

Analyse the
assumptions made by
liberalism and realism
politics essay



Liberalism assumes instead portraying lust of power as the international conflict liberalism fights for the basic rights of the people. It insists on pursuing the political reforms establish democracies. It emphasizes on the value of the free trade on the basis that it will help in preventing the conflicts between nations as it reduces the national selfishness and enhances the communication.

Liberalism advocated the formation of the global institutions such as the United Nations which sees any threat to any individual nation as a threat to everyone. The institutions help in resolving the conflicts by mediating the conflicts in the event of any misunderstanding.

Basically liberals assume that states will act in a rational manner and they are a unitary actor.

The liberalists fell into three different groups as classified by the realists: The first group advocated league of the nations was formed with the objective to consider the attack on the nation as an attack on all. The second group formed the Permanent Court of International Justice that would lead to formation of judicial body capable of issuing justices to the disputes. The third group sort to avoid war by advocating " Disarmament" in[1]order to reduce the international tension1.

The League of Nations failed to take appropriate action against the Japan or Italy for invasion, PCIJ failed as the major disputed were rarely submitted and the Geneva Disarmament Conference resulted in failure1.

Realism (discussed later in the paper) failed to explain complex interdependence of the transnational relations. As a result various types of the international regimes were formed to govern the behaviour of different international issues that resulted in higher interdependence and lead to even higher co-operation (Neo-Liberalism).

Often Realists argue that Liberalism prime focus was not providing the national security rather than playing with the low politics (such as in the area of finance, environment). The critics believe the global institutions often fail to provide the appropriate response for the aggression¹.

Realism

Assumptions:

Realism assumes the state as the ultimate power that is not answerable to any body; it can resolve the critical issues itself. The realists often believe that world politics is a zero-sum game; what ever is gained by one competitor is lost by the other.

The realists portrays the international politics is the struggle among the states to dominate others by the gain of power, what ever actions are required to achieve the national interest they must be taken at any costs. The best way to maintain the peace is to be powerful.

The states should increase its military power and align with the powerful states in order to counter any threat, to promote is national interest or to maintain balance of the power among the states.

To the realists the economic power is less important than the military power. They believe that under the international anarchy the state should depend on itself to provide the security and wellbeing (Realpolitik) ¹ and should never underestimate the power of the rival (that is it will cooperate easily). Realists don't consider the decision making as a social work and they ignore one's interest. The great rivalry between US and USSR to struggle for the hegemony is supported by the realist thought.

Realism doesn't allow the ethical considerations to influence the decision making process. The realists evaluate the choices available for decision after considering the results of the action taken. Realists sometimes fail to explain the reasons for its own action taken for the national interest. The leaders were unable to justify that Vietnam War served the America's National Interest.

How do these two schools of thought (Liberalism and Realism) differ?

The following points highlight the key difference between the realism and liberalism:

Human Nature: The realists are believers of the pessimistic view that politics at the global level is driven by the self interest of individual nation, each nation should rely on itself for the national defence and well being ¹. It should make decision to satisfy the national interest.

Where as the liberalism has the optimistic view that foreign policy decisions should be based upon the mutual interests of the people and can be achieved with the help of the international organizations¹.

Concepts: The realists portray the international politics is the struggle among the states to dominate others by the gain of power, what ever actions are required to achieve the national interest (that can be with the military influence). While according to the liberal theory explains that International Relations can be improved by the model of complex interdependence that can result in larger cooperation.

The complex interdependence explains that the state is not the most important actor, the foreign policy decisions should not be made on the basis of the military power. “ The complex interdependence theory focuses that growing ties (that can be either a result of the trade between two nations) between two nations can make them exposed to each other’s activities and sensitive about their needs” 1.

Zero Sum Game: The realists consider politics as the Zero-Sum game (what ever is gained by one competitor is lost by the other; one nation can easily betray other) 1. Liberals don’t consider politics as the zero sum game, instead of following the military methods they have the reliance upon the judicial methods to tackle the disputes.

