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Review Article

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, REALISM, AND LIBERALISM: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

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**ABSTRACT**

International Relations is a significant subfield of social science specifically political science. The scope of international relations refers to the complex relationships that exist between the world's sovereign states. It is primarily concerned, among other things, with the in-depth examination of all events and situations that affect more than one state.International relations between countries are essential in today's globalized world. This is because no country is self-sufficient. As a result, countries all over the world have established bilateral and multilateral relations to advance their economic, security, and social well-being.This study thoroughly reviews and examines only twotheories(Realism and Liberalism) among thetheories of international relations as well as its definitions. finally, the study foundthat the term "international " was used by Jeremy Banthanl for the first time in the late eighteenth century, and also the international relations has been defined in a variety of ways since its inception by many scholars. In addition,realism,or political realism, has been the dominant theory of international relations.

**Key words***:* International relations, theory, realism, liberalism, international politics..

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars have been attracted for centuries by the study of international relations. However, the term international was used by Jeremy Banthanl in the late eighteenth century, although Rijchare Zouche used the Latin equivalent integrated a century earlier. They both used this word about the branch of law known as the law of nations, which later became known as 'International Law.' International interactions expanded dramatically over the nineteenth and twentieth century. Today's nation-states are far too intertwined, and their interactions, whether political or commercial, have evolved into a crucial topic of study. This topic is primarily concerned with the political relationships that exist between sovereign societies known as nations or nation-states. Although historians, international lawyers, and political philosophers have written about international politics for centuries, the formal recognition of International Relations as a separate discipline is usually thought to have occurred at the end of World War I with the establishment of a Chair of International Relations at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Other Chairs followed in the United Kingdom and the United States. Before 1919, international relations were studied, but there was no such thing as a discipline. Its subject content was shared by several earlier disciplines, including law, philosophy, economics, politics, and diplomatic history — but before 1919, the subject was not studied with the zeal that the First World War produced.(Linklater, Devetak, Donnelly, Paterson, Reus-Smit, & True,2005). Furthermore, IR is an abbreviation for the academic discipline of international relations. It is the study of international relations and interactions, including the operations and policies of national governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational enterprises (MNCs). It can be both a theoretical and a practical or policy subject, using academic techniques that can be empirical, normative, or both. It is frequently seen as a branch of political science, but it is also studied by historians (international or diplomatic history) and economists (international economics).It is also a branch of law (public international law) as well as a branch of philosophy (international ethics). From a broader perspective, IR is unmistakably an interdisciplinary investigation. Aspects of international relations, particularly war and diplomacy, have been examined and commented on since the time of the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, although IR did not become a formal academic field until the early twentieth century (Jackson, Sørensen& Møller,2019).

### Why do we need to study International Relations?

The main reason we should study international relations is that the world's population is divided into separate political communities, or independent states, which have a significant impact on how people live. A sovereign state is an unambiguous and bordered territory under the jurisdiction of a supreme government that is constitutionally separate from all foreign governments: an independent nation or state. These states work together to form a global international state system.At the moment, there are nearly 200 independent states. With very few exceptions, everyone on the planet not

only lives in one of those countries, but is also a citizen of one of them, and very rarely of more than one. As a result, virtually every man, woman, and child on the planet are linked to a specific state, and through that state, to the state system, which affects their lives in significant ways that they may not be fully aware of(Jackson, Sørensen & Møller,2019).

**International Relations: Meaning and Definitions**

International Relations is a significant subfield of social science. The scope of international relations refers to the complex relationships that exist between the world's sovereign states. It is primarily concerned, among other things, with the in-depth examination of all events and situations that affect more than one state. According to the great Greek philosopher Aristotle, man is a social animal by nature. Man, as a social animal, cannot exist in isolation. His basic nature and basic needs drive him to meet his numerous needs in collaboration with others. Furthermore, no man is self-sufficient in his daily needs, so he must rely on his fellow man for survival. No individual or state can afford to live in isolation, and no state can afford to live in isolation. No state, like the individual, is self-sufficient. It must, of course, cultivate inter-state relations. International Politics is concerned with these relationships. Political activities and other types and aspects of interactions between two or more states are referred to as international relations. International Relations is a branch of political science concerned with the study of state relations, nation-state foreign policy, and the mechanisms and institutions (such as international organizations, inter-governmental organizations, international and national non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations) through which states interact.international and regional peace and security, international organizations, nuclear proliferation, globalization, human rights, economic development, intervention, international financial relations, and international trade relations are all topics covered in the study ofinternational relations (Brown & Rengger,2002).

