

Approaches to the Study of International Relations

Day 31 · the theory core of Paper II. Every school, scholar and debate from the Foundation & OGP class, compressed for fast recall. **Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.**

Listed PYQs on this chapter, UPSC 2016–2025: 8 × 10m · 6 × 15m · 1 × 20m.

I The Discipline & Its Evolution

I International Relations — the discipline, its scope, the word

Working definition

International Relations studies the interactions that cross national boundaries — political, economic, cultural, military and ecological — among sovereign states and a widening field of non-state actors.

Where the word comes from

- **Jeremy Bentham** coined “**international**” in the late 18th century, as the modern state system matured; a century earlier **Richard Zouche** used the Latin *intergentes* for the “law of nations” — now International Law.

Condition vs discipline — Quincy Wright

- **Quincy Wright**: IR as a **condition** is the actual state of affairs among nations (foreign policy, diplomacy, trade, conflict, war); IR as a **discipline** is the systematic, scientific study of those interactions to find patterns and anticipate developments.

International Relations vs International Politics

- **International Relations** — all cross-border interactions (the broader concept). **International Politics** — the subset centred on the struggle for power: diplomacy, war, alliances, balance of power.
- **James N. Rosenau**: the essence of IR is how states adjust national interests to those of others. **Hans Morgenthau**: international politics is the core, but economic and cultural relations also shape it. **Harold and Margaret Sprout**: all human behaviour crossing boundaries and affecting other nations. **Padelford and Lincoln**: the interaction of state policies within a changing pattern of power.

Is IR a discipline? — the status debate

- **Palmer and Perkins**: grew out of history and political science but lacked a well-organised structure — too fragmented to stand alone. **Alfred Zimmern**: a “bundle of subjects” (law, economics, political science, geography) without a unifying frame. **E. H. Carr**: early IR was “markedly and frankly utopian.”
- The failed League and the Second World War forced a more critical, analytical study — consolidating IR as a discipline.

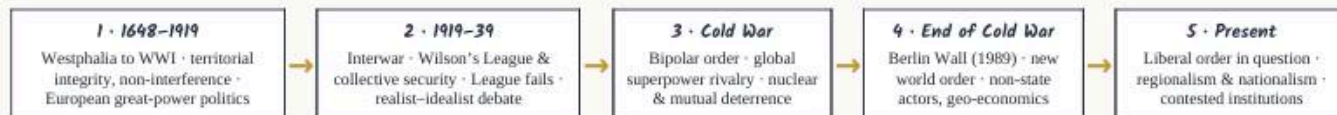
Institutionalisation

- First academic chair — University of Wales (1919). Early focus: diplomatic history and legalism. Post-Second World War: a shift to analytical, scientific method and theory-building.

2 Phases of International Politics — Westphalia to the present

Dated from the **Treaty of Westphalia (1648)**, which ended the Thirty Years’ War, established state sovereignty, and founded the modern state system.

From hard-shell states to a networked world — the evolution



Monroe Doctrine · James Monroe, 1823

The Western hemisphere is closed to further European colonisation; the US will not interfere in European affairs and expects Europe to stay out of the hemisphere; any attempt to control newly independent American states is a hostile act.

Detente · 1969–79

A thaw driven by the cost of the arms race, domestic strain and the Vietnam war. Markers: the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), China’s admission to the UN (1971), SALT (1972) and the Helsinki Agreement (1975).

The present world order

- Decline of the liberal order after the **2008 Global Financial Crisis** — state-centric geopolitics and protectionism (Crimea, Brexit).
- Rise of regionalism and nationalism — the QUAD, “America First,” Atmanirbhar Bharat.

- Contested international bodies — the Ukraine–Russia conflict exposed the limits of NATO and the UN; rising Chinese expenditure and falling US influence suggest the liberal order is waning.

3 Billiard Ball vs Cobweb — two images of world politics

The state as hard shell, or society as network

Billiard Ball · Arnold Wolfers

Westphalian, realist assumptions · states as impenetrable hard shells colliding in anarchy · the Cold War era



Cobweb · John Burton

Liberal complex interdependence · society-centric · many cross-border channels (MNCs, NGOs, trade groups, universities) · the post-Cold War era

- Baylis** and **Steve Smith**: territories became less relevant and domestic and international politics increasingly overlapped — the billiard-ball world was supplanted by the cobweb world.
- Drivers of the shift: globalisation opened the hard shell to flows of people, capital, information and culture; **David Ricardo**'s comparative advantage worked through global supply chains, moving politics from geopolitics to geo-economics; **Keohane** and **Nye** read the era through complex interdependence; **Joseph Nye** notes states now influence others through consent (soft power). A partial swing back to the billiard-ball image is visible as states rebuild internal capacity.

