



EDO UNIVERSITY IYAMHO EDO STATE, NIGERIA.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMIN
Pol 316 - Theories of International Relations

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Lectures: Tuesday, 8am-10am, LC7, Thursday, 11am-12pm, LC2,

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General overview of the lecture:

- The study of International Relations takes a wide range of theoretical approaches. Some emerge from within the discipline itself; others have been imported, in whole or in part, from disciplines such as Economics or Sociology. Indeed, few social scientific theories have not been applied to the study of relations amongst nations. Many theories of International Relations are internally and externally contested, and few scholars believe only in one or another. In spite of this diversity, several major schools of thought are discernable, differentiated principally by the variables they emphasize. We shall start with the origins of the theoretical study of International Relations, the traditional, scientific and post behavioral schools in International Relations and then move on to the various theories, for example, Systems Theory, Functional Theory, Decision Making Theory, Simulation and Games Theories. Finally we shall get down to the application and utility of these theories.

Prerequisite:

- Essentially, you are expected to be familiar with the main theories and models applied in the study of international relations, their ambitions, achievements and limitations; have substantive knowledge of the cases covered by the course; have developed a critical approach to current debates and issues in world politics and the discipline of international relations; and have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written presentation and communication. This assumption is based on the fact that you are expected to build on the foundation knowledge you acquired during the introductory courses you undertook in Year 11. Having said that, you are supposed to be intelligent consumers of news about international issues and events. And as you become familiar with the various approaches to the study of International Relations, and with their particular strengths and weaknesses, you will be able more readily to identify the options available to international actors and the constraints within which they operate.

Learning outcomes:

At the end of the course, students should:

- a) be familiar with the main theories and models applied in the study of International Relations, their ambitions, achievements and limitations;
- b) have substantive knowledge of the cases covered by the course;
- c) have developed a critical approach to current debates and issues in world politics and the discipline of International Relations; and
- d) have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written presentation and communication.

Assignments

- We shall have four continuous assessment tasks; the four assessment tasks are seen as complementary opportunities for the students to show the extent to which they have achieved the course objectives. All assessment tasks have at their centre, reflection of knowledge issues but this reflection is demonstrated differently in each. The emphasis in the in-class and mid semester test is on demonstrating an understanding of knowledge. It is thus, distinguished from the quizzes/presentations and the assignment tasks, where students are required to show their thinking skills in the analysis of international politics, diplomacy, foreign policy and various theoretical persuasions that may be primarily conceptual, current and contending in nature.

Grading/Course Assessment Marking Scheme

Assessment	Marks
In-Class Test	10 marks
Home work	10 marks
Mid semester Test	10 marks
End of Semester Examination	70 marks
Total	100%

Reading Lists:

1. Akpotor, A. S. (2012). Theoretical Foundations of International Relations. Benin City: Allen Publications.
2. Adeniran, T. (1982). Introduction to International Relations. Ibadan: Macmillan Press.
3. Baldwin, D. A. (1993). Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate. Columbia: University Press New York.
4. Beer, F. A. (1970). Alliances: Latent War Communities in the Contemporary World. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc.
5. Deutsch, K. W. (1988). The Analysis of International Relations. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall International Inc.
6. Isaak, A. C. (1985). Scope and Methods of Political Science. Illinois: The Dorsey Press.
7. Johnston, A. I. (1995). Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History Princeton: University Press Princeton.

Reading List Contd:

8. Holsti, K. J. (1995). International Politics: A Framework for Analysis. New York: PrenticeHall International, Inc.,
9. Nwachukwu, C. B. (1997). Themes and Concepts in International Affairs and Diplomacy. Owerri: Chitolynn Printers and Publishers.
10. Okere, J. O. (1998). International Relations: Theories of Preferential Behaviour. Owerri: Achugo Publications.
11. Palmer, N. D. and Perkins H. C. (1999) International Relations. New Delhi: S. K. Jain Publishers.
12. Powell, R. (1999). In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics (Princeton University Press Princeton 1999).
13. Rourke, J.T. (1997). International Politics on the World Stage. Connecticut: McGraw-Hill.
14. Spiegel, S. L. and Wehling, F. L. (1999). World Politics in a New Era. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Pub.
15. Waltz, K. N. (1979). Theory of International Politics, New York: Random House.

Courseware - Pol 316----Theories of International Relations

➤ **THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- i. The concept
- ii. scope
- iii. purpose of International Relations.

➤ **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- iv. The concept of Theory
- v. The Components of Theory
- vi. The Purpose and Need for Theory.

