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
- Explainantion 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 theoriest
- **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 (uni-polar).

- 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
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
- Alexender 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 catostrophic nature- Ozone depletion, green house effect, Glacial erosion, Wide spread floods, acidic rains, toixity 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 interdisciplinary
• 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