4 The Great Debates in IR theory

Each debate set the terms of the next

I · Realism / Idealism

Interwar · Wilson's League vs power politics · Carr's critique; realism prevails



II · Traditionalism / Behaviouralism

1960s · method: science & testing (Kaplan) vs interpretation (Bull)



III · Neorealism / Neoliberalism

Inter-paradigm · Waltz reboots realism; complex interdependence; the Neo-Neo synthesis



IV · Rationalism / Reflectivism

Mid-1980s · positivists vs feminism, constructivism, critical theory

- E. H. Carr** (*The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 1939) delivered the decisive critique of pure idealism; German, Italian and Japanese aggression exposed the League's impotence. **Lucian Ashworth** argues the realist–idealist gap was exaggerated; **John Mearsheimer** notes idealism survives in the English School.
- The **reflectivists** (postmodernism, feminism, constructivism, critical theory) reject positivist method; **Keohane** challenged them to test their claims, and the polarised debate settled into methodological pluralism.

II Realism

5 Realism — meaning and intellectual precursors

Realism (Political Realism, Realpolitik): international relations are governed by self-interest, power and a state-centric worldview. Rooted in **Thucydides** and **Sun Tzu**, it crystallised in the 20th century as a reaction against idealism's claim of a fundamental harmony of interests. **Classical Realism** (post-Second World War) locates conflict in **human nature** — **E. H. Carr**, **Reinhold Niebuhr**, **Hans Morgenthau**.

- Thucydides** — *History of the Peloponnesian War*; the Melian Dialogue: the strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must. **Robert Gilpin** reads him as a realist of honour, greed and fear.
- Kautilya** — *Arthashastra*; national interest and power. **Roger Boesche** calls him the “first great realist”; **Henry Kissinger** reads his blend of realpolitik with *dharma* as idealism plus pragmatism.
- Niccolo Machiavelli** — *The Prince*; separates politics from morality; **raison d'état** — whatever serves the state is permissible.
- Thomas Hobbes** — *Leviathan*; the state of nature mirrors international anarchy without a sovereign; adopted later by Morgenthau and Waltz.
- E. H. Carr** — *The Twenty Years' Crisis*; morality is relative to power; states prioritise power when interests clash.

“Men live without other security than what their strength and their invention shall furnish them withal.” — **Thomas Hobbes**, *Leviathan*

6 Classical Realism — Hans Morgenthau

Hans Morgenthau, a refugee from fascist Germany, turned realism into a theoretical framework in *Politics Among Nations*.

“International politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.” — **Hans Morgenthau**

Six Principles of Political Realism

- Objective laws in human nature** — politics runs on permanent laws; understanding them yields a rational theory of IR.
- National interest defined as power** — the “master key”; judge outcomes, not motives or ideology.
- Interest is dynamic** — interest-as-power is constant, but its content shifts with context.
- Abstract morals cannot dictate politics** — states are guided by **prudence**, the practical judgement of outcomes.
- National moral aspirations are not universal morals** — states cloak interest in moral language; power, not morality, drives them.
- Autonomy of international politics** — a distinct sphere of power and interest, separate from the moral, legal and economic domains.

Classification of states — via diplomacy, deterrence, balance of power

- **Status-quo** (the USA) · **revisionist** (China, Russia) · **imperialist / expansionist** (historical Germany).

Critiques

- **Stanley Hoffmann** — one-sided; ignores cooperation. **Kenneth Waltz** — a theory built on unpredictable human nature is unscientific. **J. Ann Tickner** — masculinist; neglects ethics and human security.

UPSC 2017 · 20m Is the Realist approach the best method to understand International Relations? Examine this in the context of Classical Realism.

7 Thucydides' Trap and the Melian Dialogue

- **Thucydides' Trap** — tension between a status-quo power and a rising revisionist power makes conflict highly probable as the rising power disrupts the order (read onto China's rise).
- Power supersedes justice; survival rests on strength; **self-help** is the only reliable strategy in anarchy.
- The **Melian Dialogue** — the dominant Athenians assert "might makes right" and dismiss the weaker Melians' appeals to justice as naive. It captures the **security dilemma**: the tragic choice between survival and ethics.

8 Neo-Realism (Structural Realism) — Kenneth Waltz

Structural Realism imported the methods of modern social science (game theory, quantitative analysis), replacing Morgenthau's normative reasoning with structural explanation. **Kenneth Waltz**, in *Theory of International Politics*, drew a market analogy: states resemble firms, aiming above all for survival; **self-help** governs, with no authority to enforce order.

- **Anarchy as structure** — no central authority; states are functionally alike, distinguished only by capabilities (power), not function.
- **Ordering principle** — domestic politics is hierarchic; international politics is anarchic (functionally similar, sovereign units).
- **Barriers to cooperation** — insecurity (intentions cannot be verified, prompting arms races) and **relative gains** (not whether I gain, but whether my gains outweigh others').
- **Levels of analysis** — individual, domestic and international; for Waltz the systemic level is decisive and leaders are relatively unimportant because structure compels them.

