



Theories of International Relations

Realist Approach, Pluralist Approach and Globalist Approach

¹Riddhi Kashyap

¹Law Student

¹Symbiosis Law School, Nagpur, India

Abstract: This study has been undertaken to investigate the different approaches to the International Relations. The paper emphasis mainly over the three major theories of international relations that can be stated as Realist Approach, Pluralist Approach and Globalist Approach. Realist approach is an approach to the study and application of international politics. Pluralism tends to study international relations by not confining role of any one factor but multiple factors including individuals and groups continuously barging to gain influence. Globalism focuses on the importance of economy, especially capitalist relations of dominance or exploitation, to understanding world politics.

A Theory of International Relations is a set of ideas that focuses on how the international system works. The following are the major theories of International Relation:

REALIST APPROACH –

“Every political action is directed towards keeping, increasing or demonstrating power. The thinking is that policies based on morality or idealism can lead to weakness – and possibly the destruction or domination of a state by a competitor. In this sense pursuing the national interest is ‘Amoral’.” - Morgenthau

Realist approach is an approach to the study and application of international politics. It gives prominence to the role of the nation-state and forms a wide and extensive assumption that all nation-states are impelled by national interests, or, to say, national interests personated as moral concerns.

According to realism, international relations or international politics is all about what a nation wants or wants to achieve the national interest of that particular state and at the same time achieve the goals that it has set for itself and for that purpose, whether it is moral, immoral does not matter. In this type of approach, states are the main actor and it work only to increase their own power as compared to that of other states so that it can dominate.

The **six principles of Hans Morgenthau** which are widely accepted as the principles of theory of international relations are as follows:

- Politics are governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. - The state is nothing but the highest association of human beings. So how the human nature is will have reflection over the state and society. So, Classical or Traditional realism states that whatever governs politics they are all the objective laws and they have all their backdrops or their roots in human nature, so it is basically the original human nature that is reflected the way international relations work.

- The concept of national interest defined in terms of power and it is also important in molding foreign policy goal.
- National interest in a particular period of time depends on the political and cultural context of the world. The national interest of any nation completely depends upon the time and what kind of political and cultural beliefs and understanding that the people of the nation have, which means it keeps on changing. That is why we find many of the countries changing their stand from one particular issue to another. For example- We have seen that many countries, like the USA, are against terrorism but somewhere or the other from the backdrop they are funding terrorism or sympathizing with terrorist group or their actions.

- Universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states, instead state must function in according to time and place because the national interest or national goal that the state has for itself is completely free from any moralistic codes.

For example – the conditions of Israel and Palestine, 2003 US invasion on Iran, so here we cannot say that any of the two-state is right or wrong.

- Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.
- Politics is an autonomous sphere, not subordinate to economics, law, morality.

PLURALIST APPROACH –

"Pluralism tends to study international relations by not confining role of any one factor but multiple factors including individuals and groups continuously barging to gain influence."

In Realist approach, we saw that power and national interest are the sole factor that is used to understand international relation but pluralist approach is in contrast to realism because in pluralist approach there is no, one particular factor that actually can be considered or solely given all the importance for understanding the international relation but rather there are multiple factors which include individuals, groups and these individuals/groups continuously bargaining to gain influence especially to dominate in the world politics. Here the individuals or groups can be considered as state actors or non-state actors or even those actors who are individual entity such as terrorist group head or organization etc.

In realism it's national interest and power is a very central idea of realist approach but for few pluralists, this particular approach is not correct because one particular factor or just one particular factor playing an entire role or entire responsibility is not what international relation is all about. There are multiple factors that actually come to play their respective role and it's all about how and who gains more influence whoever is going to gain influence is going to have tremendous control over international relations and that is how international relationships to be found.

For example-

In the 18th century, it was the naval power, the military strength of individual countries that upheld who will dominate international politics. As time pass by 19th - 20th centuries, the countries started becoming individual states. Now individual states then started forming their own groups or alliances, and whichever alliances have more power, military, weapons, technology was thought to dominate. Slowly by slowly that shift and again when the actors and factors changed and today as we stand in the 21st century we find that it is basically economy and technology that determines the dominance of the state over the national politics.

- Pluralist Approach is of the view that power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites.

- It is a "Doctrine of Multiplicity "

- Its emphasis on Interaction of Local, National, and International Norms.

GLOBALIST APPROACH –

"Globalism focuses on the importance of economy, especially capitalist relations of dominance or exploitation, to understanding world politics. This view holds that international relations are best understood if one sees them as occurring within a world-capitalist system."

According to the globalist approach, it's not one particular factor or multiple factors but rather the entire international system that operates how international relations is going to be or how the behavior of states is going to be in that in the international system. Here international system means entities like UN, ASEAN, IMF etc.

Globalism focuses on the importance of economy especially capitalism relation to dominance or exploitation because today or even 50 years back, it was all about the capitalist system in the world against which the USSR was trying to resist and counter and at the same time even today maximum of whatever system would have been initiated or established in the world are all related to the capitalism.

- This approach is different from the two approaches that is, realism and pluralism. Globalism focuses on the importance of economy, especially capitalist relations of dominance or exploitation, to understanding world politics.

- This approach tends to understand international relations on the basis of the current international systems.

- It tends to believe that international relations are the outcome of the way the international systems and institutions functions.

- The working and functioning of international system and institutions have the direct result of what later becomes the international relations.

IN NUTSHELL...		
Realist Approach	Pluralist Approach	Globalist Approach
<p>State is the main and most important actor.</p> <p>Power and national interest are the sole factor that is used to understand international relation.</p>	<p>State is not necessarily a rational actor. Non-state actors are important entities.</p> <p>State is not a unitary actor.</p>	<p>It's not one particular factor or multiple factors but rather the entire international system that operates how international relations is going to be or how the behavior of states is going to be in that in the international system</p>