INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Theoretical debates in the discipline of international relations (IR) are unending and still remain unresolved. However, in this chapter, we discuss three theoretical approaches that have historically and currently occupied a central position in the study of IR. These approaches including their various sub-schools are realism, liberalism and social constructivism. Notably, each of these theoretical frameworks is favoured by some scholars and at the same time vigorously challenged by other scholars. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that these three approaches are the most dominant theoretical discourses in the study of IR.

REALISM

No single theory adequately explains the complexity of IR, but the realist approach is still the main paradigm in the study of IR. It views IR through the lens of power. Although the realist school has attracted strong criticism, it still occupies a central position in IR studies. For realists, the state, for example, is the main actor, and state sovereignty is the main principle arranging relations among states. However, the field of IR has become more complex, particularly the fact that other actors have emerged. The relationships among the world's governments are no longer occurring in a vacuum. They are inextricably linked with other actors such as individuals, international organizations and transnational or multi-national corporations. The realist paradigm developed as an alternative to the liberal school of thought, which emphasizes cooperation and peace rather than power as key influences on international interactions. Realist theories view many activities in IR as mainly organized around realist assumptions. In addition, realists do not only give simple explanations of phenomena in the international system but also offer practical and clear prescriptions to decision makers.

This section discusses important assumptions of the realist approach to IR and is divided into three parts. The first part discusses key assumptions of realism such as power, national interest, statism, survival and self-help. The second part focuses on the main proponents of realism such as Hans J. Morgenthau and K. J. Holsti. The final part

examines neo-realist concepts such as the balance of power, bandwagoning, alliance, defensive realism and offensive realism.

REALIST MAIN ASSUMPTIONS

The three main basic realist assumptions or elements often discussed are grouped in 3Ss: statism, survival and self-help (Dunne & Schmidt 2011: 86). The historical emergence of the nation state is an interesting matter since the state is the main actor in the anarchical international system or environment. The centrality of the state departs from the fact that to survive and to achieve a self-subsistence level, people need to unite based on group solidarity. Group cohesion, therefore, is important and this often means conflicts with other groups. Unsurprisingly, the state is the most important grouping today, and the strongest source of cohesion is nationalism (Wohlforth 2008: 32). As noted by Shorten, "nationalists prefer their own nation to others and are arrogant, xenophobic and prone to militaristic self-aggrandizement" (2008: 34).

Additionally, the state as an independent political community has sovereignty over certain territory. Sovereignty over its own territory is important because in the realist approach, international politics is anarchical in the sense that there is no central government or higher authority to arrange relations among states or enforce rules. In contrast to the hierarchical structure of domestic politics, the basic structure of international politics is anarchical, where states are sovereign and assume the highest authority. Put differently, states have the right to do whatever they want in their own territory, and states are not supposed to interfere in the internal affairs of other states. The state therefore is closely connected to the concept of sovereignty.

This idea of the sovereign unitary state comes from the Weberian definition of the state as an institution claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in enforcing order in a certain territory. The Western concept of sovereignty implies that many domestic problems are easier to settle, since the government of a state has legitimate authority to rule. Thus, citizens or subjects inside the state feel secure and often get justice from centralized authority. In view of the foregoing, it is scarcely surprising that centralized power structure within states is a different reality from the anarchical structure of the international system. Hence, many scholars argue that the international system is very insecure and thereby compel states to do everything to ensure their own survival and security.

In the anarchical situation, it is proffered that the state's main priority is to protect and maintain its survival from many threats, which also underpins the main national interest of a state. From the realist perspective, other interests such as economic interest are considered secondary vis-à-vis the security interest. In this regard, economic and other non-security issues are often treated as 'low politics' as opposed to the 'high politics' of security issues. The main ethical code in realism is that a policy and action must be considered in its result, not in the sense that it is right or wrong. Realists do not believe

in moral universality. If there are moral considerations, they are often relative and apply only to certain communities. In other words, as noted by Wohlforth, states often must be selfish if they are to choose between their individual interests and collective interests (2008: 32).

In the anarchical world, every state must help itself from other states. In other words, states are self-help oriented, that is, no other state can be relied upon to guarantee their own survival and interests. This implies that the structure of the international system does not permit friendship, trust and honour to develop among states. As such, they must not rely on other states and international organizations. Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain or interpret the intention of another country empirically. The best way, therefore, is for states to strengthen and develop their own power vis-à-vis that of potential and actual rival states. It is hardly surprising that realists argue that the best route to national security is for states to accumulate their own power and ensure no other state acquire a preponderance of power. In this context, alliances also play a crucial role in ensuring one or more states' power are used to balance that of another state or group of states. The basic definition of balance of power, therefore, holds that if the survival of a state is threatened, it should seek to increase its own military capabilities (internal balancing) or join forces by establishing a formal alliance (external balancing), to preserve its own independence by countermanding the power of the opposing side. Thus, for realists, the notion of balance of power is an enduring feature of the international political arena.

As indicated in the foregoing, relations among states or the way they may live and coexist can be done through the balance of power and limited interactions. However, it is important to note that the concept of balance of power does not mean a real stability and balanced situation. The state's primary objective is still to gain more benefits or relative advantage over other states. In reality, balance of power at the international level may have contradictory implications for states. It might heighten tensions because actions states take to enhance their security may be seen as threats to the security of other states. In other words, security for one state may trigger insecurity to another state. This security dilemma often takes place in such situations involving two big powers in which the enhancement of military power in one state will be considered as a threat by the other state. Inevitably, this will lead to the other state to increase its own power. The arms race pitting the United States against the former Soviet Union during the Cold War epitomizes the security dilemma in practice. As noted by Mearsheimer (2007: 74), this is the political tragedy of great states.

An important concept coming out from the above discussion is power. Although this concept is often confusing because of its broad and multiple meanings, power is the main concept for realists. Power is often interchangeably used with other concepts such as influence, military power, balance of power and soft power. Power has been understood also in economic terms, particularly, its total gross domestic product (GDP) (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 46). A country's GDP combines its overall size, wealth

and level of technological advancement. Whatever the definition, all states, according to realist, are very worried and apprehensive of losing their power vis-à-vis other states (especially rival states). Because of that states always attempt to make sure the balance of power will remain maintained or skewed in their favour.

The main element of power, according to Mearsheimer (2007), is military capability. Realists tend to view military force as the most important attribute of national power in the short-term (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 48). State has also other important sources of power such as economic resources. Other resources such as population, natural resources and technology are part of national power resources, which are latent because they have not been developed into military power. States, therefore, gain power not only from conquering other states but also from these latent forms of power. According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2012), elements of tangible power that states can draw on over the long-term include territory, GDP, geography, population and natural resources. In addition, they pointed out that intangible long-term power resources include political culture, patriotism, education of the population and strength of the scientific and technological base.

Power has a simple and complicated meaning. Put differently, it is surprisingly complex and a highly contested concept. The simple meanings, among others, were provided by Morgenthau, who describes power as 'man's control over the minds and actions of others' (Morgenthau 1955: 26). An alternative definition presents power as the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done (Maclean & MacMillan 2009: 425; Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 45). Power cannot be understood in vacuum but must be understood in relation to another state. It is relative because it should be measured in comparison to the power of another state. A more complex meaning of power is prestige, that is, the ability to gain what we want not by using weapons or threat to use weapons but by diplomatic persuasion and authority. Another meaning is derived from the neo-realist approach, which understands power as capability. Capability can be measured based on the size of population and area, funding, military power, stability and political competition (Waltz 1979: 131).