International System: Realism assumes that International System is anarchic that forces the leaders of the different nation to pursue self help principle (In the international anarchic system the nations must depend on themselves for their national defence and well being) 1. It assumes that chances of co-operation on the global level are very rare on critical issues. Even if there is co-operation then it can result in the relative gains (One participant benefits more then the other in joint effort). While in Liberalism the International

system is struggling to be more peaceful. Liberals stress on the role of inter-governmental organizations in the endorsement of cooperation.

Main Cause of Conflict: Basically Classical Realists believe the lust of the power to dominate others leads to the conflicts between two nations and ends in enmity while the neo-realists claim that cause of the conflicts is the anarchic international system¹; each state should rely on its own abilities to survive. Where as Liberals believe in that realpolitik results in the conflicts.

Also the conflicts are caused due to lack of the international laws to regulate competition (example arms race) between nations¹.

Best path to peace: Realists state that peace can be achieved by the balance of power if all states seek to increase their power preventing without being dependent on any other nation while Liberalism assumes that best path to peace can be achieved through co-operation through inter-governmental organizations such as United Nations. IGO such as UN help in mediate the conflicts between two nations in the event of any misconception.

Also liberalism emphasizes on the value of the free trade on the basis that it will help in preventing the conflicts between nations as it reduces selfishness and results in effective communication.

Organizations: Realism assumes the state as the supreme power that is not answerable to any body (for its internal affairs); it can resolve the critical issues on its own, without any external interference while liberalism emphasizes on the IGOs (Intergovernmental Organizations) in mediating the conflicts in the event of any misconception.

Morality: Under realism the nation's national interest is the prime objective.

Classic Realists are the firm believers that the Leaders of the nation can often choose the wrong decision while the foreign policy making process if they allow morality to preside over the policy making process, they believe that the country should always follow the dictation of the power. Realists complaint against liberalism of its tendency to turn foreign policy in the moral crusade¹. While liberalists advocate the importance of the people in the decision making process, the power of the ideas can influence many critical decisions.

In your opinion, which one most accurately described the world during the Cold War era?

Realism during Cold War: In my opinion, Realism most accurately explains the world during the cold war era. Realism accounts that the cold war was a consequence of the narrowing of the military capabilities of the great power rivals - United States of America and Union of Soviet Socialists Republics that resulted in the hegemonic struggle between them. Both of the countries struggled for the establishment of the spheres of influence around the world. After the end of the Second World War, the global politics were dominated by United States of America (Unipolarity) as it possessed an atomic bomb while its rival (USSR) didn't.

Truman Doctrine and Containment: The great rivalry between two nations started with the George F Keenan's long telegraph to President Harry S Truman stating that America needs to assess the post war policy as the soviets had a feeling of insecurity to maintain power. The measures taken by <https://assignbuster.com/analyse-the-assumptions-made-by-liberalism-and-realism-politics-essay/>

USSR to strengthen their spheres of dominance ended up in the policy of the Truman Doctrine and Containment. Truman Doctrine stated that US will provide the military support to all its allies in the event of any communist expansion while the strategy of Containment stated the appropriate measures to be taken to against USSR to prevent its expansion or communist influence by using the threat of a possible attack by US1.

Zero Sum Game: The race of the arms or the cold war started with USSR's accumulation of the atomic bomb that took US's Unipolarity away and ended up in Bipolarity. Soon started the nuclear arms race between Soviet Union and America and they started looking at each with a watchful suspicion. US pursued the Realist Principle of Zero - Sum Game; the loss from one side is the gain to other in cooperation while USSR followed the balance of the power realist principle.

Bipolar Nature and Nuclear Weapons: Many Realists attributes the absence of war to the bi-polar nature of the postwar global system which is less war-prone than the multi-polar system during the world-war - 2. In the multi-power global system the states often underestimate the comparative power of the opponent.

Some realists also concluded that nuclear weapons had played a significant role in the preservation of the peace during the cold 1.

National Interest: Under the realism the state was the most important actor and nation's interest was the top priority. When the Soviet invaded

Afghanistan, US President Jimmy Carter came up with " Carter Doctrine"

under which America will use its military forces in order to protect its oil
<https://assignbuster.com/analyse-the-assumptions-made-by-liberalism-and-realism-politics-essay/>

supplies from the gulf (which was nation's top interest) 1. Also as per Reagan Doctrine, US provided support to the insurgents to overthrow the soviet supported governments in countries like Afghanistan (US supported AL-QAEDA).

