

Name :- Asad Ali  
Batch :- 54  
LMSID :- 30306

## Question

Critically analyze the extent to which introductionary thoughts of realism, classical realism, neo-realism, idealism thoughts classical idealism and neo-liberalism remain relevant in explaining and shaping international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

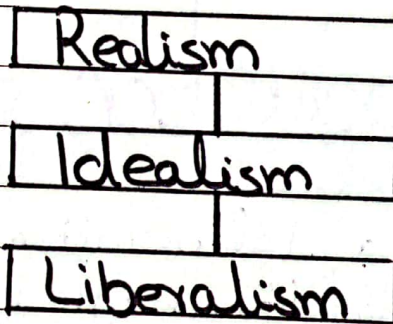
## Introduction :-

Realism, idealism and liberalism are all school of thoughts in international relations theory that have been influential in shaping the discipline. While idealism and liberalism emphasize cooperation and possibility of peaceful change. Realism emphasizes competitive and conflictual nature of international politics. Classical realism, neo-realism classical idealism and neo-liberalism are all variation of these broader school of thought. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these theories remain relevant in shaping international relations.



# Relevance of IR Theories in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century global landscape demands a reevaluation of the assumptions and analytical frameworks used to understand international theories. International relations theories can help to understand the way international system work, as well as how nations engage with each other.



## Realism :-

### Introduction to Realist thoughts:

Realism is an assumption is notion of states, driven by self-interest and the pursuit of power, operate in an anarchic system lacking a central authority, leading to a competitive and sometimes conflictual environment.



According to Jonathan Haslam, professor of history of international relations at university of Cambridge:

"Realism is a spectrum of ideas which revolve around four central propositions of Political Groupism, Egoism, International anarchy and Power Politics"

## 2) Key Features of Realist thought:

History shows that humans are naturally sinful and wicked. Lust of power and domination is a major fact of human nature. Human instinct for power cannot be eliminated. Struggle for power is the reality of international relations.

## 3) Realism claims on things :-

a) Power :- The world is a harsh and dangerous place. The only certainty in the world is power.

b) International law :- International law and organization have no power or force

c) War :- The international system itself drives states to use military force and to war.

## 4) Essential features of Realism

a) Statism :- State principal actor,



State sovereignty is necessary features in politics, sovereignty state is bound to use force. Power cannot be exercised in a vacuum.

b) Survival :- In classical realism power is end in itself. In neoliberalism power maximization is a mean to an end and end is survival. Survival is pre-condition to other objectives.

c) Self-Help :- In international system no state can be relied upon for the security. Realism rejects notion of peaceful co-existence because non-intervention is impossible to achieve

## 5) Criticism

Realism considers international system only as an anarchic system. Classic realism present a negative image of human nature because of selfishness. According to anti-realist, Realism doesn't anticipate present relation in the world policy. For example, collapse of Soviet Union, disarmament.

## Classical Realism

Classical Powers realism paints a stark picture of international relation emphasizing power, self-interest and



conflict as a dominant force

## 1) Core Assumptions of Classical Realism

- a) State as a primary actor :- In the anarchic international system, sovereign states not individuals or organizations are main players. They act as unitary rational actors pursuing their own national interest.
- b) Power Politics :- Power measured in military, economic and diplomatic capabilities dominates states behavior. States constantly strive to maximize their power and avoid vulnerabilities.
- c) Survival is ultimate goal :- For states, securing their own survival and security is paramount.
- d) Conflict :- Wars and conflict are seen as natural and inevitable consequences of competing interests and the struggle of power.
- e) Balance of Power :- States seek to maintain a balance of power to prevent any single state from becoming dominant and threatening others. This can involve balance forming alliances, engaging in arms race.
- f) Security Dilemma :- Attempts to increase one's security can inadvertently threaten the security of others.



## 2) Criticism :-

Over-simplification of human motivations and international dynamic. Neglects the role of non-state actors and international cooperation. Can justify amoral foreign policy choices focused solely on power maximization.