Classical Realism and Neo-realism

According to classical realists such as Morgenthau, states have goals and aspirations, and they do not necessarily succumb to power distribution dictates of the international structure, as argued by neo-realists. The basic assumption of the state is that it is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In this regard, states are seen as always attempting to fulfill their interests defined in terms of power. However, Morgenthau also recognizes the context in which foreign policy is made. He argues that states have the 'contextual imperative' related to geopolitics, history, economy and politics. Morgenthau also gives emphasis on the importance of leadership and national character in foreign policy making. Holsti (1983: 99), another proponent of classical realism, also cited domestic politics and economic situation as determining factors that

influence the perception of decision makers in threat analysis. Holsti also observes that the state as an international actor has goals, aspirations, needs, attitudes, choices and actions influenced and shaped by power structure and distribution in the international system.

Structural realism or neo-realism, which "explains patterns of international events in terms of the system structure" (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 56), is a 1990 modified version of realism. In contrast to classical realists, for neo-realists, capability in the international structure is a critical determinant of state behaviour. To them, it is not human nature that governs state behaviour, but the anarchical international system that creates hatred, jealous, fear, suspicion and insecurity. Conflicts can happen even if one state has good intention towards other states because the structure or architecture of the international system compels states to struggle for power, no matter what political systems and culture those states have. Basically, neo-realists concur with the viewpoint that international politics is essentially a struggle for power, but strongly challenge the view that this struggle for power is a consequence of human nature.

A branch of neo-realism distinguishes offensive and defensive forms or realism and relates these to the concept of hegemony (Garner, Ferdinand & Lawson 2012: 347). Offensive realism views states as constantly seeking to enhance their power in relation to others, which is a perfectly understandable way of guaranteeing state survival. In this regard, a state that "acquires hegemonic status enjoys the greatest measure of security because of its superior power" (Garner, Ferdinand & Lawson 2012: 347). The other form, that is, defensive realism views states' hegemonic ambitions in the context of the security dilemma because the pursuit of hegemony by one state will inevitably provoke a response or reaction in others. According to Dunne & Schmidt (2001: 151), the difference between offensive and defensive realism depart from whether a state follow principles of security maximization or power maximization. If a state only seeks to maximize its power, it can be categorized as using the defensive realism strategy. In this case, the goal of the state is only to pursue power for the purpose of ensuring its own survival as a state. Essentially, the state will be defensive-oriented and will not increase its power if it will endanger its own security. In contrast, offensive realists like Mearsheimer view the main goal of a state as seeking dominance or hegemony in the international system. This kind of state is always eager to increase its power if the opportunity avails itself, even if there are attendant risks that threaten the state's security interests. Therefore, as mentioned by Dunne and Schmidt (2001: 152), defensive realism supports the status quo because it reduces competition whereas offensive realism always assume that competition always exists because revisionist states and those which want to be a hegemon continues to improve their position in international arena. However, whether a state applies offensive or defensive realism is often hard to guess or know. According to Zakaria, it depends very much on the perceptions of state elites or leaders (Zakaria 1998: 42). Indeed, they are the real actors in international affairs. As such it is their perceptions or idiosyncrasies on power and power shifts that count, not the changes of power itself that determine or inform foreign policy of one's country. Perception, therefore, can be

regarded as a kind of a 'transmission belt', which translate constraints and incentives of the international environment into policy.

As can be seen in the foregoing, there are basically two camps of the neo-realist paradigm. On the one hand, one camp led by Kenneth Waltz argues that anarchy leads to a logic of self-help in which states seek to maximize security (defensive realism). On the other hand, the other camp led by Mearsheimer proffers that the anarchical, self-help system forces states to maximize their relative power position (offensive realism). In other words, the security dilemma is an enduring feature in international politics. The security dilemma is one the key paradoxes inherent in the international systems. It refers to a situation in which actions states take to ensure their security (such as strengthening their military capabilities) are viewed as threats to the security of other states. The reactions of those other states, such as enhancing their own military capabilities, in turn threaten the first state (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 51). In a way, as aptly put by Mearsheimer:

> The essence of that dilemma is that most steps a great power takes to enhance its own security decrease the security of other states. For example, any country that improves its position in the global balance of power does so at the expense of other states, which lose relative power. In this zero-sum world, it is difficult for a state to improve its prospects for survival without threatening the survival of other states. Of course, the threatened states then do whatever is necessary to ensure their survival, which in turn, threatens other states, all of which leads to perpetual security competition. *(Mearsheimer 2007: 75)*

There are many ways to face this security dilemma. One of the ways is to establish a balance of power system by combining the power of other states to challenge the hegemon. The mechanism of balance of power ensures an equilibrium of power in which case no single state or coalition of states is in a position to dominate all the others. As such, states continually attempt to maintain a certain degree of balance in the international system by creating and joining alliances. The most important factor in determining the balance of power is the role of big states or powers. They possess strong military capability that is critical in maintaining stability and peace in the world. In a way, military capability and the alliance system are necessary safeguards in the anarchical international system. Meanwhile, small states have to adjust to the will of the big states or powers.

Thus, for neo-realists, the balance of power will happen naturally, for example, through alliance making. Balancing can happen internally through domestic military mobilization and externally through alliance making among states to counter a threatening concentration of power. However, neo-realists suggest that states are careful in alliance making. They always calculate the costs and benefits and worry that the benefits will go more to an alliance partner than to them. They also worry of losing autonomy as a sovereign state, if they get involved too deep in the alliance. Given this condition, most alliances are temporary, and if there are changes in the international system power

distribution, states may reconsider their participation in a coalition. Weak states, in certain circumstances, tend to choose the route of bandwagoning, that is, joining or making alliance with the most powerful power. In these situations of bandwagoning, states may seek to balance threats rather than power. For example, soon after the Second World War, most European states opted to form an alliance with the greatest power, the United States, rather than a broad alliance against it, because they considered the United States as less threatening than the less powerful Soviet Union.

It is therefore not surprising that the balance of power theory has been developed alongside with the balance of threat concept by neo-realists, such as Stephen Walt (1987). According to Walt, states form alliances not to balance power but to be able to fight external threats (Walt 1987: 5). Although international distribution of power is important in alliance making, Walt argues that that the decisions made depend also on decision makers' perceptions and considerations of threat analysis. Decision makers will not automatically counter accumulation of power from the other side, but will consider whether the accumulation is a threat as indicated by the behaviour of some European states shortly after the Second World War. Perceptions about threats, according to Walt, are not only determined by the presence of strong powers in the international system, but also by geographical proximity, offensive capability and strategic intentions or goals of states.

The concepts of balance of power, balance of threat and alliance making, for example, can be utilized to explain why former Soviet Union Republics in East European and Central Asia are too keen to join the Western military alliance the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is led by the United States. After getting independence from the former Soviet Union, they are still afraid of the residual threat posed by Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union government. Geographically and militarily, Russia has the potency to control them or at least to make these new states submit to its influence. The brief war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 in which the latter was battered demonstrates the existential Russian threat. By looking at this situation and considering their relatively weak military power vis-à-vis Russia, these new states joined or seek to join NATO to counter-balance the Russian threat.