Three core assumptions of neorealism

The world is anarchic · sovereign states are the main actors · the distribution of capabilities is decisive — only a relative change in it transforms the system. Waltz conceded only a single structural change since Westphalia.

"In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states seek such other goals as tranquillity, profit, and power." — **Kenneth Waltz**

UPSC 2021 · 15m Discuss the emergence of neo-realism and its basic tenets.

9 Defensive vs Offensive Realism

Within neorealism, scholars divide over how much power a state needs for security.

- **Defensive Realism** (**Kenneth Waltz**; **Jack Snyder**; **Stephen Van Evera**) — states are **security maximisers**, seeking equilibrium, not hegemony; excessive power provokes balancing, and conquest is often costlier than its gains.
- **Offensive Realism** (**John Mearsheimer**, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*) — states are **power maximisers**, seeking regional hegemony; balancing is unreliable (states buck-pass), and potential hegemons inevitably strive to become actual ones. China's rise will not be peaceful. Strategies: direct (war, blackmail) and indirect (buck-passing, bait and bleed, bloodletting).

	<i>John Mearsheimer (Offensive Realism)</i>	<i>Kenneth Waltz (Defensive Realism)</i>
Primary objective	Power maximisation; pursuit of hegemony	Security maximisation; survival
Perception of threat	States are perpetual threats due to offensive capabilities	States seek balance; conflict arises from security concerns
Security dilemma	Amplified by offensive intentions and capabilities	Exists but is contained as states seek stability
Globalisation	Power politics persist despite globalisation	Anarchy drives competition, but excessive power-seeking is rare

Waltz held bipolar systems are more stable (fewer great powers, simpler deterrence); **Mearsheimer** applied this to predict that post-Cold War multipolar Europe would see more crises. **Robert Jervis**: the **security dilemma** spirals through "illusory fears and unnecessary defences."

UPSC 2023 · 15m What do you mean by offensive and defensive realism?

UPSC 2018 · 10m Bring out the major differences between the Classical Realism of Hans Morgenthau and the Neorealism of Kenneth Waltz.

10 Strategic, Neoclassical and Subaltern Realism

Strategic Realism · Thomas Schelling

- **Thomas Schelling** applies game theory to strategic interaction; diplomacy is rational and success-oriented, not moral. **Brute force** takes directly; **coercion** holds the power to hurt in reserve — threats are most potent when the capacity to harm is not used. Nuclear deterrence depends on the adversary's alternatives; strategy over ethics.

Neoclassical Realism

- Synthesises neorealism and classical realism: structure sets the “broad parameters,” but domestic politics and leaders’ perceptions are **intervening variables**. **Gideon Rose** (coined the term), **Stephen M. Walt** (perception of power), **Randall Schweller** (status-quo vs revisionist interests), **Fareed Zakaria** (state strength), **Thomas Christensen** (domestic mobilisation), **Steven Lobell**, **Norrin Ripsman** and **Jeffrey Taliaferro**. Richer explanation of foreign policy, but less parsimonious.

Subaltern Realism

- Mohammad Ayoob** reads state behaviour in the Third World: recently decolonised states face not only the **security dilemma** but an **insecurity dilemma** — internal threats from unfinished nation-building. Allied scholars: **Ayesha Jalal** (colonial legacies, Pakistan), **Arundhati Roy** (global inequality), **Dipesh Chakrabarty** (*Provincialising Europe*).

II Realism — schools compared, critique, present relevance

School	Cause of state behaviour & character
Classical	Human nature; flexible on motivation, perception and prudence
Neorealism	Structure (anarchy + capabilities); generalising, plays down history and domestic life
Neoclassical	Hybrid: structure sets parameters, domestic politics and elites intervene
Subaltern	Colonial history, global inequality, the marginalised state at the centre

Criticism of realism

- Over-emphasis on power and conflict; cannot explain peace. Misreads anarchy — the UN and Chapter VII collective security challenge perpetual anarchy. State-centric limits — non-state actors and transnational issues blur boundaries (**Keohane** and **Nye** on complex interdependence). Failed to predict the Soviet collapse. **Jeffrey Legro** and **Andrew Moravcsik** — a degenerating paradigm (“Is everybody now a realist?”).
- Wider critiques: **Martin Wight** (realism, rationalism, revolutionism); **Ken Booth** (human security and emancipation); **Andrew Linklater** (global justice); constructivists (**Richard Ashley**, **Robert Cox** — structural realism is “problem-solving theory”); feminists (**Tickner**, **V. Spike Peterson**).

Contemporary relevance

- The state remains the dominant unit; interdependence has not abolished war. **Russia–Ukraine** — neorealists read balance of power and NATO expansion, classical realists Putin’s drive for prestige, neoclassical realists domestic politics. **Indo-Pacific** — a rising China balanced by India, Japan and the USA. **India–Canada** — a neoclassical reading (external security plus diaspora politics).

