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Q3. The positivist and post-positivist debate offers a striking contrast in terms of approach and methodology to the study of IR. Describe, compare and critically evaluate the divergence b/w the two debates. Are there any points of convergence?

Introduction

As with all social sciences, international relations contains different theories which view the world from different lenses. Positivists and post-positivists are such theories that for the most part conflict with each other and interpret international relations differently. Positivists argue that the subject can be studied objectively and sees it as any other natural science and a terms of cause-and-effect relations. On the other hand, post positivists see the descriptive and dynamic elements of the subject matter that cannot always be quantified and instead need more in depth analysis. In this answer, the two schools of thought will be discussed and compared and some points of convergence will be presented.

Positivism: Definition and constituents

Objective approach and absence of bias

Positivism approaches international relations objectively and practically. There is no room for bias as it is studied without emotions and opinions. It does not account for prejudices as the subject is viewed in a binary way.

Treatment of International Relations as any natural science

International relations is treated as all other natural sciences. It is not viewed ~~as~~ as an arbitrary chain of events but rather ~~as~~ through a systematic way. The study involves cause-and-effect relations and can be studied completely objectively.

Preference of quantitative tools of analysis

Positivists want to study the subject objectively, hence many and quantitative tools are preferred. ~~For this would result in~~ lead to studies results being in the form of numbers that can be objectively studied without bias.

Scientific Method of study

Positivists study international relations through scientifically. A hypothesis is formed and then studies commence in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis. This is similar to other sciences and implies objective study and scientific methodology.

Testing repeatedly to remove bias

Being to achieve an unbiased result, the

scenario or event being studied might have to be repeatedly studied. Moreover, the scenario might change and hence it would be studied multiple times. Positivists don't shy away from starting over repeatedly to achieve accurate results.

Definitions and Constituents of Post-positivism

Acknowledgement of complexity

Post-positivism acknowledges that international relations are complex and cannot be studied objectively and scientifically. International relations have a myriad of influencing factors that are constantly changing. Hence, they are not it is not possible to study it scientifically.

Criticism of Positivism

Post-positivism emerged as a criticism of positivism. It believed that international relations cannot follow binary and scientific study. Thus, post-positivism can be deemed as anti-positivism.

Qualitative and Descriptive study of International Relations

Post-positivism adopts a qualitative and in-depth approach to study IR. Because of the richness of the content, events and scenarios in international relations - the study subject requires more

detailed analysis

Cannot be value-free

Post-positivism claims that the study of IR cannot be value-free due to its inherent nature. The subject cannot be studied objectively and bias would creep in because of the presence of human factors and social factors.

Cannot be treated as a natural science

Post-positivism opines that natural sciences can be studied through a hypothesis-based analysis. But, IR has ~~too~~ a myriad of factors that cannot be controlled or removed as with ^{natural} sciences in a laboratory. Hence, all factors need to be studied simultaneously and the dynamic nature of IR ensures that it never remains constant.

Preference of descriptive analysis

The study of IR requires ~~deep~~ in-depth descriptive analysis because of the nature of IR. ~~All~~ A plethora of factors need to be accounted for for example: cultural factors, economic factors, social factors among others which need deep analysis.

Comparison Table of positivism and post-positivism

Positivism

- Objective and practical
- Quantitative methods
- Treated as natural science
- Hypothesis testing
- ~~Less~~ Repeated testing
- Some factors missed out during study/testing

Post-Positivism

- Could cut out bias
- In-depth descriptive methods
- Not treated as natural science
- Too complex to be objectively tested
- Acceptance of dynamic nature
- All factors accounted for due to flexibility

Point of convergence between positivism and post-positivism

A rather more profound analysis is required

Both seek to study the complexities of IR

Both ideologies seek to study IR and understand why things are currently the way they are and how the relations will unfold in the future. They both also draw from the past and try to incorporate elements into their study.

Both claim to ^{be} see the ~~most~~ accurate model to study IR

Avoid cutting

Both feel that they are the accurate ideology to study IR. While their ideologies are different, they both feel that they are

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Conclusion

Good analysis

You have got potential
Good luck!

In conclusion, ~~post positivism and post positivism~~ are ideologies that conflict with each other. ~~Positivism~~ adopts an objective, quantitative and scientific approach whereas, ~~post-positivism~~ adopts a complex, dynamic and qualitative approach. They are both different and conflicting. The only things similar are that they both seek to study complexities of IR and explain the subject in their own right.