In explaining state behaviour in IR, neo-realists see the importance of structure or more precisely the distribution of power among great states in the international political structure. According to neo-realists, the polarity of an international power distribution refers to number of independent power centers in the system. These configurations of the variations of world political systems (power distribution in the international system) are known as multi-polar, bipolar and unipolar. Accordingly, these international structures influence state behaviour in the sense that they limit the state's choice by compelling it to follow the structure. In a bipolar system during the Cold War, for example, states had limited choices, namely, either to join the Western bloc or the Soviet bloc. However, another option was for states to be non-aligned to either of the two competing poles by becoming a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The bipolar system which has two predominant states or alliances is generally regarded as the simplest and most stable power distribution system. For instance the bipolar system like the United States-USSR stand-off during the Cold War is generally regarded by some scholars as the most peaceful and stable international system. However, it appears there is no consensus because some scholars contend that a multi-polar system is relatively more peaceful than a bipolar one because deterrence is easier to implement when there are several powerful state actors to counter aggressors. In this scenario, no country has an opportunity to win easily or trample on others. Yet some scholars argue that under a unipolar system (hegemony) with one center of power peace is best preserved. Not surprisingly, this structure is considered as the most stable type because there is only one predominant state in the international system. The international system in the few years after the collapse of the Communist bloc became unipolar under the aegis of the United States as the only superpower. Arguably, the current situation remains unipolar even though China and other states are emerging as challengers to U.S. predominance. However, Mearsheimer (2007: 80) cites two weaknesses of the unipolar system. First, power vacuum are created when the only superpower shifts its attention from regions deemed safe. Such situations may generate tension if there is a revisionist state attempting to exploit the power vacuum. After all, the power transition theory teaches us that largest conflicts result from challengers to the top position in the power status hierarchy, when an emerging power is surpassing or threatening to overtake the most powerful state (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 57). Secondly, as the only superpower, a state may take action unilaterally by attacking another state to punish a state considered as evil or threatening its domination. The war on Iraq in 2003 that was triggered by the United States mirrors this scenario.

In facing many types of polarity in the world, two models of responses are often mentioned. The first response as noted earlier is from defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979). According to Waltz, the main goal of the state is to maintain security in an anarchical international system or world. However, according to defensive realists, it is not wise for a state to gain much power vis-à-vis others because the system will punish the state. In the history of states' relations, aggressive and offensive behaviour will not enhance the state security because the aspiring hegemon will always face challenges from the other states that are more keen to balance its power. Unsurprisingly, realists of all varieties can see the dangers of aggressiveness and expansionism.

In contrast, offensive realists such as Mearsheimer (2007), Fareed Zakaria and Eric Labs argue that to gain power as maximum as possible is a strategic step, in particular, if the situation allows the state to gain hegemony or relative power. The goal is not to conquer or dominate but to ensure the survival of the state. Put differently, the anarchical, self-help international system forces states to maximize their relative power position. Thus, having relative power is the best way to ensure security in the international system. The more the superior power one country possess over another country, the safer that state will be. For offensive realists, should continuously monitor the military capability of other states, since they cannot understand fully the strategic intentions and goals of other states. Uncertainty in state behaviour as well as the possibility of threats and

foreign policy changes of other states attracts constant suspicion and fear in the anarchical international system. Naturally, this has pushed states to constantly enhance their capability or power in the economic, military, political and territorial realms. For offensive realists, it is not that the state in nature is aggressive, but it is the systemic characters that force states to apply offensive strategy in pursuing power (Frankel 1996: ix).

Offensive realism criticizes defensive realism on the basis that the latter does not use the anarchic international structure as the main source of state behaviour but instead uses foreign policy analyses departing from domestic politics in explaining state policies (Mearsheimer 2007: 77). In a nutshell, neo-realism explains patterns of international dynamics in terms of the international distribution of power rather than in terms of the internal dynamics of individual states.

A key theory related to the power distribution in the international system is the hegemonic stability theory. According to this theory, powerful states tend to gain and maintain domination over all or part of the international system, so that they can create hierarchy in the anarchical world system. Generally, hegemony arises when one state holds a preponderant power in the international system. In other words, in a hegemonic system, only one state is dominant while other states only follow and cooperate with it. A hegemonic state has the capability strong enough to influence and if necessary force other states to follow rules, norms and institutions made by the hegemonic state. The majority, if not all states, benefit from living in a hegemonic system because hegemons can "help to resolve or at least keep in check conflicts among middle powers or small states" (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 59). The capability of hegemons relies on growing economic power, domination in technology and solid political power supported by military power.

In history, states that had hegemonic power included Portugal from 1494 to 1580 (from the end of Italian war till Spain invasion to Portugal). Portugal's main strength was its navy, which was rivaled only by Spain. After Portugal, the Dutch became the hegemonic power from 1580 till 1688 (started from Utrecht Treaty in 1579 notifying the birth of Republic of Dutch till the coming of William of Orange in England), the Dutch's hegemonic power was based on control towards credit and money. The rival of the Dutch at that time was Britain, which was also a strong candidate to be the next dominant force in international affairs. Unsurprisingly, Britain succeeded the Dutch as the hegemon from 1688 to 1792. Interestingly, the source of British power was also its navy as well as its textile industry. The rival of the British was France, which had become a republic during the French Revolution of 1789. France became the dominant power from 1792 until 1815 when its enigmatic leader Napoleon was resoundingly defeated at the battle of Waterloo. After its hegemonic status was interrupted for 23 years, British hegemony continued from 1815 to 1914 (from Wina Congress till World War I). During this period, British hegemonic power was predicated on industry and transportation (train technology). Its main rival was Germany. The last hegemon was the United States from 1945 to 1971, which was based on oil and combustion engine technology. The United States was rivaled by the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War.

Notably, from the perspective of developing states, hence less powerful, hegemony is perceived as undesirable and unjust because it may infringe on international norms of sovereignty when the hegemon enforces its rules and norms unilaterally. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States when the latter was largely seen as a hegemon gives credence to such fears. In this case, the United States and a few of its allies bypassed international institutions such as the United Nations Security Council (which has the mandate to sanction military interventions in other states) and unilaterally attacked Saddam's Iraq on flimsy grounds.

Problems with the Neo-realist Approach

The above explanations on neo-realism regard the international structure, particularly, the international distribution of power as the main determinant of state behaviour. In this structure, powerful states especially superpowers play an important role in determining the nature of the international system. Interestingly, the more pressing questions pertain to the role of middle and small powers in an international power distribution system. In most cases, because big powers and superpowers have strong military and economic capabilities, less powerful states have no option but to follow the rules of the game as determined by big powers. Hence, small states often have to adjust their behaviour in accordance to the dynamics of the international distribution of power dictates. If the structure is bipolar, they have to choose between the two competing blocs, (or alternatively follow a neutral position as was the case with most Non-Alignment Movement members during the heydays of the Cold War). However, if the power structure is unipolar, they have no choice but to follow the dictates of the hegemon. The choice therefore is limited and the only rational and strategic choice is to align with the single center of power.

However, in some cases, neo-realist assumptions and explanations cannot adequately capture the behaviour of small and middle power states. As mentioned earlier, during the Cold War era, Third World countries, for example, formed the NAM, which did not follow either of the two blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. The role of NAM was quite significant since it appealed to freedom, justice, equality and independence for the newly independent states mainly in Asia, Africa and to some extent Latin America. Furthermore, in the bipolar system, some Third World countries may also manipulate superpower rivalry to realize their foreign policy objectives. For instance, to get support for its struggle to release Irian Barat (West Papua) from the Dutch, Indonesia for example, told the United States to support her in that struggle, otherwise, she would go to the Soviet bloc to get support. Certainly, afraid of the implications of such a potential shift or move in South East Asia, the United States gave pressure to the Dutch to negotiate and solve that West Papua issue with Indonesia.