## Neo-realism :-

Neo-realism building on the foundations of classical realism offers a more refined and sophisticated analysis in international relation. It focuses on structural constraint of international system emphasizing influence of anarchy, power distribution and state behavior.

### 1) Core Assumptions :-

a) Anarchy :- The international system lacks a central authority like world government forcing states rely on self-help for security and survival.

b) State as main Actor :- Similar to classical realism states remain the primary actors driven by pursuit of power and survival.

c) Bipolarity and Multipolarity :- The distribution of power across the



the system creates a power dynamic that shapes state behavior. Bipolarity (two dominant powers) and multipolarity (multiple competing powers) influence alliances, arms races and conflict risk.

d) Rationality :- States behave rationally to maximize their security and self interest within the constraints of anarchic system.

## 2) Neorealism or Classical Idealism

a) Focus :- Neorealism focuses on the structure of international system (anarchy and power distribution) while classical idealism emphasizes the potential for cooperation and international institutions to promote peace and shared values.

b) Conflict :- Neorealism sees conflict as inherent in the anarchic system while classical idealism view it as avoidable through cooperation.

## 3) Basic Concepts of neorealism

a) Balance of Power :- Maintaining a balance of power among states is crucial for stability and preventing any single power from dominating the system.



b) Security Issues :- Attempts to increase one's security can inadvertently harm others leading to arms races and insecurity.

c) Hegemony :- A single achieving dominant power and maintaining order within system. e.g US

4) Criticism :-

a) Robert Cox and Ashley Critics :-

They argue it neglects the role of social structure, power dynamics beyond states and historical shifts in how "interest" are even constructed.

Idealism :-

Idealism stands in stark contrast to realism advocating for a world order based on cooperation, morality and international institutions.

1) Core Assumptions :-

a) Human reason and morality :-

Humans are capable of rational decision-making and guided by moral principles like peace, justice etc.



## b) Interdependence and shared Interests

States are increasingly interconnected, creating common interest and fostering cooperation over conflict.

## c) International Institution :-

Organizational like United Nations and legal frameworks can promote cooperation, resolve conflict peacefully and uphold human rights.

## d) Rejection of war :-

War is an irrational and avoidable outcome achievable through dialogue, diplomacy and collective action.

# Classical Idealism :-

Imagine a world where states choose cooperation over conflict, guided by reason and morality.

## Key Thinkers of Classical Idealism :-

### a) Immanuel Kant:

Proposed a "perpetual peace" based on international law, republican governments, and free trade, outlined in his seminal work "Toward Perpetual Peace".



## b) Woodrow Wilson:-

Championed the League of Nations and international cooperation after World War I, advocating for collective security and self-determination.

## Liberalism:-

Liberal theory in international relations stands for a vision of the world order rooted in individual liberty, economic freedom and international cooperation.

## 1) Key Assumptions of Liberalism:-

### a) Individual Liberty:-

Humans are endowed with fundamental rights and freedom of speech, religion and assembly. This forms the basis for a just and prosperous society.

### b) Economic Freedom:-

Open market, free trade and private enterprise drive economic growth and prosperity for all. Cooperation between states fosters these goals through trade agreements and global economic institutions.



## c) Democracy and Rule of Law :-

Democratic governments, upholding the rule of law and protecting individual rights to contribute to a stable and peaceful international order

## d) Different Versions of Liberalism

### a) Classical Liberalism :-

Emphasizes individual liberty, free markets, and limited government intervention. Adam Smith and John Lock are key thinkers in the tradition.

### b) Liberal Idealism :-

Combines classical liberalism with idealist principles that advocating for global governance, human rights protection and peaceful conflict resolution. Woodrow Wilson and John Rawls are prominent figures.

### c) Neo-liberalism :-

Focuses on economic interdependence, free trade agreements and globalization. International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies align with this stand.



# Conclusion:

Traditional school of thought remain significant but cannot alone explain the intricate tapestry of 21<sup>st</sup> century of international relations. Understanding contemporary dynamic requires a approach that combines insights of perspectives, acknowledging the limitations of each while recognizing their enduring relevance.