

**A PRESENTATION ON**

**THEORIES IN INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**

CLASS- M.A.SEM -I POLITICAL SCIENCE  
COURSE TITEL: **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS : THEORIES & APPROACHES**  
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# What is Theory:

- Theories help us make sense of 'chaos' of information and events taking place all around us
- Abstraction of information for generalization and theory building
- Explanation of events and facts in a coherent manner.

## Types of Theories:

- Explanatory Theory : Descriptive why and under what conditions- events and development happen in IR.
- Interpretive Theory : Attempting to understand rather than explain- believing human understanding is a social process, used by constructive and critical theorists
- Normative Theory: Emphasise values, norms like peace, security, Human rights etc.

# Idealism

- Idealism is optimistic of human nature
- World can be made better
- Need for eliminating War, Inequality, Violence, Tyranny, Hegemony, Disarmament
- Emphasizes role of Morality and Public opinion in the affairs of nations. Kant, Gandhi, Russell, Huxley, Galtung etc.

# Realism

- **Classical Realism**

- Most dominant theory
- State is key factor in IR and must pursue Power
- War is a legitimate instrument of survival and interest articulation in International politics
- Universal Moral Principles do not exist.
- Kautilya (Manadala Theory), Machiavelli, Morgenthau – (International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power)

- **Neorealism/Structural Realism**

- States do not seek to maximize power, but merely balance it; most powerful states set the action. NATO, WARSAW Pact like STRUCTURE provide stability, balance of Power
- Kenneth Waltz

# Liberal Theories

- ❖ Liberalisms is built around concept of democracy which asserts order, liberty, justice, use of institutions and law regimes to regulate behavior of states.
- ❖ Democratic states 'love' development and well-being of their people
  - Democratic Peace Theory: Extension of liberal-democratic structures and Market Capitalism amounts to “end of history”(ideologies), thus no threat to peace-Francis Fukuyama
  - Liberal Institutionalism
    - Role of international Organizations in deterring situations of conflicts
    - Rule of Law

# Balance of Power

— Theory that states that states ally themselves with other states to balance the power of threatening states.

-How do you measure power?

- \* Soft
- \* Hard

- **Hegemonic Stability Theory**

- International stability requires a single dominant state to enforce the rules (unipolar).

- **Bipolar**

- World is divided into two power centers, like during the Cold War

- **Multi-polar**

- World is divided into many power centers

# **Critical Approaches/Theories**

- Marxism/Critical theory
- Constructivism
- PostStructuralism
- Feminism
- Green Politics
- PostColonialism

# Critical Approaches/Theories

- Challenge mainstream theories
- Gained prominence after 1980s
- Challenge global status quo, norms, values
- Believe Realism & Idealism legitimizing approaches for status quo
- Expose inequalities, asymmetries that mainstream theories ignore
- Also called emancipatory theories
- Emphasize interests of specific, people, communities and groups
- Politically engaged therefore lack rigours of scholarship and sometimes objectivity

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# Marxism / NeoMarxism/Critical Theory

- Attacks Capitalism and sees 'Power' itself a tool to augment Capitalist interests.
- International manifestation of Capitalism in form of Imperialism-the highest stage of Capitalism-Lenin
- NeoMarxism: Dependency Theory- Centre Periphery

-Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank,

# Constructivism

- Based on belief there is no objective social or political reality, independent of our understanding of it.
- Inter-subjective awareness (within the subjects)
- Individuals and social groups ‘Construct’ the world- world is not an absolute objectivity- we make sense out of it.
- Particular specific beliefs once shared widely become significant. Nation-states are not all alike
- Political culture shapes foreign policy
- Form of government shapes foreign policy
- History shapes foreign policy
- Domestic political trends and debates shape foreign policy
- Alexander Wendt- “Anarchy is what states make of it”

# Poststructuralism

- Also synonymous with Postmodernism
- All ideas and concepts are enmeshed in complex relations of power.
- Knowledge is power- Foucault
- Idea of Discourses to unleash character of power and clear ambiguity
- Deconstruction of verbal barriers to understand power in IR