In a unipolar world structure currently obtaining, some small and middle powers have no choices but to cooperate with the hegemonic power, the United States, in many policies, for example, in combating terrorism. This gives credence to neo-realist explanation

that small countries have limited choice since the dominating state can enforce rules and values unilaterally. However, in practice these small and middle powers do not just follow U.S. policy dictates and strategies. They also attempt to get benefit from the cooperation with the United States in the economic and military realms. The decision by Philippines and Thailand governments, for example, to identify some irredentist groups seeking to gain more autonomy for their communities as terrorist organizations was largely seen as a strategy of getting political and military support from the dominating power, the United States (which is known for its disdain of any form of terrorism) to suppress those pro-autonomy movements.

In addition to this, neo-realist analysis also disregards other important issues that affect developing countries in the international realm such as justice, economic development, poverty and democracy. More importantly, these issues are often more important than military issues. Developing countries have been for long time attempting to improve their economy and to adopt good governance practices and structures. It is therefore important to point out that these key issues are not really discussed if not totally ignored by the neo-realism school of thought.

However, a much more serious setback to the realist school of thought is the growing and persistent cooperation in the international arena in contemporary times. Instructive examples of this phenomenon include the deepening and enlargement of European cooperation under the European Union; growing integration in other parts of the world under the African Union (AU), ASEAN etc. More interestingly, however, is that intra-European rivalry still persists with Britain opting out of the exchange rate mechanism or the Euro. Furthermore, British membership in the EU is under threat in the near future. In 2012, the British Premier David Cameron indicated that a vote or referendum on whether Britain should get out of Europe or stay in on new terms should be held within the next five years. In Asia, regional flare-ups over territorial integrity (especially over the South China Sea) have placed ASEAN's unity and solidarity under the spotlight. More interestingly, the ability of ASEAN to stay neutral is increasingly been threatened by the clashing interests of big powers. A more pressing concern would be whether the ASEAN community would be forced to choose between the Unites States and China. The rumblings in ASEAN community over territorial integrity; the division of European countries on bailing out the economies of troubled sister economies like that of Greece as well as sharp differences over the invasion of Iraq in 2003 only serve to underline the resilience of realist discourse as a tool of analysis in today's global politics.

In sum, students of international politics need to take note of the complexity of international affairs. The world is too complex, and its problems are too many to be fully explained by realist school. Crucially, many important issues have not been fully understood or resolved, and therefore, we need to discuss other approaches to IR. Key realist assumptions about the state and its sovereignty are currently under threat due to recent developments necessitated by global interaction, technological and communication

developments. The following Table 2.1 depicts the theories and paradigms of the realist school (including the main proponents):

The Importance of Realist Approaches to IR

No single theory or approach reliably explains or accounts for the wide range of IR and politics. But one school of thought or approach has historically held a central position in the study of international politics is realism. It is favoured by some IR scholars and fiercely challenged by others. Nevertheless, realism is still the dominant approach in IRs studies. This is because its explanations of international politics are simple and based on the assumption of power and struggle for power. More importantly, any explanation of phenomena in international politics can be explained by using the realist logic of power.

Table 2.1   Theories of Realism

Theory or Sub-School	Main Theorist	What it Explains	Scope Conditions
Offensive Realism	Mearsheimer	Expansionism/war	Security is scarce; offence/defence cannot be distinguished; technology/geography favour offence
Defensive Realism	Jervis, Glaser	Over-expansionism; cooperation	Security is plentiful; offence/defence distinguishable; technology/geography favour defence
Balance of Power	Waltz	Alliances, military build-ups, militarized rivalries	One great power rising to potential hegemony/predominance
Balance of Threat	Walt	Alliances, military build-ups, militarized rivalries	One great power rising to potential hegemony/predominance whose geographical location, military posture, and overall behaviour engender threat perception
Soft Balancing	Pape	Subtle constrain actions vs. unipolar	One great power too strong to be balanced: uni-polarity
Hegemonic Stability	Gilpin	Cooperation; institution-norm construction; 'order'	One great power predominant in system or region
Power Transition	Organski, Gilpin	War	Capability of a rising challenger approaching parity with dominant hegemon

Source: Wohlforth (2008: 44).

Since realists see power as the driving force in all political life, the realist approach is also able to give accurate prescriptions to states as they engage in IR.

In its development, realism has been challenged by the neo-realist approach. In contrast to realism whose analytical focus gives attention to a state's independent decision, neo-realism departs from the structure of IR that determines the behaviour of the state. Put differently, the structure of the international system is a major determinant of actor behaviour in international politics. In recent developments, however, realism has been criticized and challenged by many approaches in IRs in particular because it is perceived as a narrow approach giving attention only to the idea of struggle for power defined as military power. These emerging attacks on realism have gained currency in contemporary times since the world has changed dramatically especially after the demise of the Cold War. Notably, IR phenomena are not only limited to struggles for power but also shaped and influenced by human security, democracy, human rights, socio-economic and environmental issues. Undoubtedly, these issues and factors require different approaches and perspectives other than that of the realist school. Furthermore, the realist school has also been vigorously attacked for ignoring other important facets of international life (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013). For instance, it overlooks the cooperative pull in human nature. Thus, states are not only in perpetual conflict, but they also share common interests and observe common rules. In other words, there are also other values besides national interest or security. Finally, realism has been criticized for underrating the influence of international law and other important players such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multi-national corporations (MNCs) etc.

As mentioned earlier, the above discussion clearly shows that no single theory can reliably explain the wide range of international interactions and dynamics. Nonetheless, the realist approach, is one theory that has historically occupied a central position in the study of international politics. As demonstrated in this chapter, the theory of realism is a contested subject. It is favoured by some scholars and vigorously challenged by others.

LIBERALISM

The liberal approach in the study of IR is inextricably linked with the emergence of the modern liberal state. As indicated by Jackson and Sorensen (2010: 96), liberal philosophers, beginning with John Locke in the 17th century, saw great potential for human progress in modern civil society and capitalist economy, both of which could flourish in states, which guaranteed individual liberty. Liberals argue that the process of modernization leads to progress in most areas of life including international affairs. They argue that humans possess reason, and when they apply it to international affairs greater cooperation will be the outcome. In other words, the liberal approach emphasizes the cooperative strain in human nature. Consequently, they view states as not only engaging in conflict, but also as having a capacity to share common interests and thus observe common rules. Clearly, liberals generally take a positive or favourable view of human nature. They have a strong conviction in human reason, and they are convinced that rational principles can be applied to international politics. Although liberals recognize

that individuals/states are self-interested and competitive, they also believe that individuals/states share many interests and can thus engage in cooperative social action in both domestic and international affairs.

Many scholars regard liberalism as the historic alternative to realism (Dunne & Schimdt 2005: 186). During the course of modern history, liberalism has had its fair share of ups and downs. However, in recent history, liberalism gained new currency in IR studies after the end of the Cold War in 1989. Both in theory and practice, we can see opportunities for more peaceful relations among states. It is evident that in this era, relations are not based on ideological rivalries between the United States and Soviet bloc anymore but on other issues such as economic cooperation, environmental issues, democracy and human rights. Thus, old themes such as collective security and democracy as a base for peaceful relations among state are widely discussed. More importantly, the role of United Nations (a symbol of international order) in the post-Cold War era has been also strengthened to authorize actions against states violating international law. The UN-sanctioned military operation code-named Operation Desert Storm, involving multilateral forces that reversed Iraq aggression against Kuwait in 1990 is a case in point. It showed optimism that a multilateral force under the United Nations may be formed to promote the sanctity of the principle of territorial integrity as enshrined in the UN Charter.