Courseware Contd:

➤ **BASIC THEORIES AND CONCEPTS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- vii. Realism and Neo-Realism
- viii. Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism
- ix. Constructivism/Functionalism
- x. Marxism and Neo-Marxism
- xi. Anarchy Vs Critical Theory
- xii. English School
- xiii. World System Theory –Immanuel Wallerstein
- xiv. Feminism/Decision Making Theory
- xv. Games Theory
- xvi. Balance of Power

Unit 1:

- **The Concept, Scope and Purpose of International Relations.**

What is International Relations?

- People sometimes tend to equate or regard international relations as simply the relations between governments of states. The fundamental attribute of any state is a well-organized government which conducts its foreign relations with other states.

Meaning of Int'l Relations Contd:

- International relations, as an academic discipline, provides us with a better knowledge of the underlying foreign policies of states. Students of international relations are thus concerned with the study of the international political system and the relationship existing among the members of the system.

- IR can be viewed also as the sum total of activities and intercourse between two or more states. International relations encompass private and public activities among individuals and states.
- Students of international Relations are thus concerned with the study of the international political system and the relationship existing among the members of the system.

Scopes of International Relations.

- a) International Politics**
- b) Foreign Policy Analysis**
- c) Diplomacy**
- d) Strategic Studies**
- e) International Organizations**
- f) International Economic Relations**

Purpose of International Relations

1. The study of IR arises from the variations that exist between nation- states that make up the international system.
2. The need to understand and seek solutions to problems common to world community.
3. To foster international cooperation.
4. The need to discover alternatives to end the threats of nuclear war, and international action against political violence and terrorism.

UNIT 2 The Concept of Theory in International Relations.

What is Theory?

- A **theory** is a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.
- A *theory* provides reasoning for why something may occur or explain patterns in behaviour.
- **Theory** explains how some aspect of human behaviour or performance is organized. It thus enables us to make predictions about that behavior.

Definition of Theory Contd:

- A set of assumptions, propositions, or accepted facts that attempt to provide a plausible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect (causal) relationships among a group of observed phenomenon.
- A scientific ***theory*** is a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world, based on a body of facts that have been repeatedly confirmed through observation and experiment. Such fact-supported ***theories*** are not "guesses" but reliable accounts of the real world.

The Components of Theory

They are:

- a) Concept: A **concept** is a symbolic representation of an actual thing - tree, chair, table, computer, distance, etc.
- b) Construct: **Construct** is the word for concepts with no physical reference - democracy, learning, freedom, etc. Language enables conceptualization.
- c) A **principle** expresses the relationship between two or more concepts or constructs.

In the process of theory development, one derives principles based on one's examining/questioning how things/concepts are related.

Theory of International Relations

- A **theory of international relations** is a set of ideas that explains how the **international** system works. Unlike an ideology, a **theory of international relations** is (at least in principle) backed up with concrete evidence.
- Theories of International Relations allow us to understand and try to make sense of the world around us through various lenses, each of which represents a different theoretical perspective.

Why theory is important

1. Theory allows us to explain what we see and to figure out how to bring about change. Theory is a tool that enables us to identify a problem and to plan a means for altering the situation.
2. Theory guides research.

Why theory is important Contd:

3. Theory also helps us understand what we do not know and, therefore, is the only guide to research. Relating to theory, it increases its ability to solve other problems in different times and different places.

4. Theories explain the laws of international politics or recurrent patterns of national behaviour.

Why theory is important Contd:

5. Theories attempt both to explain and predict behaviour or to understand the world 'inside the heads' of actors.
6. Theories analyse and try to clarify the use of concepts such as the balance of power.

UNIT 3: Realism and Neo-Realism

- **Realism**
- The theory rests on the theoretical assumption that nations in their international engagements act for their own benefit and not for the benefit of others unless both interests happen to agree.
- According to Waltz (1979: 88-97), realism means that the state's interest provides the spring of action, the necessities of this action arise from the unregulated competition of states.

Proponents of Realism

- Early proponents and principal scholars of realist theory were Thucydides (460- 406 B.C.) and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). Others are Carr (1939), Niebuh (1947), Kennan (1951), down to Morgenthau (1967), etc, posited that international politics is governed by objective universal laws based on national interest defined as power.

Realism Explained

- Their basic argument here is that in the contemporary world politics, conflict of interest is inevitable among states and since international politics is anarchical, states must be rational in terms of power and preservation of their national interest.
- And hence the purpose of state is national survival, so acquire power if possible through self help in order to preserve one's own national interest.

