

**Summary**

**Chapter 3: Theories of International Relations**

*EQ: How do theoretical traditions in international relations differ on how to understand actors and their behavior on the global stage?*

* There are five major theories in international relations, each of which takes a different approach to addressing the major issues of IR. These five theories are realism, liberalism, Marxism, constructivism, and feminism. Each theory makes a handful of assumptions and outlines a series of propositions.
* Realist assumptions:
  + States operate in a world of anarchy.
  + States are the main actors in IR.
  + States are rational actors.
  + Security is the central problem of international politics.
  + The search for security is competitive.
* Realist propositions:
  + States pursue a balance of power.
  + States seek strategic alliances.
  + Security dilemmas will arise.
  + States focus on relative gains.
  + Power transitions are a key point in IR.
  + Nationalism is a key force in IR.
* Liberal assumptions:
  + The world is modernizing.
  + Individuals and groups are the main actors in IR.
  + Individuals have deep incentives to trade, cooperate, bargain, and negotiate for joint gain.
  + Modernization and advancement tend to take societies toward democracy and market society.
  + Progress exists.
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* Marxist assumptions:
  + Economics shapes politics.
  + Socioeconomic actors are the main actors in IR.
  + The modern state is organized to serve the interests of the capitalist class
  + Class conflict will increase.
  + Revolution is the greatest source of political change.
* Marxist propositions:
  + States will act in ways that advance the interests of capitalism.
  + Transnational business will be a salient feature of world politics.
* Constructivist assumptions:
  + The interests of individuals, groups, and states are not set in stone (interests are shaped by the identities of actors).
  + Identities are molded by a variety of ideational factors.
  + Elite individuals are the main actors in IR.
  + Communication plays an important role in shaping and changing identities.
* Constructivist propositions:
  + ‘The world is what you believe it is.’
  + States operate within a global civil society.
  + Normative change is important.
  + State elites exist within and are influenced by strategic culture.
* Feminist assumptions:
  + Women serve primarily as subordinate and undervalued laborers.
  + States and international relations have ‘gendered’ structures of domination and interaction.
  + The dominating views of world affairs ignore the standpoints of the weak and powerless.
* Feminist propositions:
  + Scholars should critique male-oriented assumptions (particularly realism).
  + The reduction of women’s roles and capabilities in IR due to gender bias should be rectified.