Furthermore, International relations have been defined in a variety of ways since their inception. The definition of the subject varies greatly among authors. According to Stanley Hoffman, it appears quite natural "How could one agree once and for all on a definition of a field whose scope is constantly changing, indeed, a field whose fluctuation is one of its primary characteristics?" As a result, no universally accepted definition of international relations exists. International relations, according to Prof. Charles Schleicher, are the relationships between states. International relations are defined as follows by Quincy Wright: "relationships between major groups in world life at any time in history. “International relations, according to Prof. Hans Morgenthau, are a struggle for power among nations. International relations, according to Norman Podelford and George Lincoln, are the interaction of state politics with the changing pattern of power relationships. It is defined by Padelford and Lincoln as "interactions of state policies within changing patterns of power relationships"(Morgenthau & Nations,1948).

Harold and Margaret Sprout, on the other hand, provide a useful working definition of international relations. International relations are defined as "those aspects of interactions and relations of independent political communities in which some element of opposition, resistance, or conflict of purpose or interest is present." "International Relations as a field of study is focused on the process by which states adjust their national interests to those of other states," according to Hartman. According to Palmer and Perkins, the primary concern of international politics is the state system. International politics, according to Sprout and Sprout, are those aspects of the interactions and relations of independent political communities in which there is some element of opposition, resistance, or conflict(Sprout & Sprout, 1957).

International Relations (IR) can refer to both a "condition" and a "discipline." For example, Quincy Wright makes this distinction. Official relations between sovereign countries are referred to as international relations, though he believes that ".....the term interstate would have been more accurate because, in political science, the term state came to be the terms applied to such societies." Thus, international relations as a 'condition' refers to the facts of international life, that is, the actual conduct of relations between nations through diplomacy based on foreign policy. It also includes actual cooperation, conflict, and war zones. According to Wright, IR should tell the "truth about the subject," i.e., how such relationships are conducted, and as a discipline, IR should approach them systematically and scientifically.In other words, IR should concentrate on the study of all relations-political, diplomatic, commercial, and academic-between sovereign states that comprise the subject matter of international relations. The scope of IR should include the study of "various types of groups—nations, states, governments, peoples, regions, alliances, confederations, international organizations, even industrial organizations, cultural organizations, religious organizations, and so on—that are involved in the conduct of these relations," etc. ( Kaplan,1958).

Furthermore, the term International Relations (abbreviated as IR in capital letters) refers to the academic discipline. International Politics, International Studies, World Politics, and Global Politics are all terms used to describe the discipline. The core subject of the academic discipline is referred to as international relations or international politics (lower case). That is, international relations/international politics are the "real world-processes" studied by IR as an academic discipline (or international politics, world politics, or global politics, if you prefer). In textbooks, the abbreviation SIR, which stands for a scholarship or the study of international relations, is used to refer to scholarship that analyses those "real-world-processes .“Throughout the book, the traditional term "International Relations" refers to the academic discipline. The abbreviation "IR theory" is used for the theory within this academic discipline (International Relations theory) (Spindler,2013).

**International politics and International relations**

In 1919, the University of Wales (U.K.) established the first Chair in International Relations. Professors Alfred Zinmern and C.K. Webster were the first two occupants of the chair. International Relations as a subject was little more than diplomatic history at the time. This subject's nature and content changed over the next seven decades. Today, analytical political studies have taken the place of descriptive diplomatic history. The term

international politics now refers to a new discipline that has emerged since World War II. When compared to International Relations, it is more scientific, but also more narrow.Even today, the two terms are used interchangeably. They do, however, have two distinct areas of study, or content. Hans Morgenthau believes that "the core of international relations is international politics," but there must be a clear distinction between the two. International Relations, he claims, has a much broader scope than International Politics. Whereas national politics, as Morgenthau puts it, is a power struggle, international relations encompass political, economic, and cultural relations(Morgenthau & Nations,1948).

According to Harold and Margaret Sprout, international relations encompass all human behavior on one side of a national boundary that affects human behavior on the other side of the boundary. International politics, on the other hand, deals with conflicts and cooperation among nations primarily at the political level. International politics, as defined by Padelford and Lincoln, is the interaction of state policies within a changing pattern of power relationships. Palmer and Perkins both agree that international politics is primarily concerned with the state system. International relations are broader in scope than international politics because it encompasses all types of relationships between sovereign states. As IR students, we will investigate political conflicts and state cooperation. However, we will also look at other aspects of international relations, such as economic interdependence and the role of non-state actors(Snyder,1955).

