for Theory: Neorealism (cont.)

- Motives of Actors: Power, prestige, and advantage (relative gains) over other states
- Central Concepts: Structural anarchy; rational choice; arms races
- Prescriptions: Preserve nuclear deterrence; avoid disarmament and supernational organizations





The Quest for Theory: Liberalism

- Key Units: Institutions transcending states
- Core Concern: Institutionalizing peace
- Major Approach: International law; international organization; democratization
- Outlook on Global Perspectives: Optimistic/Progress





The Quest for Theory: Liberalism (cont.)

- Motives of Actors: Collaboration; mutual aid; meeting human needs
- Central Concepts: Collective security world order; law; integration; international organization
- Prescriptions: Institutional reform





The Quest for Theory: Neoliberalism

- Key Units: Individuals; “penetrated” states and nonstate transnational actors
- Core Concern: Fostering interstate cooperation on the globe’s shared economic, social, and ecological problems
- Major Approach: Complex inter-dependence and regimes
- Outlook on Global Perspectives: Expectation of cooperation and creation of a global community





The Quest for Theory: Neoliberalism (cont.)

- Motives of Actors: Global interests (absolute gains); justice; peace and prosperity; liberty; morality
- Central Concepts: Transnational relations; law; free markets; interdependence; integration; liberal republican rule; human rights; gender
- Prescriptions: Develop regimes and promote democracy and international institutions to coordinate collective responses to global problems