UPSC 2022 · 15m What is the realist prescription to the States to ensure their survival in an anarchical world?

III Liberalism & the Idealist School

12 Liberalism and the Idealist School

Liberalism stresses the potential for **cooperation** within anarchy; humans are rational and can shape their destiny. The liberals’ “children of light” against the realists’ “children of darkness”: war is blamed not on anarchy but on imperialism, the failure of the balance of power, or undemocratic governance — with collective security, commerce and world government as remedies.

Core assumptions of idealism

Per **Hoffmann**, liberalism’s essence is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace; its pillars are institutions, interdependence and democracy. Individuals are the primary actors; state interests are dynamic (self- and other-regarding); interests are shaped by domestic and international conditions; mutual interests can sustain cooperation without a hegemon; human nature is essentially good (bad behaviour is the product of bad institutions).

- Coulombis and Wolfe**: for idealists “politics is the art of good government, not the art of the possible.” Supporters: **Gandhi**, **Bertrand Russell**, **Woodrow Wilson**, **Aldous Huxley**, **William Ladd**, **Richard Cobden**, **Margaret Mead**.
- Peace-building: **Immanuel Kant** (*Perpetual Peace* — republican constitutionalism, a federal contract between states); **Woodrow Wilson** (a rule-based institution, collective security, self-determination); **Michael Doyle** (democratic peace). Contemporary: the UN, security communities (**Karl Deutsch**, ASEAN), the SDGs, the Paris Agreement.

Intellectual precursors

- John Locke** (government by consent, limited government) · **Immanuel Kant** (republican democracy and commerce restrain war) · **Adam Smith** (the invisible hand, gains from free trade) · **Richard Cobden** (free trade builds peace) · **Norman Angell** (*The Great Illusion* — in an interconnected world, war is economically futile) · **Jeremy Bentham** (utilitarianism; an early international court) · **Woodrow Wilson** (the Fourteen Points).

“A world full of human happiness is not beyond human power to achieve.” — **Bertrand Russell**

UPSC 2020 · 10m What are the core assumptions of idealism as an approach to study international relations? Explain its continuing relevance in peace building.

UPSC 2024 · 10m Explain the various facets of the idealist approach to the study of international relations. Comment on its contemporary relevance.

13 The strands of Liberalism

Liberal Institutionalism

- Institutions mitigate anarchy and enable cooperation. **Woodrow Wilson**: institutions convert the “jungle into a zoo.” **Hedley Bull** concedes institutions moved IR to an “anarchical society”; the WHO and WTO acted during the pandemic beyond single-state capacity; **Nina Tannenwald** on the nuclear taboo shows their preventive role. Criticism: often “toothless tigers” (Russia’s Security Council veto; the unresolved Israel–Palestine question).

Sociological Liberalism

- John Burton** — the cobweb model, dense society-to-society ties. **Karl Deutsch** — the **security community**, where large-scale violence becomes unthinkable through shared values and communication (the transatlantic region, the EU, ASEAN). Track 2 and Track 3 diplomacy.

Functionalism and Neo-Functionalism

- David Mitrany** — functionalism (“peace by pieces”); **form follows function** — cooperation works on technical tasks done better together, building institutions. The assumption that loyalties would transfer from the state to functional bodies proved unworkable given the legitimacy of the nation-state. **Ernst B. Haas** — neo-functionalism (“federalism by instalments”) and the **spillover effect**: cooperation in one area (coal and steel) leads to political integration (the EU). Criticism: rests almost solely on the European experiment; the Westphalian state has not faded; charged with Eurocentrism.

Interdependence Liberalism

- Thomas L. Friedman** — the Golden Arches Theory (no two countries with McDonald’s have gone to war). **Richard Rosecrance** — the **Trading State**: power through economic means (Japan, West Germany). Criticism: trade does not guarantee peace; economic determinism.

Democratic Peace Theory

- Michael W. Doyle** (from Kant), with **Bruce Russett** and **James Lee Ray** — **dyadic** peace (democracies do not fight each other) and **monadic** peace. Reasons: institutional constraints, shared norms, interdependence. Criticism: **Douglas Gibling** and **Andrew Owsiak** — peace often precedes democracy; India and Pakistan, both democracies, have fought repeatedly.

Complex Interdependence

- Robert O. Keohane** and **Joseph S. Nye** — a descriptive theory: multiple channels; no hierarchy of issues (military security is not always primary); a minor role for military force. Criticism: struggles with rising defence budgets and open conflict (Ukraine, Iraq).

Neo-Liberalism and the Neo-Neo debate

Keohane (After Hegemony) and **Robert Axelrod** (The Evolution of Cooperation) accept anarchy but stress cooperation; institutions reduce transaction costs and set norms.