**International relations theories**

Different people have different interpretations of the term theory. It could even mean different things to different people. In common parlance, something may be true "in theory" but not in practice or a specific case or set of circumstances. In this rather broad sense, "in theory" is synonymous with "in principle" or "in the abstract." Another definition, more consistent with usage in this volume, sees theory as simply a method of making the world or some part of it more understandable or intelligible. This is the goal of theories dealing with international relations. Making things more understandable may, of course, simply mean providing a better or more precise description of what we see. Although an accurate description is necessary, a theory is more significant.

**Realism**

Realism is a school of thought in the field of International Relations (IR) that emphasizes the competitive and conflictual aspects of international relations. The origins of realism are said to be found in some of the earliest historical writings, particularly Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War, which raged between 431 and 404 BCE. Thucydides, who wrote over two thousand years ago, was not arealist,' because IR theory did not exist in its current form until the twentieth century. However, when viewed from a modern perspective, theorists discovered numerous parallels between ancient and modern thought patterns and behaviors. They then used his writings, as well as the writings of others, to support the idea that there was a timeless theory that covered all of recorded human history. 'Realism' was the name given to this theory.

**The fundamentals of realism**

The first assumption of realism is that the nation-state (usually abbreviated to state) is the primary actor in international relations. Other bodies, such as individuals and organizations, exist, but their power is limited. Second, the state is a unified actor. National interests, particularly during times of war, compel the state to speak and act with one voice. Third, decision-makers are rational actors in the sense that rational decision-making leads to the pursuit of the national interest. Taking actions that would weaken or expose your state would be illogical in this situation. Realism implies that all leaders, regardless of political persuasion, recognize this as they attempt to manage their state's affairs to survive in a competitive environment. Finally, states exist in anarchy – that is, there is no one in charge internationally.In an international emergency, the frequently used analogy of "no one to call" emphasizes this point. Within our states, we typically have police forces, militaries, and courts, among other things. In the event of an emergency, these institutions are expected to 'do something.' Because there is no established hierarchy on a global scale, there is no clear expectation of anyone or anything 'doing something.' As a result, states can rely on themselves only in the end.(Antunes,& CAMISãO,2018).

Furthermore, in Theory of International Politics (1979), Kenneth Waltz modernized IR theory by moving realism away from its unprovable (though persuasive) assumptions about human nature. His theoretical contribution was dubbed 'neorealism' or ‘structural realism' because he emphasized the concept of structure in his explanation. Rather than being based on human nature, a state's decisions and actions are based on a simple formula. First, all states are constrained by their participation in an international anarchic system (this is the structure).Second, any course of action they take is based on their relative power in comparison to other states. As a result, Waltz proposed a version of realism in which theorists should look to the characteristics of the international system for answers rather than flaws in human nature. In doing so, he ushered in a new era in IR theory in which social scientific methods were attempted rather than political theory (or philosophical) methods. The distinction is that Waltz's variables (international anarchy, state power, and so on) can be empirically/physically measured. Human nature is an assumption based on philosophical views that cannot be measured in the same way(Antunes,& CAMISãO,2018).

Realists believe that their theory best describes the image of world politics held by statecraft practitioners. As a result, perhaps more than any other IR theory, realism is frequently used in policymaking – echoing Machiavelli's desire to write a manual to guide leaders. Realists' detractors, on the other hand, argue that they can contribute to the continuation of the violent and confrontational world that they depict. Realists encourage leaders to act in ways based on suspicion, power, and force by assuming the uncooperative and egoistic nature of humankind and the absence of hierarchy in the state system. As a result, realism can be viewed as a self-fulfilling prophecy. More directly, realism is frequently criticized for being overly pessimistic, because it sees the international system's confrontational nature as unavoidable. Realists, on the other hand, believe that leaders face an endless number

of constraints and few opportunities for collaboration. As a result, they have few options for escaping the realities of power politics. For a realist, facing the reality of one's situation is prudence, not pessimism. The realist account of international relations emphasizes the limited possibility of peaceful change, or indeed any type of change. It would be foolish for a leader to place his or her faith in such an idealistic outcome(Antunes,& CAMISãO,2018).