The liberal optimism on the future world order can be seen also from some writings. Notably, one of those defining writings is Francis Fukuyama's *End of History* thesis. In his thesis, Fukuyama indicated that history or ideological conflict came to an end with the end of communism and the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism in the late 1980s (Fukuyama1992). Put it differently, Fukuyama was pointing out what appeared to be "the end point of mankind's ideological revolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Jackson & Sorensen 2010: 112). For him, all states in one way and or the other will eventually succumb to the charms of capitalism and liberal democracy. Unsurprisingly, Fukuyama's thesis has been complemented by another liberal approach, that is, the democratic peace thesis that argues that there is a democratic zone of peace among consolidated and established liberal democracies. This thesis links lasting peace with states becoming democracies. The main assumptions being that "democracies do not go to war against each other owing to their domestic culture of peaceful conflict resolution, their common moral values, and their mutually beneficial ties of economic cooperation and interdependence" (Jackson & Sorensen 2010: 112). In the past two decades, there is a general trend towards democratization in most of the world's regions. However, it is too early to suggest that all the world's states will be democratically governed in the near future. The jury is still out. What is certain, however, is that the transitional period to democracy may be more prone to war and conflict (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 96).

Basic Principles of Liberalism

Liberalism is the foundation for liberal democracy and capitalism as we see nowadays. Among the principles commonly found in liberalism include rational scientific thinking, limited government and individual freedom. Political freedoms, particularly individual

freedoms in civil society and market capitalism are two main principles that support the management of limited resource allocation effectively in society (Burchill et al. 2009: 3). In IR liberal approaches try to explain how peace and cooperation are possible.

According to Doyle (2008: 50), there are three types of commitment to rights that became the foundation of liberalism. The first type is 'negative freedom' meaning freedom from arbitrary leaders. This includes the freedom to decide which freedom is good or bad, press freedom and freedom of speech, equality before the law, freedom to have and property rights. The second form of rights to protect and promote opportunity for freedom or 'positive freedom'. This includes social and economic rights, equal opportunities for education and rights for health system and for getting job. These rights are essential in the sense that they make it possible for citizens to express themselves and to have meaningful participation. The third category of liberal rights is democratic participation and representativeness that are very important to guarantee the continuity of the previous two rights. These rights are required to guarantee morally autonomous individual to be free in their social actions.

In contrast to realism that gives emphasis on ambition particularly the lust for power among states, liberalism is based on ideal principles in relations among states. If realism views the struggle for power as natural, that is, part of natural law, then liberalism sees peace as the normal situation (what Kant describes as perpetual peace). Again, in contrast to realism which highlights power and views struggles for power as rational, liberalism, on the other hand, perceives war as anti-natural law and irrational. In other words, conflict and war are considering artificial and not a natural product of human special characters. In a way, the exponents of liberalism believe in the ability of human beings, on the progress of human beings and on their perfection. Indeed, they have faith in the ability of human reason and the capacity of human beings to realize their potential, and believe that war can be erased from human experiences (Burchill et al. 2009: 83). In short, liberals generally have a positive outlook of human nature.

To many liberal scholars, when war happens, it is mainly caused by undemocratic and militaristic governments whose interests are largely shaped by their desires to expand power and wealth. Thus, war is seen as a tool to gain power as well as serving the interests of the ruling elites, statesmen, army, diplomats and weapon manufacturers. In contrast, liberals view people as naturally peace loving and thus trapped in wars engineered to serve the interests of power holders and their acolytes. In the liberal approach, war is thus a cancer in a body of politics, but men are also given power to cure it. For liberals, the best medicine to cure war since the18th century remains the same, that is, democracy and free trade. Eventually, democratic processes and institutions will determine power holders as well as putting in place mechanisms that prevent elites' tendencies to utilize violence as a political resource. In the same vein, liberals argue that free trade will overcome artificial borders between individuals and unite them in a community of states (Burchill et al. 2009: 83).

In IR, the influence of liberalism is quite significant and growing. Liberals talk about the influence of domestic legitimacy and political processes on foreign policy. Liberals such

as Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett argue, in Kantian verse, that a pacifist federation can be developed by increasing the number of states with a democratic constitution. Doyle stated that liberal democracy is unique in the sense that states with liberal democracy models attempt to build peaceful relations among them. Pacification of external relations among these states is largely seen as a direct consequence of their political system, which is based on democratic principles and institutions (Burchill et al. 2009: 83).

In addition to this, similar democratic principles and commitments to laws, individual rights and public opinion result in liberal democratic states having common interests or values that minimize the probability of conflict with one another. In foreign policy, they do not have reasons to question the legitimacy of another, and it is much easier for them to create special peace among themselves (Doyle 1986: 1161; Fukuyama 1992: xx). However, this 'democratic' peace does not apply in non-democratic states. Burchill and others even went further to suggest that these democratic states have big temptations or desires to engage in conflict with authoritarian states as happened with conflicts against non-democratic states in Middle East and Central Asia (Burchill et al. 2009: 83).

The above liberal approach is often labeled as 'democratic peace theory'. As noted earlier, its liberal proponents believe that the behaviour of liberal democratic states is limited by institutions such as an independent judiciary and legislature. Some other liberals argue that state behaviour is limited by normative choice to compromise and to solve conflicts by using procedures as in their domestic politics. These norms and institutions strengthen the view that liberal democratic states do not solve their problems by force or violence (Burchill et al. 2009: 83). Although, it is often criticized that democracy and pacifism is only a correlation not an explanation, but as Rawls argues, fact shows less war happen between democratic states than between democratic states and authoritarian states (Rawls 1999: 49).

The second principle of liberalism is free trade. In liberal views, free trade among states also reduces enmity among states in international affairs. Regional cooperation, particularly, reduce conflicts among its members because trade and economic collaboration enhance cooperation among member states. Thus, regional cooperation can transform the nature of relationship between historic rival states. For instance, France and Germany, traditional enemies have set aside their long-standing enmity, by cooperating under the European Union framework. Liberals argue that, once conflicting states enter into a regional organization, they are able to expand their national interest conceptualization in order to make it possible for wider cooperation. It is often pointed out that regulations in organization prevent narrow definitions of national interests and reduce absolute claims over sovereignty (Keohane & Nye 1977). According to liberal scholars, within regional and international organizations, the behaviour of states is limited by regulations in the organizations. They do not need to engage in a zero-sum game politics, because in an organization they can get benefit by maximizing their interests. In contrast to realists who advocate for absolute gains, benefits from cooperation can be achieved through relative gains (Burchill et al. 2009: 83).

In modern times, the liberal prediction that trading states are more important than military states (see Rosecrance 1986), appear to be gathering momentum. Notably, today's

globalized world depends on increasing economic interdependence. More importantly, states are finding it increasingly difficult to act unilaterally through military intervention. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States of America, which took place without the blessings of the international community, come readily to mind. Moreover, every state needs to consider its share in the world market and to increase its value addition of its products and services in this interdependent system. No country can be self-sufficient today. The layers of economic interdependence are so vastly complex that aggressive states may get punishment from the international community (Burchill et al. 2009: 83).

