

Strengths and weaknesses of neorealism essay



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Strengths and Weaknesses of Neorealism, Neoliberalism and Constructivism

Introduction Our world since its origination has been a ' hotbed' of activity.

Activity in the sense, we humans have been showing activeness both mentally and physically, which have transformed our globe from an archaic one to an advanced one. That advancement is evident in every sphere of our life, as well as in the ' sphere', we live in. In addition, that advancement or development is seen in one of the important activities of the ' sphere', the activity of politics.

With the advancement, humans spread out to new territories. In course of time that territories became cities, states, and eventually countries. Along with this evolution of humans and territories, the political setup, which ruled villages, also evolved and new political setups came into being, to rule cities, provinces or states and importantly countries. So, this evolution and establishment of different countries and their government setups have lead to the formulation of various theories and ideas by renowned thinkers and researchers, constituting under the International Relations domain.

International Relations or IR for short, focuses on the relations between the countries of the world and how those relationship is handled from the diplomatic and military perspective. This handling of relationship under IR is further divided into three main theories, Neorealism, Neoliberalism and Constructivism. So, this paper will focus on these three theories and will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Neorealism, Neoliberalism and Constructivism as theoretical approaches to the study of International Relations

Neorealism

Neorealism or in other words structural realism was firstly formulated by Kenneth Waltz in his book, *Theory of International Politics*. The basis of this theory is that, the international political structure is defined by anarchy, which directly correlates to a decentralized setup. That is, the anarchic ordering principle and the resultant decentralization, leads to no formal authority or setup, and thus the international structure is mainly composed of equal sovereign states. These equal sovereign states function on the basis of self rule and self help, without subordinating their interest to other countries or institutions.

Strengths The main strength of this theory is that it will enable the countries to assume and actualize the “ minimum wants”, it needs for its survival, including military strength, financial strength, etc. A country can survive and succeed, only if its security is guaranteed. And if the country equips militarily according to its minimum needs, it will ensure its safety as well as build multi-polarity. The other strength is, it stipulates the policy of containment, which can be used to prevent ‘ rogue’ countries from indulging in problems and at the same time prevent large scale wars leading to loss of lives.

Weaknesses The main weakness is that, it ignores domestic public opinion in times of crucial international decisions. Importantly, Neorealism mainly focuses on the military capabilities of a country and misses to look at states’ other power capabilities. “ It does not deal with the various dimensions of power (military, economic, cultural or hard-soft power) nor with the elite perceptions of power. More importantly, neorealism misses the important role of foreign policy elites or leadership structures” (Erdem, 2004)

Neoliberalism

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The basic principle of Neoliberalism is the actualization of free markets and free trade. So, it involves market deregulation, minimum intervention from the state and its government, and also increased privatization. With the actualization of this kind of political economy perspective, there will be break down of barriers to international trade as well as foreign investment. Thus, there will be adequate transfer in the control of a nation's economy, from the state actors or government to the private sector players. Strengths

The main strength of this theory is that, it puts forward the notion that minimalistic state role or intervention resulted in better economy and importantly better society. That is, with greater role for private sector and importantly entrepreneurial role for individuals, there will be better productivity. " Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005) .

With inclusive role for the citizens, this theory has good strengths.

Weaknesses One of its weaknesses is the uneven distribution of income.

That is, with the emergence and success of private sectors as put forward by the Neoliberalism theory, the resultant wealth or income gets stagnated in few hands, with uneven wage distribution. It leads to poverty, industrial problems, etc. Another weakness is the uneven geographical development of neo-liberalism. That is, certain states or even organizations develop at the expense of other countries, by ' tapping' their weak neoliberalistic policies.

The rise of neo-liberal economic thinking in the West led to the view that the

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underdeveloped states had approached development in the wrong way.

Instead of establishing inefficient state run import substitution industries, it was argued, they should have concentrated on areas in which they possessed comparative advantage” (Best and Hanhimaki, 2008)

Constructivism The concept of Constructivism was first introduced from the IR perspective by Nicholas Onuf in 1989. Then, with optimal contribution from other scholars especially Alexander Wendt, who contributed a series of influential articles and a book, this theory gained prominence.

The basic premise behind this theory is that, individuals’ behavior is mainly influenced by their identity, which is directly influenced by the society. So, according to this theory, all political and social institutions, including the countries, are socially constructed. **Strengths** The main strength of this theory is that, it promotes formation of social identities as well as interaction, for a nation to develop. That is, instead of militarily equipping themselves on the basis of Neorealism, countries should identify their identities and interests, and thereby shape their interactions with other countries.

This will lead to more harmonious relationship between the states as well as between the states and the multilateral organizations. “...states in an anarchic system may each possess military and other capabilities which can be seen as potentially threatening by other states; but enmity and arms races are not inevitable outcomes. Social interaction between states can also lead to more benign and friendly cultures of anarchy. ” (Jackson and Sorensen, 2007). So, this theory will complement security as well as peace.

Weakness The weakness with this theory is that, social interaction may not work out positively all the time.

This is because, all the states cannot become friends and indulge in social interaction in all the occasions. Although, social interaction is the main strength of the Constructivism, "...such a goal may be ' desirable in principle, but not realizable in practice, because the structure of the international system forces states to behave as egoists. " (Brown). So, with many countries exhibiting egoists and overbearing attitude towards its neighbors and other ' opposite' countries, it will be difficult to actualize this theory everywhere.

Conclusion The organization of people into various countries, and the resultant governance has both positives and negatives. To optimize the positive and minimize the negatives, the various perspectives of International relations has to analyzed in-depth, with greater emphasis on its constituent theories. " International Relations is given People had not spoken of International relations before this time, since humanity had not previously been organized into national communities governed by territorial states. " (Baylis, 2001).

From this analysis, it is clear that these three theories exhibit three different perspectives about International Relations. While, Neorealism focused on materialistic powers, such as military forces and economic aspects, Neoliberalism focuses on the relationship between government institutions and the private individuals. Constructivism provides the third perspective by arguing that the most crucial component of international relations is social interaction.