Question	Neo-realists	Neo-liberals
Gains	Competition; relative gains	Cooperation; absolute gains
Institutions	Sceptical — reflect power	Facilitators of cooperation
Issue areas	Security (“high politics”)	Economic and social (“low politics”)

Joseph Grieco — states ask “Who will gain more?” **Mearsheimer** (The False Promise of International Institutions) — institutions reflect the distribution of power. **Krasner** — neo-liberalism neglects capabilities. The gap narrowed into a **Neo-Neo Synthesis**.

UPSC 2018 · 15m Critically examine the Functionalist approach to the study of International Relations.

UPSC 2023 · 15m In what ways does the functionalist approach in international relations help in maintaining peace and order in global politics?

UPSC 2025 · 10m “Neo-liberalism lightened neo-realism’s dark view of international politics.” Comment.

14 The Liberal World Order

- John Ikenberry** — three phases: **1.0** (after WWI, Wilson’s institutional liberalism, collapsed with WWII); **2.0** (after WWII, the US-led UN, IMF and GATT, dormant during the Cold War); **3.0** (after the Cold War, LPG reforms, peaking with the WTO in 1995).
- Ian Bremmer** — the shift from the G-8 to the G-20, and a “G-Zero” world lacking central leadership.
- Robert Kagan** — the order is in decline: challenged externally by dissatisfied powers (China, Russia) and internally by a crisis of self-confidence.
- Challenges: legitimacy (the US’s own breaches — the 2003 Iraq invasion, exit from the Iran deal), equity (uneven democracy; post-colonial constraints), and self-confidence. The 2008 crisis, protectionism, Brexit, “America First,” the pandemic and the Ukraine war signal a tipping point.

IV Marxist Approaches

15 Marxist Approaches — assumptions and imperialism

Marxism offers a critical framework centred on **economic structures** and **class relations**. It draws not from Marx’s diplomacy but from later interpretations, and is often called a “Critical Theory” for its commitment to radical change; from **Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels**, it shifts attention from international politics to **international political economy**.

Basic assumptions

Society and culture cannot be separated from the economic system · classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat), not states, are the primary actors · world politics operates within a capitalist world-system with a **core-periphery** structure · the system is inherently conflictual · **historical materialism** — material conditions shape social and political structures.

Three traditions: the Instrumentalist / Dependency / Orthodox school, the Critical / Frankfurt school, and the Gramscian school.

- **Marx and Engels** — proletarian internationalism; bourgeois greed drives capitalism's global expansion.
- **Vladimir Lenin** — *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916): mature capitalism produces monopolies; the export of capital yields imperialism, dividing the world into wealthy and exploited nations; imperialism is capitalism's final stage, ending in revolution.
- **J. A. Hobson** — *Imperialism: A Study*; tied imperialism to the malfunctioning of capitalism. **Kenneth Waltz** called Lenin's theory "elegant and powerful."

16 Dependency and World-Systems Theory

The Dependency School (1960s–70s)

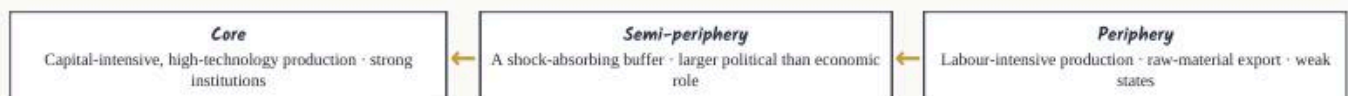
- A counter to modernisation theory. Scholars: **Andre Gunder Frank**, **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**, **Samir Amin**, **Raul Prebisch**, **Immanuel Wallerstein**. The **development of underdevelopment** — integration into global capitalism produces underdevelopment in the periphery; unequal exchange reinforces dependency. **Prebisch**: the centre-periphery model; protection and industrialisation. Criticism: over-external; ignores internal governance.

World-Systems Theory · Immanuel Wallerstein

Definition

"A world-system is a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence" — a multicultural territorial division of labour, integrated through the market since the sixteenth century.

One capitalist world-economy, three structural positions



Unequal exchange — surplus flows periphery to core (Wallerstein: perpetual)

- Nation-states are variables; imperialism is the domination of the periphery by core states; hegemony is one core state temporarily outstripping the rest, and is temporary. Criticism: **Arrighi** and **Drangel** (generalisation, not falsifiable), **Robert Brenner** (neglects social class), **Theda Skocpol** (blurs state and business), **Ramon Grosfoguel** (economy over culture), and Eurocentrism; China does not fit neatly. It still explains persistent impoverishment in Africa and Latin America.

UPSC 2024 · 10m Explain the central tenets of the World-Systems Theory.

UPSC 2017 · 15m Examine the World-Systems approach as developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.