Neo-liberalism

In 1970s and 1980s, as a response to neo-realism and to the changing nature of world politics, a new perspective of liberalism dubbed neo-liberalism emerged. This approach is seen largely as a response to the neo-realist school in the sense that it considers both internal and international aspects in explaining state behaviour. Its emphasis on domestic aspects is commonly labeled an inside-out approach. In 'inside-out' approach, state behaviour can be explained by examining arrangements and agreements within the state (endogenous arrangements). Within this domestic domain, as Doyle stated "liberal democracies are uniquely willing to eschew the use of force in their relations with one another". Notably, the domestic arrangement rejects neo-realist arguments that in anarchical international system, states are trapped in struggles for power and security (Linklater 1998: 29). Furthermore, neo-liberalism in contrast to neo-realism, recognizes that there are many actors that need to be considered in explaining state behaviour. Apart from domestic factors or actors, neo-liberalists also take into account the growing roles of international actors such as transnational corporations (TNCs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in shaping and defining state behaviour in international affairs.

Neo-liberal emphasis on domestic milieu, however, is not complete, and it is often a target of criticism from neo-realists, whose own emphasis is on the influence of the international structure on state behaviour (which is commonly called the outside-in approach). Interestingly, however, neo-liberalists also place a great deal of emphasis on the role of international factors, particularly, the role of international institutions in shaping state behaviour. Notably, they highlight the connection between the rise of cooperation in international affairs and emergence of international organizations. Undoubtedly, international institutions such as the European Union and ASEAN influence state behaviour in many ways. For instance, they limit state choices and preferences and lock the member states in norms and arrangements made by institutions. Having stated the above, the neo-liberalists claim to give better and more complete explanation than that of the realist school to state behaviour appears to be plausible.

A dominant approach in the neo-liberal school is democratic peace liberalism. This approach dominated discussion on IR theoretical scholarship especially after the end of the Cold War. It focuses around Fukuyama's thesis on the end of history. Fukuyama argues that the history of the world has come to an end, after the triumph of capitalism

and liberal democracy over other ideologies, particularly after the collapse of Communist regimes. The triumph, according to Linklater will enlarge the zone of liberal peace (Linklater 1998: 29). The main assumption is that if more countries adopt liberal democracy, cooperation, friendship and peace among these liberal states will be enhanced since "democracies almost never fight each other" (Goldsten & Pevehouse 2012: 95). It is generally argued that in the zone of peace, there are some core liberal democratic states, which implement peaceful solutions in their relations with other states. The enlargement of the liberal democratic peace zone (resulting in the increase of democratic states) has become one of the most important features in the post-Cold War era. Over the past decades, democracy promotion has become a key foreign policy objective of Western states notably the United States and its major ally Britain. As a result, liberal democracy has become more widespread as a form of government, a trend commonly known as democratization.

The expansion of the zone of liberal democratic peace challenges earlier criticism of liberalism (notably by E.H. Carr who in the 1940s dismissed some earlier prognosis of democratic peace thesis as liberal utopianism). More importantly, the democratic peace thesis challenges the assumption of realism that war is an endemic feature of international life. However, such earlier criticisms remind us of the failure of liberal approaches to support peace as signified by the failure of the League of Nations to prevent the Second World War.

In the following sections, this chapter will discuss common themes in the liberal approach to IR, namely, human rights, free market and globalization.

Liberal Concepts

Human Rights: The issue of human rights is one of the main themes in contemporary liberal discourse. According to liberal scholars, the legitimacy of a government depends on its adherence to rule of law and observance of human rights. Such a position challenges the traditional principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. The notion of sovereignty gives states the right to do as they please in their own territory without outside interference. However, there is a growing realization that there is need to protect the rights of human beings even from murderous governments. Even though, there is no consensus on what are the most important human rights, there is a strong feeling that human beings are born with certain inalienable rights called human rights. Liberal discourse teaches us that human rights cannot be separated from human beings because they are an integral part of people life. This approach to human rights argues that human rights are universal. A competing approach often labeled as relativism proffers that local traditions and histories should be given due respect, even at the expense of certain human rights (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 265).

The spread of human rights across people in many political boundaries are part of the growing liberal ethos in foreign policy and IR. For liberals, human rights give legal foundation to emancipation, justice and freedom. The rejection and violations of human

rights by a government denigrate people's self-esteem and dignity. Many states (particularly from the West) are spreading principles of civic-political rights to other states as part of their foreign policy. These rights include traditional Western rights such as free speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, equal protection under law and freedom from arbitrary incarceration.

The main challenge for liberals is to develop and promote universal moral standards that can reduce egoistic implementation of national interests. In some areas, this task has been realized such as in elimination of slavery, women participation in politics, good treatment to indigenous people and elimination of apartheid policy in South Africa. Liberals have also attempted to form and strengthen international human rights laws. The progress in their efforts can be seen in the establishment of some international covenants and bodies such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).The institution of the Convention Against Torture (1987) and emerging norms such as the Responsibility to Protect that emerged in the 21st century are recent developments that show the growing importance of liberal-oriented human rights in the present international system. Progress in this area can also be seen from the global consensus to overcome genocide, to protect detainees and to free people from hunger.

Free Trade: This is another main important principle of liberalism that influences the foreign policy of states is free trade. Classical liberal views of Adam Smith and David Ricardo on free trade continue to inspire modern IR. According to Smith in his seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations,* the true wealth of states is based on the amount of goods and services their people produce. So for liberals, commercial traders should be allowed to exchange money and products across nations without inhibitions. Smith further argued for free market system with little government interference. It was reasoned that government intervention was not the path to prosperity. As such liberals advocate for little barriers on international business and are against protectionist measures that limit free exchanges of goods and services. Thus, a free global market is the ideal goal for liberals. Undoubtedly, liberals believe that only free trade can maximize a state's economic growth and competition because it allows states to utilize their resources and capital in the most efficient way.

In contrast, protectionism is seen as having a negative influence on the state of the economy. Liberals argue that protectionist policies protect uncompetitive industries in the market which will eventually disturb international trade by causing distortions and inefficiencies. For Smith, the 'invisible hand' of market power guides every member of society towards the most profitable position in the global economy. In the end, the self-interest of one state would become the general interest for all.

Another approach of the free trade theory is the theory of comparative advantage, which requires states to specialize themselves in goods and services in which they produce with the greatest relative efficiency and at the lowest relative cost (that is, in relation

to other goods produced by the state). In other words, states differ in their abilities or capacities to produce certain goods because of differences in natural resources, technology, quality of labour etc. So in order to maximize the overall creation of wealth, states are encouraged to specialize in cite producing goods for which they have a comparable advantage and then trade for goods that another state produces best (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 288).

The Influence of Globalization

Another view of liberalism relevant in the study of IR is associated with the process of globalization. Globalization is considered appropriate to liberalism because it is an important aspect of the phase of capitalism in the globalization era (Held et al. 1999; Held & McGrew 2002). Some liberals cite the growing irrelevance of national boundaries in the implementation of economic activities such as free trade, the operation of transnational companies as well as the release of capital from national boundaries as evidence of the growing influence of neo-liberal values in present times (Burchill et al. 2009).

The development of free trade regimes and organizations such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and NAFTA as well as an increasingly important roles of international organizations such as the G8 and G20, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are also indicators of the burgeoning influence of neo-liberalism in the post-Cold War (Burchill et al. 2009: 75). These powerful international regimes and bodies have become the backbone of the international free trade ideology as well as major influences in the shaping of developmental policies of less developed countries. However, there are a lot of criticisms that have been directed at the subordination of developing countries to the whims and caprices of international bodies (which are allegedly controlled by Western countries) that actually enforce rules of free markets. By locking the developing world into agreements that forces them to subtract the boundaries of protection, the IMF, World Bank and the WTO, for example, are preventing less advanced countries from developing trade profiles that follow comparative advantage models. Furthermore, the IMF and World Bank conditionalities enshrined in their balance of payment deals and development assistance programs only reinforce free market rules and principles that have continued to marginalize developing countries especially in Africa and Latin America.