Many critics of realism focus on one of its central strategies in world affairs management – an idea is known as "the balance of power." This describes a situation in which states are constantly making decisions to strengthen their capabilities while undermining the capabilities of others. This creates a sort of 'balance' in that (theoretically) no state is allowed to become too powerful within the international system. If a state tries to push its luck and grow too much, as Nazi Germany did in the 1930s, it will spark a war because other states will ally to try to defeat it – that is, restore balance.One of the reasons that International Relations are anarchic is because of the balance of power system. No single state has ever been able to become a global power and unify the entire world under its direct rule. As a result, realism emphasizes the importance of adaptable alliances in ensuring survival. These alliances are determined less by political or cultural similarities between states and more by the desire to find fair-weather friends, or 'enemies of my enemy.'This may help to explain why the United States and the Soviet Union were allies during World War II (1939–1945): they both saw a similar threat from a rising Germany and sought to balance it. However, within a few years of the war's end, the nations had become bitter enemies, and the balance of power began to shift again as new alliances were formed during what became known as the Cold War (1947–1991). While realists see the balance of power as a prudent strategy for managing an insecure world, critics see it as a means of legitimizing war and aggression(Antunes,& CAMISãO,2018).

Despite these criticisms, realism remains central to the field of international relations theory, with most other theories concerned (at least in part) with critiquing it. As a result, it would be inappropriate to write an IR theory textbook without including realism in the first chapter. Furthermore, because of its history of providing policymakers with tools of statecraft, realism continues to offer many important insights into the world of policymaking.

**Liberalism**

Liberalism is a distinguishing feature of modern democracy, as evidenced by the use of the term "liberal democracy" to describe countries with free and fair elections, the rule of law, and protecting civil liberties. However, when discussed within the context of international relations theory, liberalism has evolved into its distinct entity. Liberalism encompasses a wide range of ideas and arguments about how institutions, behaviors, and economic ties contain and mitigate state violence. When compared to realism, it incorporates more factors into our frame of reference, particularly the inclusion of citizens and international organizations. Most notably, liberalism has been the traditional foil to realism in IR theory, offering a more optimistic world view based on a different reading of history than that found in realist scholarship.

**The Fundamentals of Liberalism**

Liberalism is founded on the moral argument that the highest goal of government is to protect an individual's right to life, liberty, and property. As a result, liberals emphasize individual well-being as the foundation of a just political system. A political system characterized by unchecked power, such as a monarchy or a dictatorship, is incapable of protecting its citizens' lives and liberties. As a result, liberalism's primary concern is to build institutions that protect individual liberty by limiting and checking political power. While these are domestic issues, the field of international relations is also important to liberals because a state's actions abroad can have a significant impact on liberty at home. Militaristic foreign policies particularly irritate liberals.The primary concern is that war necessitates states amassing military power. This power can be used to fight other countries, but it can also be used to oppress its citizens. As a result, political systems based on liberalism frequently limit military power by ensuring civilian control over the military(Meiser,2018).

Territorial expansion wars, or imperialism – when states seek to build empires by capturing territory elsewhere – are especially upsetting to liberals. Expansionist wars not only strengthen the state at the expense of the people but also necessitate long-term commitments to military occupation and political control of foreign territory and peoples. Large bureaucracies with a vested interest in maintaining or expanding the occupation of foreign territory are required for occupation and control. For liberals, the central issue is how to create a political system that allows states to protect themselves from foreign threats without jeopardizing their citizens' liberties.In liberal states, the primary institutional check on power is free and fair elections through which the people can remove their rulers from power, providing a fundamental check on the government's behavior. The division of political power among different branches and levels of government – such as a parliament/congress, an executive, and a legal system – is a second significant limitation on political power. This enables power to be used with checks and balances(Meiser,2018).

Democratic peace theory is perhaps liberalism's most significant contribution to international relations theory. It asserts that democratic states are extremely unlikely to go to war with one another. This phenomenon can be explained in two parts. First, as previously stated, democratic states are distinguished by internal power restraints. Second, democracies tend to see each other as legitimate and unthreatening, and thus have a greater capacity for cooperation with each other than non-democracies. Statistical analysis and historical case studies provide strong support for democratic peace theory, but several issues remain unresolved. First, democracy is a relatively new development in human history. This means that democracies have few opportunities to compete with one another. Second, we don't know whether the peace is truly "democratic," or whether it is the result of other factors associated with democracy, such as power, alliances, culture, economics, and so on. A third point is that, while democracies are unlikely to go to war with one another, some research suggests that they are more likely to be

aggressive toward non-democracies, such as when the US went to war with Iraq in 2003. Regardless of the debate, the prospect of a democratic peace gradually replacing a world of constant war – as described by realists – is an enduring and important aspect of liberalism(Meiser,2018).

We now live in an international system shaped by the post-World War II liberal world order. The international institutions, organizations, and norms (expected behaviors) of this world order are built on the same foundations as domestic liberal institutions and norms; the desire to restrain the violent power of states. However, power is more diluted and dispersed internationally than it is within states. Aggression wars, for example, are forbidden under international law.There is no international police force to enforce this law, but an aggressor understands that breaking it risks severe international repercussions. States, for example, can impose economic sanctions or intervene militarily against the offending state, either individually or as part of a collective body such as the United Nations. Furthermore, an aggressive state risks missing out on peace's benefits, such as gains from international trade, foreign aid, and diplomatic recognition.