# Feminism

- Half of the world is women and women and children are worst affected in war torn regions
- Brings gender concerns into the study of international politics by making use of **feminist** theory
- Key figures in IR- diplomats, policymakers, HOG/HOS, scholars still are males trained in patriarchal social and political backgrounds and values
- “War is to man what maternity is to women”- Mussolini

# Green Politics/Ecologism

- Acquired prominence since 1970s with phrases like 'Limits to growth' 1972 report on rapid economic and population **growth** but finite supply of resources- Sustainable Development
- Global Ecological Issues of global catastrophic nature- Ozone depletion, green house effect, Glacial erosion, Wide spread floods, acidic rains, toxicity of oceans.
- Emphasise balance between Human & Nature
  - Gandhi**- “*Nature has ample for everybody’s need but not greed.*”

# Postcolonialism

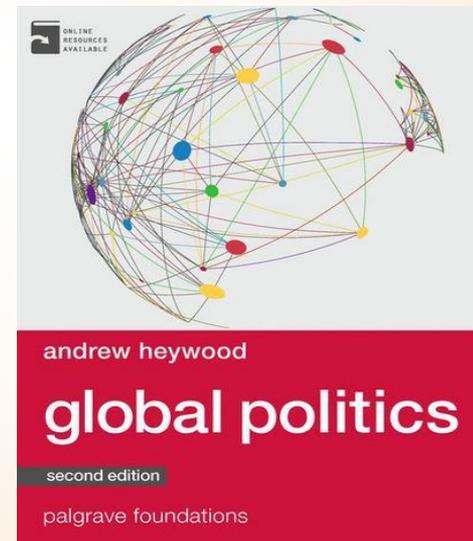
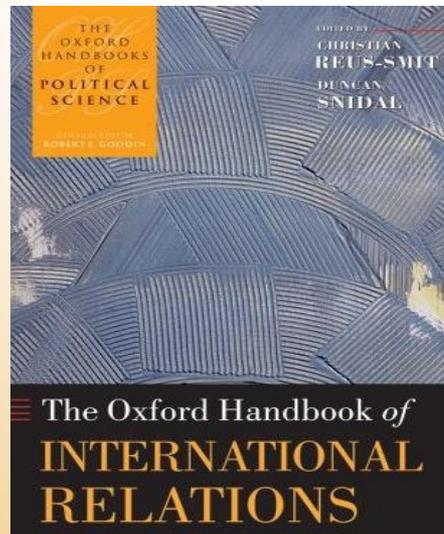
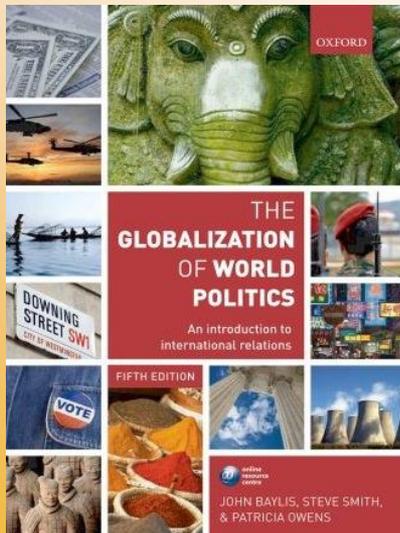
- Assert cultural dimensions of colonial rule not just economic plunder
- Against **Eurocentric / Westcentric** notion of the world politics
- Criticize **inadequacies of western scholarship** to understand the complete picture of IR
- Highlights the **ideological character of seemingly Universal ideas as Westcentric notions** like Human rights, Democracy of western Models, Globalization, Feminism, Orientalism etc.

# Conclusion

- Theories are essential for developing understanding of IR & Global Politics
- Organize our information and help develop objective and predictive analysis
- Theories are still particular and specific and not general
- New theories have made IR interdisciplinarity
- Political Science in general and IR in particular still need more precision to be at par with other social Sciences

Please refer the following texts for details:-

1. **John Baylis & others**, The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations, Oxford University Press
2. **Andrew Heywood**, Global Politics, Palgrave
3. **Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal** (Edited) The Oxford Handbook of International Relations (for Advanced Treatment)



**Thank You**