Ironically, these international economic institutions impose free market economic policies on developing states only to legitimize a global order based on unequal market relations. On a somber note, these institutions have imposed a similar recipe for economic development in all countries in the South regardless of local conditions that exist. In these one-size-fit-all policy prescriptions, developing countries are expected to adopt a blueprint of the free market (which is cynically called the Washington consensus) namely to open the economy to foreign investment, to make financial deregulation, to reduce spending and budget deficits, to privatize state-owned enterprises, to remove subsidies and protectionist measures, and to develop export-oriented economy. Unfortunately, many developing countries end up swallowing these bitter pills because the

alternative is loss of much needed financial grants and loans needed to boost develop-ment efforts in their economies. In other words, the consequences are too ghastly to contemplate.

Furthermore, Governments in the developing world are discouraged from controlling the movement of capital thereby allowing industrial countries to peg their investment priorities and spending. In this way, the direction of economic development is increas-ingly governed by international financial markets which are purely based on profit and which rarely take into consideration the public or national interest FDI receiving de-veloping countries. The free trade argument based on the economic efficiency, which is also a way of uniting the developing world into the global economy, is still a strong argument and precludes the possibility of alternative Third World economic policies.

On close inspection, in the domain of international financial economic relations, policies of developing countries virtually serve the global interests of the so-called advanced countries. Another by-product is that the sovereignty of developing countries in eco-nomic policy making has been compromised and eroded by the demands and condi-tionalities of the Bretton Woods Institutions. The whole process was triggered by the large volume of capital that was released following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s. Since then the relationship of the state and the market has undergone a transformation. Credit (bonds and loans), investment (foreign direct in-vestment, or FDI) and currency (foreign exchange) are now flowing more freely across the world rather than commodities. The increase of transnational capital and the reduc-tion of economic sovereignty is the most dramatic realization of liberal economic ideas (Strange 1996).

Thus the relationship between economic prosperity of a nation and world financial mar-kets are very certain. Since most developing countries are not able to generate wealth on their own to finance their economic development programs, these governments are compelled to provide the necessary domestic economic conditions that will attract for-eign investment into their countries. In a world where capital markets are very global and money can be transferred electronically in a second, these countries are assessed based on their comparative friendliness, kindliness or hospitality to foreign capital or investment. They have to offer the most attractive investment climate to get a supply of money which is very small and limited. This has led to foreign investment commu-nity to get space for setting policy and national economic development of the Third World states, and also means the decline of the economic sovereignty of these states (Burchill et al 2009: 77).

It is clear from the foregoing that policy makers of developing states cannot afford to ignore international financial capital or markets. However, their continued reliance on foreign capital appears to be a double edged sword. Undoubtedly, foreign capital is crucial to developing countries but there are risks associated with these foreign funds (which normally come with strings attached). These countries have not only lost their control over the value of their currency and capital movements across the world, they

also can no longer determine the institutional settings where capital market operates. For the neo-liberal proponents, this development is a positive change because for them the market not the government knows the best interests of people when it comes to resource allocation.

By losing control of their country, the interests of the poor people living in developing countries are being ignored and compromised. As such countries that give up economic sovereignty to global players in the name of free trade and financial risk giving more benefits to private commercial gain at the expense of vital interests of the state. For instance, financial markets dominated by financial institutions and banks, insurance companies, brokers and speculators, are driven by the motif of profit maximization.

Similar problems affect the growing community of liberal democratic states. The help-lessness of these countries in addressing the interests of their people has given rise to the notion of democratic deficit. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Politics* democracy, deficit refers to a "perceived deficiency in the way a particular political arrangement works in practice against a benchmark as to how it is supposed to work in theory" (McLean & McMillan 2009: 142). In this regard, Held's proposal of cosmopolitan democracy is an attempt to subdue globalization problems in the control of society. Some of the proposals he suggested include the formation of a regional parliament and the granting of more sovereignty to regional bodies, the implementation of human rights within the domestic area monitored by an international tribunal, the radical reform of the United Nations as well as the promotion of a global civil society (Held 1995).

Reflections

Although history has not been kind to liberal approaches, it is evident that in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, IR has been accommodative of liberalism and its various strands. There are growing expectations that the world will be heavily influenced and shaped by liberal discourses. Increasingly, democracy has gained currency as the best political system for the over 200 states in the globe. Equally, the democratic peace thesis that underpins contemporary liberalism theory, has gathered momentum in both theory and practice. Similarly, another notion of liberalism, free trade has become the basis of arranging economic relations. Even Communist regimes like China have also embraced elements of liberalism in their political and socio-economic systems. Furthermore, the possibility of war particularly among powerful states is more limited than before since they are now cooperating more in the economic sphere via trade. As predicted by the great liberal thinker, Immanuel Kant, more than 200 years ago, trade promotes peace by increasing wealth, cooperation and global well-being. Certainly, liberalism is on the ascendancy in present day international affairs. It is very useful now as tool of analysis in explaining the functioning of international and regional cooperation. Equally, the increasing role of the United Nations and its affiliates as well as regional bodies such as the European Union and ASEAN highlight the relevance of the liberal approach.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social constructivism is a relatively new phenomenon in IR theoretical discourse. It emerged in the late 1980s as a key approach in IR theory and global politics. More specifically, constructivism was introduced to IR by Nicholas Onuf in 1989. It has attracted attention with Alexander Wendt (1992, 1999) emerging as a major proponent of this approach. Constructivists draw inspiration from established sociological theory in their quest to demonstrate how attention to norms and identities could help to uncover important issues neglected by structural realism and neo-liberalism. Although constructivism is somewhat a critique of rationalism, it does not totally reject the scientific method as post-structuralism. This chapter introduces the constructivist approach of IR. This is done through a discussion of the assumptions of the theory and its different strands. A number of case studies are also examined to highlight its relevance.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social constructivism draws attention to the importance of ideas, identity and interaction in the international system, revealing how the human world is unnatural and socially constructed. As mentioned earlier, many of its core principles or concepts have been shaped by sociological theory. As aptly captured by Agius (2010: 50) constructivism "puts into context the actions, beliefs, and interests of actors and understands that the world they inhabit has been created by them and impacts on them". In some scholarly circles, the constructivist approach has been regarded as a reaction against realism and in particular neo-realism. It is therefore scarcely surprising that it is a critique of neo-realist and neo-liberal epistemology and methodology. Some authors like and Adler (2002) and Fierke (2007) consider constructivism as middle ground between rationalist and post-structural theories. Adler illustrates this position as follows:

> Unlike positivism and materialism, which take the world as it is, constructivism sees the world as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being. Unlike idealism and post-structuralism and postmodernism, which take the world only as it can be imagined or talked about, constructivism accepts that not all statements have the same epistemic value and that there is consequently some foundation for knowledge. *(Adler 2002: 109)*

Constructivism has three basic ontological positions or assumptions. The first assumption proffers that normative or ideational structures are vitally important and matter as much as material structures (Agius 2010: 50). In other words, ideas are important and privileged. This position paints a different picture or scenario articulated by dominant IR approaches such as structural realism and neo-liberalism. For example, neo-realists regard the anarchic international system as key in explaining or determining state behaviour. Similarly, neo-liberals define state interests in material terms. In short, social constructivism focuses on ideational factors, as opposed to rationalist approaches such as structural realism and neo-liberalism, which rely on material factors in their analysis

of world politics. Furthermore, in contrast to the neo-realist approach, which regards the international structure as having a direct influence on the behaviour of states, the ideational structure has the effect to form (constitutive) and regulate (regulative), rather than influence the behaviour of actors. This mental structure also directs the actors to redefine their interests and identities. Thus, this ideational structure shapes the way actors define who they are, what their goals are, and the roles they believe they should do (Copeland, 2006: 3). More specifically as stated by Nina Tannenwald, there are four types of structures or systems of ideas in relation to the behaviour of actors: (1) shared ideologies or belief systems, (2) normative beliefs, (3) cause-effect beliefs and (4) policy prescriptions (Tannenwald 2005: 15).