The most comprehensive account of the liberal world order can be found in the work of Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry (1999), who describe three interconnected factors: First, international law and agreements are accompanied by international organizations to form an international system that extends far beyond a single state. The United Nations is the archetypal example of such an organization, as it pools resources for common goals (such as combating climate change), maintains near-constant diplomacy between enemies and friends, and gives all member states a voice in the international community.

Second, the spread of free trade and capitalism by powerful liberal states and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank creates an open, market-based international economic system. This situation is mutually beneficial because increased trade between states reduces conflict and makes war less likely because war disrupts or cancels the benefits (profits) of trade. States with extensive trade ties are thus strongly compelled to maintain peaceful relations. According to this calculation, war is not profitable for the state, but rather detrimental(Meiser,2018)

International norms are the third pillar of the liberal international order. Liberal principles promote international cooperation, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. When a state violates these standards, it faces a variety of penalties. However, because of the wide range of values around the world, international norms are frequently contested. However, there are consequences for breaking liberal norms. Direct and immediate costs can occur. Following its violent suppression of pro-democracy protesters in 1989, the European Union, for example, imposed an arms embargo on China.The embargo remains in effect until further notice. Costs can also be indirect but significant. For example, favorable views of the United States declined significantly around the world following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, owing to the invasion being carried out unilaterally (in violation of established United Nations rules), in a move widely regarded as illegitimate.

The majority of liberal scholarship today focuses on how international organizations foster cooperation by assisting states in overcoming the incentive to avoid international agreements. This type of scholarship is known as 'neoliberal institutionalism,' which is often abbreviated to just 'neoliberalism.' This frequently leads to misunderstanding because neoliberalism is also a term used outside of IR theory to describe a widespread economic ideology of deregulation, privatization, low taxes, austerity (cuts in government spending), and free trade. When applied to international relations, the essence of neoliberalism is that states can benefit significantly from cooperation if they trust one another to follow through on their commitment detection is more likely in situations where a state can benefit from cheating and avoid punishment. However, when a third party (such as an unbiased international organization) can monitor the behavior of agreement signatories and provide information to both parties, the incentive to defect decreases, and both parties can commit to cooperating. In these cases, all agreement signatories can benefit from absolute gains. Absolute gains are a general increase in welfare for all parties involved – everyone benefits to some extent, but not necessarily equally. According to liberal theorists, states care more about absolute gains than relative gains. Relative gains, which are closely related to realist accounts, describe a situation in which a state measures its increase in welfare relative to other states and may avoid any agreements that strengthen a competitor. By focusing on the more optimistic viewpoint of absolute gains and providing evidence of its existence via international organizations, liberals see a world where states will likely cooperate in any agreement where any increase in prosperity is probable(Meiser,2018).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion,International Relations is a significant subfield of social science specifically political science. The scope of international relations refers to the complex relationships that exist between the world's sovereign states. It is primarily concerned, among other things, with the in-depth examination of all events and situations that affect more than one state.International relations between countries are essential in today's globalized world. The core argument of liberalism is that concentrations of unaccountable violent power pose the most serious threat to individual liberty and must be limited. Institutions and norms at both the domestic and international levels are the primary means of restraining power. Institutions and organizations at the international level limit the power of states by encouraging cooperation and providing a mechanism for imposing costs on states that violate international agreements. Because of the substantial benefits that can be derived from economic interdependence, economic institutions are particularly effective at fostering cooperation. Furthermore, liberal norms constrain the use of power by shaping our understanding of what types of behavior are acceptable.Today, it is clear that liberalism is not a 'utopian' theory describing a fantasy world of peace and happiness, as it was once accused. It offers a consistent counter-argument to realism that is grounded in evidence and a long theoretical tradition. However, realism is a theory that claims to explain the reality of

international politics. It emphasizes the political constraints imposed by humanity's egoistic nature and the lack of a central authority above the state. For realists, the highest goal is the survival of the state, which explains why states' actions are judged by ethics of responsibility rather than moral principles. The dominance of realism has resulted in a significant body of literature critical of its central tenets.Finally, the study found that the term “international" was used by Jeremy Banthanl for the first timein the late eighteenth century. Also, international Relations has been defined in a variety of ways since its inception by many scholars.In addition,realism,or political realism, has been the dominant theory of international relations.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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