17 Gramsci and Cox · Critical Theory · New Marxism

- **Antonio Gramsci** — **hegemony** as consent plus coercion: political society (coercion) and civil society (consent, which manufactures agreement); the superstructure stresses culture and ideology over the purely economic.
- **Robert Cox** — *Social Forces, States and World Orders*; integrates ideas, institutions and material capabilities. Structural realism is "problem-solving theory" that accepts the prevailing order, against critical theory that contemplates alternatives; international organisations spread the hegemon's norms by co-opting peripheral elites.
- Critical Theory — **Max Horkheimer** and the Frankfurt School (knowledge is socially situated; the goal is human emancipation); **Jurgen Habermas** (communicative action, discourse ethics; a dual moral identity); **Andrew Linklater** (the state is inclusionary and exclusionary; cosmopolitan citizenship).
- New Marxism — **Justin Rosenberg** (*The Empire of Civil Society*); globalisation is not recent but intrinsic to capitalism; **uneven and combined development**.

Criticism and relevance

- **Edward Said** — Marx as "orientalist"; **John M. Hobson** — Eurocentric; realists — a reductionist view of the state. Relevance: **David Harvey** ("accumulation by dispossession"; the "race to the bottom" in labour standards); **Thomas Piketty** (a world of haves and have-nots); against **Francis Fukuyama's End of History**, rising inequality keeps the critique alive. The point is not merely to interpret the world but to change it.

"Theory is always for someone and for some purpose." — **Robert Cox**

UPSC 2022 · 10m Discuss the commonalities between the Marxist and Realist approaches to the study of International Politics.

UPSC 2021 · 10m "Marxist approach to the study of international relations has lost its relevance in the post-Cold War era." Comment.

V The Other Approaches

18 The International Society School (English School)

A middle path between classical realism and liberalism, treating IR as a **society of states** and statecraft as central. Proponents: **Hedley Bull** and **Martin Wight**, rooted in the British academic tradition.

- **System** — interaction based on power politics; **society** — interaction based on shared norms. As more states accept international norms, anarchy gradually changes into society. The Cold War reduced US–USSR relations to a "system."

- Critique of structural realism: anarchy is not permanent. Three goals (Bull): preventing war, enforcing agreements, limiting violence — through the balance of power, international law and the great powers. **New medievalism** and shared / overlapping sovereignty. Inspiration: **Hugo Grotius** (father of International Law), **Immanuel Kant**, **R. J. Vincent**.

"There is less anarchy in international politics than in the domestic politics of any third-world country." — Hedley Bull

19 Social Constructivism

Developed in the 1980s: the social world — even anarchy — is our creation, the product of ideas, norms and thoughts. Scholars: **Alexander Wendt**, **Nicholas Onuf**, **Peter Katzenstein**, **Nina Tannenwald**.

- Meaning is given through **interaction**; if the arrangement of ideas changes, the system changes. Elements (Wendt): material resources, shared knowledge, practices. In a security dilemma states foresee worst cases; in a security community they trust one another.
- Intellectual roots: **Giambattista Vico**, **Kant**, **Max Weber**. Three **cultures of anarchy** (Wendt): Hobbesian, Lockean, Kantian.
- **Martha Finnemore** — norms are embedded in international society and transmitted via international organisations, which are autonomous actors, not innocent servants of states. **Peter Katzenstein** locates identity in national-security discourse; **Alastair Johnston** finds a realpolitik strategic culture in China.
- Criticism: **Krasner** and **Copeland** (deceptive actors); **Mearsheimer** (why was realism dominant from c. 1300 to 1989?); **Robert Jervis** (how are norms and identities formed?).

"Anarchy is what we make of it." — Alexander Wendt

"Five hundred British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than five North Korean nuclear weapons because the British are friends and North Koreans are not." — Alexander Wendt

20 Feminism in International Relations

Feminism emerged against the male-dominated discourse of traditional IR, arguing that **gender** is at the core of world politics. Studied as empirical, analytical and normative feminism.

Empirical feminism

- **Cynthia Enloe** — women have always been part of IR if we choose to see them; reflected in UN gender mainstreaming. Globalisation produces an internationalised gender division of labour (migrant Third-World women as cheap labour; the Bangladesh garment-factory fire; the ILO on "gender depletion"). **Goldstein** — greater domestic gender inequality makes states more likely to use force.

Analytical feminism

- Exposes the gender bias in IR's key concepts; the **public-private division** obscures gendered power. **Enloe** — states depend on a particular construction of the private sphere. **Ann Towns** — a state's standing partly rests on how it ranks others on gender equality.