The second assumption of constructivism is that identities matter. For constructivists, identities give us interests and those interests tell us something about how actors behave and the objectives they pursue (Agius 2010: 50). Put differently, actors in the international system cannot act without an identity, and identity explains the actions of actors. This assumption also challenges the neo-realist position, which simply views all states as similar. Thus, from a neo-realist angle, it may be difficult to make sense of why a state, such as the Unites States, may have antagonistic relations with one state (for example, North Korea) and friendly relations with another (say, Britain). Clearly, identity is therefore vital for constructivists. As aptly put by Alexander Wendt, "a gun in the hands of a friend is different thing from one in the hands of an enemy, and enmity is a social, not material relation" (Agius 2010: 50). Unlike, neo-realists and neo-liberals who define interests materially as power and interest, constructivists focus on ideas, beliefs and values that define these material interests. To put it differently, by focusing on how interests are obtained, developed and defined, constructivists are in a better position to get a better picture.

In this scenario, global politics is controlled by ideas, norms, concepts, assumptions and values that are widely owned jointly by actors inter-subjectively. With regard to the role of actors in foreign policy decision-making, the constructivists argue that ideas about specific foreign policies' issues can be owned by different groups such as organizations, decision makers, social groups or communities. According to Tannenwald, the ideas are mental constructs, which are owned by individuals, and a set of specific beliefs, principles and attitudes that provide extensive orientation to the attitudes and policies (Tannenwald 2005: 15). The constructivists focus on the inter-subjective dimension of knowledge because they want to explain the social aspect of human existence and the role of shared-ideas as a structure of ideas that limit and shape behaviour. So if the realist has the structure of the material, then constructivists also assume the existence of ideational structure (Copeland 2006: 3). In this context, constructivism is also empirical, but for constructivists, it is the structure of ideas that define the subjects of IR.

On closer inspection, constructivists are interested in "how actors define their national interests, threats to those national interests, and their interests' relationships to one another" (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013: 97). For instance, the fact that the United States perceives North Korea (a minor nuclear power) as posing greater threat than Britain (a far superior military force than North Korea), demonstrates that the identity of the potential enemy matters, not just its military capabilities and power projection. In this

regard, constructivists will cite the shared history, shared alliances and shared norms between the United States and Britain as telling both countries that they are not a threat to each other despite possessing deadly military arsenal. A related idea that is articulated by constructivists is the notion that state identities are complex and changing, and arise from interactions with other states. Such interactions are shaped by the process of socialization. As such, it is possible that over time states can re-conceptualize one another from a state of enmity to a state of friendship through socialization. For example, European countries such as Germany and Italy have assumed new identities as progressive democracies as opposed to their earlier identities of violent nationalism that triggered world wars. Similarly, Japan's identity has transformed from its earlier image of aggression and war mongering.

The third assumption of the constructivist approach is that agents and structures are mutually constituted. This position shows that actors shape the world and vice versa. In other words, human relations are inherently social, and we create the world that we live in and it influences us as well (Agius 2010: 50). As part of the agency-structure debate, constructivists would say the anarchy in the international system is not a given feature or natural part of the system, but it is an idea that actors who believe it to be so construct it. After all, didn't Alexander Wendt state that "anarchy is what states make of it". It appears that the constructivists understand the world through interactions involving agents (individuals, NGOs and the state) with the structure of the wider environment. There is a process of mutual formation between agents and structures. For example, if an international actor such as state said that its foreign policy promote a particular interest, then the constructivist attempt to understand this by exploring how that interest has been constructed through a process of interactions with the wider environment. Therefore, the constructivist emphasizes the importance of meanings and at the same time assumes the existence of reality. According to Zehfuss (2002: 4), states may defend their own interests, but they continue to redefine what is meant by realizing their own interests.

It is clear from the above discussion that constructivism puts IR in the context of broader social relations or interaction. As is evident in this chapter, constructivists have pointed out that far from an objective reality, global politics is a "world of our making" (Fierke 2007: 168). For constructivists, the social and political world, including global politics, is not a physical or material entity like the solar system, which exists outside human consciousness. As a result, approaches to IR must focus on the ideas, norms and beliefs that inform the actors in the international system as well as shared norms and understandings between them (Jackson & Sorensen 2007: 160).

Types of Constructivist Approaches

Basically, constructivists have not sung from the same hymn sheet and what entails constructivism has been changing over time (Fierke 2007). Like other theoretical approaches, it comes in different shapes. There are two major strands of constructivism, namely, conventional constructivism and critical (including radical constructivism). Modernist or conventional constructivism is dominated by North American academics, especially the United States, while the conventional form is dominated by European academics.

Notable modern constructivists include Alexander Wendt and as for critical constructiv-ists, the names that readily come to mind include Krachtochwill and Onuf. Radical or critical constructivism shares a lot in common with critical theory and the postmodernist approach. What divides the two camps tend to center around questions of methodol-ogy, and how identity is treated. Modern or conventional constructivism is a form of constructivism that gravitates towards rationalism and accept key notions of neo-realist theorizing, such as the centrality of the scientific method as well that of the state. Some mild version of this approach proffers the idea that there can be a synergy between ratio-nalist approaches (e.g., neo-realism) and reflectivist approaches (mainly postmodernism and critical theory). In other words, this version support the view that constructivism should occupy the middle ground. However, critical constructivists contend that this version of constructivism is contradictory and problematic (Agius 2010). On the other hand, critical constructivism suggests that language structures our reality and has a con-stitutive effect, something that conventional constructivists downplay. It is therefore not surprising that this divergence of approaches has created a positivist and post-positivist dichotomy in the constructivist discourse. Moreover, the two versions also differ in their handling of identity. For critical constructivists is much more complicated and complex than acknowledged by conventional constructivists. The latter end is to view identity as uniform, ignoring questions of power and representation (Aguis 2010).

Reflections

Constructivism is a relatively new but well developed approach in IR. It has attracted significant attention from many scholars in IR because it offers new and fresh ideas that have shook IR theory. At the broadest level, constructivism in IR challenges the way in which both neo-realism and neo-liberalism approach the international system. Despite its popularity amongst scholars in IR, social constructivism has its share of skeptics. Realists, for instance, point out that norms are simply covers for state or personal in-terests (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2013). Liberals argue that constructivists downplay the importance of formal institutions and the politics within them. Meanwhile, rational-ists criticize constructivism because its claims or positions cannot be tested empirically. Norms, values and identities are treated as abstract and hence unobservable. Some crit-ics suggest that constructivism may result in uncritical and apolitical analysis of politics because it takes reality as given, thereby suppressing other alternatives (Agius 2010). However, defined or conceptualized, social constructivism has become an increasingly important approach to the study of IR.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we introduce readers to the dominant theories that try to explain IR. Thus, the main purpose of this part of the book is to give an overview of the most influ-ential theoretical paradigms in the study of IR: realism, liberalism and social construc-tivism. Notably, the history of IR theory has been marked by a stiff rivalry between the various strands of realism and liberalism.

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