

# **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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# Major Questions in IR

# REALISM

1. **States** are the principal or most important actors
2. The state is viewed as a **unitary** actor
3. The state is essentially a **rational** actor
4. **National security** is usually tops the list of priority; thus **military** and related political issues dominate world politics; and **power** is a key concept

# LIBERALISM

- It acknowledges the variety of actors in international politics, including non-state actors: **transnational actors** (MNCs, NGOs, IGOs) and **sub-state actors** (local government, businesses, individuals)
- There are **multiple issues** that are of interests to the actors, including economic, ideological, religious and cultural issues
- The use of **military power is harmful** for the multiple interests of states and other actors

# IDEALISM

1. **Morals and values**, not state interests, should and do shape individual and state behavior
2. Humans are basically good, and it is **social institutions** that drive them to immoral acts, thus perfecting social institutions is the key to promoting **cooperation and peace** in the global society
3. States joint IGOs to **promote a value** and avoids something morally questionable

# PLURALISM

1. **Non-state actors** are important entities in international relations that cannot be ignored
2. The **state is not a unitary actor**. It is because state is composed of individual bureaucrats, interest groups, and individuals that attempt to formulate or influence foreign policy
3. Foreign policy DMP is the result of **clashes, bargaining and compromise** among different actors
4. The agenda of international politics is **extensive**

# GLOBALISM

1. **Global context** within which states and other entities interact is the starting point of analysis for international relations
2. It is imperative to view international relations from a **historical perspective** -> world capitalist system perspective)
3. Typically concerned with the development and maintenance of **dependency relations** among Northern (industrialized) States and the (poor, industrially backward) Third World

# CONSTRUCTIVISM

1. It supports the idea that **the physical world is much less important** than the social world and that important parts of the physical world are actually constructed by, the social world.
2. It is more interested in **understanding shared subjective meanings** than the objectives
3. **Identities and interests** of states are not independent of, and are constructed by their interactions.



# FEMINISM

1. Arguing that international relations theorizing is largely based on **masculine assumptions** and reasoning (construction) of global politics
2. Propose liberal approach, but reject the liberal philosophy of individual interests, as opposed to **community interests**.
3. **Women are inherently different from men** in ways that make their contributions to world politics differ greatly

# References

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