Tickner's reformulation of Morgenthau's six principles

Concept	J. Ann Tickner's reformulation
Human nature	Both masculine and feminine; "objectivity" is culturally defined as masculine, and so partial
National interest	Dynamic, multidimensional and contingent; not definable solely as power
Power	Not only domination; framing it as control privileges masculinity and ignores collective empowerment
Political action and morality	All political action has moral significance; politics and morality cannot be separated
Universal moral principles	Seeks moral commonality in human aspirations as a basis for solidarity
Autonomous sphere	A narrowly autonomous politics excludes important concerns

Security, schools, scholars

- Feminist security is **bottom-up**, multidimensional and layered, with women as agents; it questions the state as the sole provider of security (the "insecurity of security"; the protection myth). Schools: liberal feminism (Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, 1992; Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 2000) and radical feminism (roots in capitalism and patriarchy — **Nancy Fraser**, **Sylvia Walby**). **Carol Cohn** (*Sex and Death*) — the sanitised language of nuclear warfare hides its human cost; **V. Spike Peterson** — intersectionality of gender, race and class.
- Criticism: essentialism; over-emphasis on gender at the expense of race and class (**Kimberle Crenshaw** on intersectionality); a Western-centric bias (**Said**, **Spivak**).

21 Postcolonialism

A critical approach that challenges the Eurocentric foundations of mainstream IR, developed largely by Global South scholars to decolonise world politics. Its premise: the **colonial legacy** continues to shape former colonies and the global system.

- **Edward Said** — *Orientalism* (1978); the Western construction of the Orient as inferior justified domination. Criticism: **John M. Hobson** finds it over-cultural, inattentive to global capitalism.
- **Gayatri Spivak** — "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988); the subaltern cannot truly speak within colonial structures of power; Subaltern Studies (**Ranajit Guha**, **Dipesh Chakrabarty**). Criticism: the stress on silence may portray the colonised as passive (**Lila Abu-Lughod**).

- **Homi K. Bhabha** — *The Location of Culture* (1994); **hybridity** and **mimicry** (imitation that, through ambivalence, undermines the coloniser's authority).
- **Frantz Fanon** — *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961); colonialism is violent and dehumanising, and true decolonisation comes through struggle.

Contributions: challenging Eurocentrism; decolonising knowledge; the **insecurity dilemma** of the Global South shaped by colonial history. Criticism: identity over economic structure; treating the Global South as homogeneous. Contemporary readings: post-imperial insecurity in Eastern Europe; colonial borders and sectarian conflict in Syria and Yemen; the partition legacy in the India–Pakistan dispute over Kashmir.

22 Systems Theory and Morton Kaplan's Models

Systems theory views global politics as a system of interacting elements — states and non-state actors within boundaries yet open to the environment. Drawn from biology, sociology and engineering, it entered political science as a product of the **Behavioural Revolution**. Types: natural, mechanical and social (the international system is the most complex). **Stanley Hoffmann** (*System and Process in International Politics*): a dynamic network in which a shift in one part reverberates across the whole.

Kaplan's classical model	Core feature
Balance of power	Five or six essential actors governed by six rules; oppose any actor that threatens the balance
Loose bipolar	Two superpowers with non-aligned states and a role for supranational bodies (the Cold War)
Tight bipolar	Hierarchic blocs with little non-alignment (the later Cold War)
Universal international	A universal actor integrating judicial, economic, political and administrative functions
Hierarchical international	A universal actor absorbs almost all others — a hegemonic order
Unit veto	Every actor can destroy every other — mutual destruction, and therefore unstable

Kaplan added four “new” models: a very loose bipolar system, detente, unstable blocs, and incomplete nuclear diffusion. Criticism: over-emphasis on structure at the expense of agency; hypothetical models that do not fit a multipolar world of non-state actors. **Stanley Hoffmann** found it too remote; **Hedley Bull** called it an intellectual exercise; **Robert Lieber** found it hard to test.

UPSC 2016 · 10m Critically examine the functional and system approaches to the study of international relations.

VI Revision & Practice

23 Power Quotes

“The strong do what they can; the weak suffer what they must.” — **Thucydides, the Melian Dialogue**

“International politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.” — **Hans Morgenthau**

“In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states seek such other goals as tranquillity, profit, and power.” — **Kenneth Waltz**

“The complete realist, unconditionally accepting the causal sequence of events, deprives himself of the possibility of changing reality.” — **E. H. Carr**

“Anarchy is what we make of it.” — **Alexander Wendt**

“Theory is always for someone and for some purpose.” — **Robert Cox**

For idealists, “politics is the art of good government, not the art of the possible.” — **Coulombis and Wolfe**

