

(Q2)
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What are the essential differences between liberal internationalists and realist domain? In your opinion why is realism a dominant theory in the discipline of International Relations?

INTRODUCTION:

The most prominent theories of international Relations are **liberalism** and **realism**. Most of the time, both the theories have proven to be correct while analyzing state-to-state relations; however, there are differences between both the schools of thought. While **realism** talks about **survival**, liberalism usually talks about **cooperation** and more narrowly, **liberal internationalism** talks about the need for institutions to bring cooperation and mutual trust between states. Therefore, following is an account of difference between **liberal internationalists** and **realists**.

THE REALIST SCHOOL OF THOUGHT AND LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM:

Major Assumptions of Realist School of Thought:

Realist school of thought usually talks on the anarchic structure and selfish human nature. It states that humans are selfish by nature and they cannot be trusted. Moreover, this selfishness translates at the international level where states seek self-help and survival. A famous scholar, theorist, Hans J. Morgenthau says:

"States only maximize their interest in the international system and there is no space for moral principle in such an anarchic structure."

Main postulates of Liberal internationalism:

Liberal internationalism is mainly talking about cooperation and establishment of international

institutions to change state-behavior from selfish to cooperative. Authors like Francis Fukuyama have praised the liberalist school of thought. He has stated that:

“At the end of Cold war, you are seeing a liberal world order which dominated at the end and seems to be everlasting!”

ABSOLUTE GAINS VERSUS RELATIVE GAINS:

The major difference between liberal internationalists and realists lies in the recognition of benefits acquired by each state. **Realists** believe that in cooperation, states look for **relative gains**: who will get more advantage? On the other hand, liberalists believe that when in an agreement, states go for **absolute gains**: what do I gain? Even if one state gains something, according to liberal internationalists, a state would go for cooperation.

STATE SURVIVAL AND COOPERATION:

Theorists like **Niccolo Machiavelli** and **Kenneth Waltz**, states only prefer their survival and they would not cooperate if their security is not completely achieved. On the other hand, authors like **Joseph Nye** and **Robert Keohane**, support cooperation in any situation. States would not cooperate only if there are no or weak institutions to enforce cooperation.

Realist Perspective of Arms Control and Liberal Internationalist Perspective on disarmament:

Realists believe that in an anarchic world, states would never go for disarmament, instead they would go for arms control to maintain balance of power. On the other hand, Liberal internationalists believe that disarmament provides solution for mistrust and security issues of a state and they support **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** as it has been successful in preventing more than **9 States** to acquire nuclear weapons.

INSTITUTIONS OR NO INSTITUTIONS?

As Theorists like **Kenneth Waltz** and **John Mearsheimer**, there is no use of institutions because states always prioritize their interests and their security. Hence, this can also lead a state towards cheating when in an argument. Contrarily, theorists such as **Lisa Martin** and **Robert Keohane** believe that states are cooperative and they look for a **non-zero sum game** where both the parties gain something.

Realism



Anarchy



Balance of Power



Mistrust

Liberalism



Anarchy



Cooperation



Trust.

REALISM: A DOMINANT THEORY:

For decades, realism is considered a dominant theory as many case studies have shown pure or realistic behaviour.

as determined by realism.

Indeed; World is anarchic:

Many years ago, **Keneth Waltz** predicted that international system is anarchic, which is why states maximize their security and survival. Moreover, missing central government also cannot stop war crimes or genocide.

A case study of Israel's war in Gaza:

Due to the anarchic structure, no state or an organization has been successful in preventing a war in Gaza and **42000** people have died but a super power like US has failed to pressurize Israel.

States only look for their interests:

Realism is also dominant because it predicted that states only go for cooperation when their interests are being fulfilled. Moreover they can also cheat if their survival and interests are at

A case study of North Korea and NPT:

North Korea was secretly pursuing its nuclear weapon programme and finally in 2006, North Korea **withdrew** from **NPT** and became a nuclear state. Thereby, states always maximize their interests and not others.

The ways through which states achieve balance of power shows realism's dominance:

Authors like John Mearsheimer suggests that states for balancing, build their military power and enter into a **security dilemma**. They go for a strong military and get indulged in an arms race.

CASE STUDY OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN:

To maintain balance of power, India and Pakistan have been in an arms race. To tackle India's **no first use doctrine**, Pakistan built **Nasr**.

In response to Indian **BMD** system, Pakistan developed its own **MIRVs**.

Conclusion:

Thereby, both schools of thought have prominent position in theories of international relations. However, realism seems to be the winner as most of the times, States are seen achieving their national interests while seeking self-help and trying to survive an anarchic structure. Thucydides has rightly said:

“The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must”

“Melan Dialogue”