Power Politics: In the late 1980s the Soviet Policies can be seen as realistic theories, Moscow tried to increase its influence on the third world and it tried to suppress the rebellions against the government in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Military Power vs. Economic Power: As per the realist assumption, to USSR economic power was less important than military power, this resulted in the destruction of the soviet economy because of its long pursuit to seek balance of power.

During the cold the Soviet Union was involved in the constant production of the arms to increase its military power to boost national security in the event of an attack from America. Brezhnev was too slow to identify the country's economic problem and was reluctant to take necessary measures to tackle it¹.

Out of Liberalism and Realism which one most accurately describes the world we live in today?

Liberalism in present life: Liberalism most accurately defines the world that we live in today. Liberalism has the belief that change in the global politics can be engineered by human choices. The idea for the liberalism started in the 19th century in Europe then it spread slowly and steadily across the

<https://assignbuster.com/analyse-the-assumptions-made-by-liberalism-and-realism-politics-essay/>

world that we live in today. The USSR dissolution in 1991 was due to the influence of the liberal ideas by Mikhail Gorbachev. Liberalism advocates the free trade between nations which further results in the complex interdependence. United States is a liberal country, founded on the basis of free market and morality. Liberalism advocated the formation of the global institutions/ inter-governmental organizations such as the United Nations, International Criminal Court which sees any threat to any individual nation as a threat to everyone. The institutions help in resolving the conflicts by mediating the conflicts in the event of any misunderstanding. IGO such as United Nations have driven community of the peace loving countries. Countries can collectively response through the multi lateral actions to tackle any tough situation.

Trade: The liberal theory emphasizes on the trade thus helps in preventing disputes from escalating to the wars, increase inter-dependence and it increases the communication between two countries thus reducing the misconceptions (if any). The commercial liberalism (which advocates the free markets principles) has resulted in Liberal International Economic Order between the regimes. Many new trade agreements like NAFTA, FTAA, ASEAN, EU (under the liberalising rules of the World Trade Organization) have resulted in many positive have resulted in making the world more globalized. Trade had helped in improving the economic condition of the global south countries thus leading the path to democracy.

As a result of trade, global south's share in export products has grown from 10% in 1980 to 30 % in 20081.

Multi-National Corporations & Foreign Direct Investments: The political economy is shaped by the globalization of the production, the Multi-National Corporations (MNC) assist in the globalization of the production. The MNCs have resulted in the foreign direct investments (FDI) in the developing global south countries. “ In 2007, the FDI were around 30% to the global south by MNCs” 1.

International Law: Today the international law (UN) has started reviving its policies for the military intervention that it has the right to stop human genocide, suffering or the ethnic cleansing. It has resulted in the collapse of the old Treaty of Westphalia that no one can hinder in state’s internal affairs. Like the example of the rising terrorism in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan has pushed international law to rewrite international to permit the intervention in these countries providing a safe place for terrorist deeds. Many realists have tied up with the liberals in categorizing Iraq war in 2003 was an unneccary war¹.

International Criminal Court: To protect the human rights the International Criminal Court (ICC) was launched in 2002 as a watch dog on the human genocides or crimes. In many cases the ICC has pursued when State’s own court are unable to.

The ICC indicted Sudanese President Omar- al- Bashir for his role in human genocide in Sudan¹. Also the ICC tries its best to prevent the war by mediating between two states. ICC issues the sanctions against a country who tries to break the law (such as acts against humanity). In the event the sanctions fail to work then ICC is left with using the aggressive means (war).

Arms Reductions: As per the realist theory the war is necessary to achieve the peace, the realists sought to increase the military power while liberal thought predict the more armed the state, it is more vulnerable to the war.

The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty of 2002 has resulted in the nuclear arsenal of Russia and America by ninety percent. In 2005 the 189 countries have signed Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and 46 countries signed International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation to take new initiatives for nuclear arm control¹.