24 Scholar Index

Adam Smith · Alastair Johnston · Aldous Huxley · Alexander Wendt · Alfred Zimmermann · Andre Gunder Frank · Andrew Linklater · Andrew Moravcsik · Andrew Owsiak · Ann Towns · Antonio Gramsci · Arnold Wolfers · Arrighi · Arundhati Roy · Ayesha Jalal · Baylis · Bertrand Russell · Bruce Russett · Carol Cohn · Cardoso · Copeland · Coulombis · Cynthia Enloe · David Harvey · David Mittrany · David Ricardo · Dipesh Chakrabarty · Douglas Gieber · Drangel · E. H. Carr · Edward Said · Ernst Haas · Fareed Zakaria · Francis Fukuyama · Frantz Fanon · Friedrich Engels · Gayatri Spivak · Giambattista Vico · Gideon Rose · Goldstein · Graham Allison · Hans Morgenthau · Harold & Margaret Sprout · Hedley Bull · Henry Kissinger · Homi K. Bhabha · Hugo Grotius · Ian Bremmer · Immanuel Kant · Immanuel Wallerstein · J. A. Hobson · J. Ann Tickner · Jack Snyder · James Lee Ray · James Monroe · James N. Rosenau · Jeffrey Legro · Jeffrey Taliaferro · Jeremy Bentham · John Burton · John Ikenberry · John Locke · John M. Hobson · John Mearsheimer · Joseph Grieco · Joseph Nye · Jurgen Habermas · Justin Rosenberg · Karl Deutsch · Karl Marx · Kautilya · Ken Booth · Kenneth Boulding · Kenneth Waltz · Kimberle Crenshaw · Lila Abu-Lughod · Lucian Ashworth · Margaret Mead · Martha Finnemore · Martin Wight · Max Horkheimer · Max Weber · Michael Doyle · Mohammad Ayoob · Morton Kaplan · Nancy Fraser · Niccolo Machiavelli · Nicholas Onuf · Nina Tannenwald · Norman Angell · Norrin Ripsman · Padelford & Lincoln · Palmer & Perkins · Peter Katzenstein · Quincy Wright · R. J. Vincent · Ramon Grosfoguel · Ranajit Guha · Randall Schweller · Raul Prebisch · Reinhold Niebuhr · Richard Ashley · Richard Cobden · Richard Rosecrance · Richard Zouche · Robert Axelrod · Robert Brenner · Robert Cox · Robert Gilpin · Robert Jervis · Robert Kagan · Robert Keohane · Robert Lieber · Roger Boesche · Samir Amin · Stanley Hoffmann · Stephen Van Evera · Stephen Walt · Steve Smith · Steven Lobell · Stephen Krasner · Sun Tzu · Sylvia Walby · Theda Skocpol · Thomas Christensen · Thomas L. Friedman · Thomas Piketty · Thomas Schelling · Thucydides · V. Spike Peterson · Vladimir Lenin · William Ladd · Woodrow Wilson

25 How UPSC asks it

Realism — classical, neo-realism, offensive & defensive

- UPSC 2017 · 20m** Is the Realist approach the best method to understand International Relations? Examine this in the context of Classical Realism.
- UPSC 2018 · 10m** Bring out the major differences between the Classical Realism of Hans Morgenthau and the Neorealism of Kenneth Waltz.
- UPSC 2021 · 15m** Discuss the emergence of neo-realism and its basic tenets.
- UPSC 2022 · 15m** What is the realist prescription to the States to ensure their survival in an anarchical world?
- UPSC 2023 · 15m** What do you mean by offensive and defensive realism?

Idealism, Liberalism & Neo-liberalism

- UPSC 2020 · 10m** What are the core assumptions of idealism as an approach to study international relations? Explain its continuing relevance in peace building.
- UPSC 2024 · 10m** Explain the various facets of the idealist approach to the study of international relations. Comment on its contemporary relevance.
- UPSC 2025 · 10m** “Neo-liberalism lightened neo-realism’s dark view of international politics.” Comment.

Marxist approaches & World-Systems

- UPSC 2017 · 15m** Examine the World-Systems approach as developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.
- UPSC 2021 · 10m** “Marxist approach to the study of international relations has lost its relevance in the post-Cold War era.” Comment.
- UPSC 2022 · 10m** Discuss the commonalities between the Marxist and Realist approaches to the study of International Politics.
- UPSC 2024 · 10m** Explain the central tenets of the World-Systems Theory.

Functionalism

- UPSC 2018 · 15m** Critically examine the Functionalist approach to the study of International Relations.
- UPSC 2023 · 15m** In what ways does the functionalist approach in international relations help in maintaining peace and order in global politics?

Functional & system approaches

- UPSC 2016 · 10m** Critically examine the functional and system approaches to the study of international relations.

26 Today's practice — write before the evening

1. Is the Realist approach the best method to understand International Relations? Examine this in the context of Classical Realism. (UPSC 2017, 20m)
2. What do you mean by offensive and defensive realism? (UPSC 2023, 15m)
3. “Neo-liberalism lightened neo-realism’s dark view of international politics.” Comment. (UPSC 2025, 10m)

Model answers drop tonight on the Telegram channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Every point above is set out in full in your **Foundation & OGP** class notes and handouts — revise it, then write.

See you tomorrow with Day 32 — Key Concepts in International Relations.