Hans J. Morgenthau and Realism

- Morgenthau (1967) defines realism as governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. The main signpost that helps realism find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power.
- From Morgenthau's definition of realism, one can rightly attribute that power and interest are variables in content. And universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in pursuit of power and safeguarding state interest.

The Central Idea of Realism

- The central idea of realist theory in international politics is all about struggle for power. The realist views international arena as a competitive ground for power over available resources. The realist scholars believe that nations act only out of self interest (national interest) and also claim that leaders of nations use their powers to advance the interest of their nations with little or no regard for morality or friendship.

Shortcomings/Criticisms of Realism

- Critics discovered some contradictions in the usage of the concepts of “power”, “national interest” and “balance of power”. For example, while Hans Morgenthau (1967) believes nations and leaders should think and act in terms of interests defined as power, diplomats are urged to exercise prudence and self-restraint, and recognize the legitimate national interests of other nations.

Shortcomings/Criticisms of Realism

Contd:

- Another criticism of the theory is in the confusion of what policies serve or constitute the national interests of nations. For instance, how do we differentiate between the interest of an individual leader from the interest of the elite group and that of the nation at large?

Neo-Realism

- The Neo-realist school of thought developed after the realist. They focus on the anarchic nature of the international system based on competition among sovereign states rather than on human nature as the factor that shapes world politics.
- According to the neorealist, the international system is based on sovereign states which answer to no higher authority in providing security and order.

Neo-Realism Contd:

- The result of such a self-help system is that each state must rely on its own resources to survive and flourish. But because there is no authoritative impartial method of settling disputes — that is no world government — states are their own judges, jurists and hangmen, and often resort to force to achieve their security interest.

The core arguments of the neo-realist

1. States and other actors interact in an anarchic environment. This means that there is no central authority to enforce rules and norms to protect the interest of larger global community;
2. The structure of the system is a major determinant of actor behavior;
3. States are self-interest oriented and an anarchic and competitive system pushes them to favour self-help over cooperative behavior;

The core arguments of the neo-realist

Contd:

4. States are rational actors, selecting strategies to maximize benefits and minimize losses;
5. The most critical problem presented by anarchy is survival; States see all other states as potential enemies and threats to their national security. This distrust and fear create a security dilemma, and this motivates the policies of most states.

Idealism/Liberalism

- It was dominant from the early 1900s through to late 1930s.
- The approach was motivated by the desire to prevent war.
- However not all idealists believed that the economic principles of free trade would lead to peace

Proponents of Idealism

- Thomas Hobbs
- Woodrow Wilson (According to him peace could only be secured with the creation of an international institution to regulate international anarchy).

Basic Assumptions of Liberalism

- Human nature is essentially good or altruistic and people are, therefore, capable of mutual aid and collaboration;
- The fundamental human concern for the welfare of others makes progress possible;
- Bad human behaviour is not a product of evil people, but of evil justifications and structural arrangement that encourage people to act selfishly and to harm others including making wars;

Basic Assumptions of Liberalism

Contd:

- War is preventable or its frequency can be reduced by eradicating the institutional arrangement that motivate people to act selfishly;
- War is an international problem that requires collective or multilateral rather than national efforts to eliminate it;
- International society must reorganise itself to eliminate the institutions that make war to likely occur.

Neo Liberalism or Liberal Institutionalism

- In the 1980s, a new Liberal critique of Realism became dominant. The approach stressed the importance of international institutions in reducing international conflict and tension.
- The argument is based on the core liberal idea that seeking long-term mutual gain is often more rational than maximizing individual short term gains.

Neo-Liberalism Contd:

- The neo-liberalist argued that states do cooperate with one another, because it is in their interest to do so. States can also use institutions to facilitate the pursuit of mutual gain.
- In spite of many sources of conflict in International Relations, states do find ways to cooperate with one another.

Neo-Liberalism Contd:

- Liberal Institutionalism suggest that the way to peace and prosperity is to have independent states pool their resources and even surrender some of their sovereignty to create integrated societies to promote economic growth or respond to regional challenges.
- The European Union today is a model of success in regional integration.

Neo-Liberalism Contd:

- Trans-nationalism and complex interdependence of the 1970s.
- That the world had become more pluralistic in terms of actors involved in international interactions and that these actors had become more dependent on each other.

Complex Inter-dependence Presented a World with Four Characteristics:

- i) increasing linkages among states and non-state actors;
- ii) a new agenda of international issues with no distinction between low and high politics;
- iii) a recognition of multiple channels for interaction among actor across national boundaries;
- iv) the decline of the efficacy of military force as a tool of statecraft.