

# Theories of International Relations

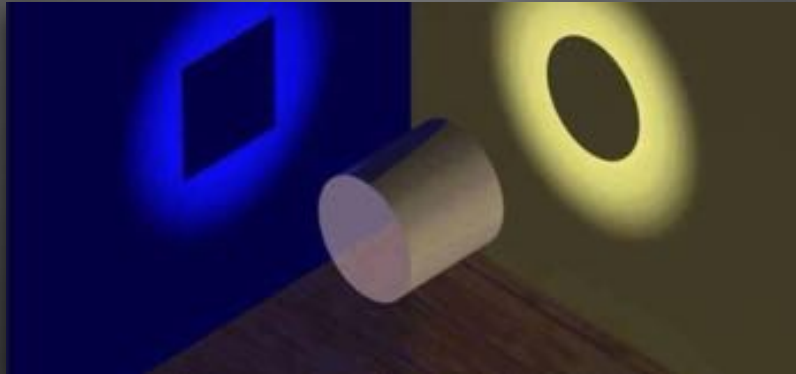
An Introduction

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## What do IR theories try to explain?

- Why do states exist and how do they behave in relation to each other?
- Why do states go to war?
- Why do states cooperate?
- Why do states trade with each other?
- Do some states behave differently than others?

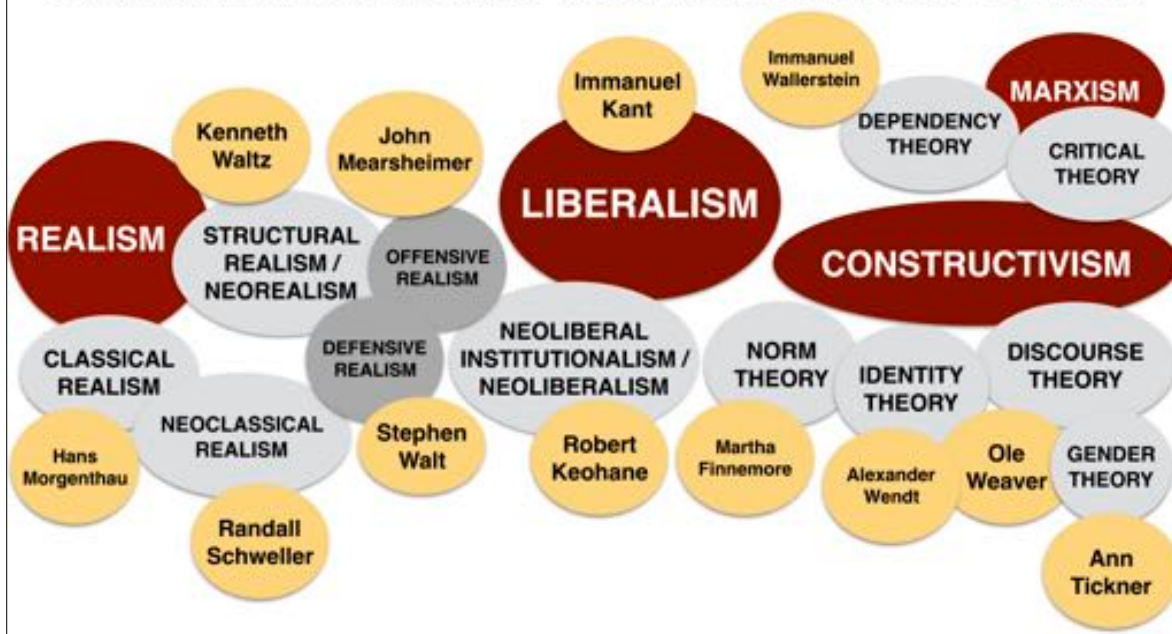
# What do they actually do?



- Provide one perspective to make sense of the behaviour of states within the international system
- None explains everything and many explain the same from different angles

## Three Paradigms - countless sub-theories

Overview of meta theories, sub-theories and some scholars



# Realism

## Core Assumptions

1. Anarchy
2. States are the main (unitary) actor
3. States act rationally
4. Power (military)
5. Competition/War

# Realism

## Core Propositions

1. Balance of Power and Alliances
2. Relative Gains
3. Power transitions

# Liberalism

## Core Assumptions

1. Modernisation/Optimism
2. States are the main actor, but institutions and domestic actors matter
3. Anarchy, but domestic politics and regime type matter
4. Interest in absolute gains

# Liberalism

## Core Propositions

1. commercial liberalism
2. Democratic Peace
3. International law and institutions
4. Transnationalism
5. Cosmopolitanism

# Constructivism

## Core Assumptions

1. Interest is shaped by identity
2. Identity depends on ideational factors
3. Elite actors shape ideas and identities
4. Communication and Networks matter

# Constructivism

## Core Propositions

1. the world is what you believe it is
2. Global civil society
3. Normative change
4. Strategic culture

ASSUMPTIONS	REALISM	LIBERALISM	CONSTRUCTIVISM
INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM	Anarchy	Anarchy	Anarchy
ACTORS	State	State and NGOs	Elites
STRUCTURE OR AGENCY	Material	Material	Material and ideational
DEALING WITH ANARCHY	Focus on own protection	Rules for action	“Anarchy is what states make of it”
GOAL	Survival	Survival and Prosperity	
MEASURE THE GOAL	Relative Gains	Absolute Gains	
MEAN	Military Power	Cooperation	identity

**“The “complete diplomat” of the future should remain cognizant of realism’s emphasis on the inescapable role of power, keep liberalism’s awareness of domestic forces in mind, and occasionally reflect on constructivism’s vision of change.”**

*Stephen M. Walt*