

CSS International Relations: theories of international relations

These notes cover the theories and approaches to the study of international relations that are examined in International Relations Paper I of the FPSC CSS Competitive Examination (optional subject, International Relations Papers I and II). They take the theories in the order you are expected to meet them. First comes the inter-war debate between idealism and realism (E. H. Carr). Then realism (classical, neorealism, offensive and defensive), liberalism (liberal institutionalism, complex interdependence, democratic peace), the English School, constructivism (Wendt), Marxist and critical theories (world-systems, dependency, critical theory) and feminist IR (liberal, radical and post-colonial feminism; Tickner and Enloe). For each theory you get its key concepts, its strengths, its main criticisms and how it explains an issue that matters to Pakistan today. The notes end with comparison tables, a glossary, a short recall drill and a quick check made up of two warm-up questions and ten CSS-style questions with model answer outlines.

1. Why theory matters in IR

A theory of international relations is a simplified account of how world politics works. It tells us which actors matter, what drives their behaviour and whether lasting change is possible. No theory explains everything. Each works like a lens that brings some features into focus and blurs others. CSS examiners reward candidates who can **compare** theories, **apply** them to real cases and **evaluate** their limits, rather than candidates who simply list thinkers.

Definition to learn: theory of international relations

A theory of international relations is a set of connected assumptions and concepts that explains and predicts patterns in the behaviour of states and other international actors, and states what causes those patterns.

It helps to sort theories along three questions. You can use these three questions as the plan for almost any comparison answer:

1. **Who are the main actors?** States only, or also international organisations, firms, classes, social movements and individuals?
2. **What drives behaviour?** Power and survival, economic interest, ideas and identity, class, or gender?
3. **Is change possible?** Is conflict permanent (pessimists) or can it be reduced through institutions, trade, norms or social transformation (optimists)?

The discipline is often described as a series of "great debates". The first was idealism against realism (1930s–1940s). The second was traditionalism against behaviouralism (1960s), a dispute about method. The third, sometimes called the inter-paradigm debate (1980s), set realism, liberalism and radical (Marxist) approaches against each other. It was later followed by the debate between positivist and post-positivist approaches. Revisionist historians of the discipline, such as Peter Wilson, Brian Schmidt and Lucian Ashworth, argue that the first debate is partly a myth constructed later, because

inter-war "idealists" were more varied and realistic than the label suggests. Mentioning this view briefly shows depth.

2. Idealism and the inter-war debate (E. H. Carr)

2.1 Inter-war idealism (utopianism)

IR became a university discipline after the First World War. The first chair of International Politics was created at Aberystwyth in 1919. The founders wanted to prevent another catastrophic war. Their thinking, later labelled **idealism** or **utopianism**, rested on these beliefs:

- War is irrational and unprofitable. Norman Angell argued in *The Great Illusion* (1910; first published in 1909 as *Europe's Optical Illusion*) that economic interdependence made war self-defeating for all sides.
- Public opinion, democracy and open diplomacy can restrain governments.
- Collective security through an international organisation can replace the balance of power. This idea is linked above all to US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points (January 1918) and to the League of Nations (1920).
- International law and arbitration can settle disputes. An example is the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928, which renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

2.2 Carr's critique

E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (1939) is the classic realist attack on inter-war idealism. His main arguments, in summary:

- **Harmony of interests is false.** Idealists assumed that what is good for the world is good for every state. Carr argued that this "harmony" is really the interest of dominant, satisfied powers presented as a universal interest. Britain and the United States (and other satisfied powers such as France) preached peace and the status quo because the status quo favoured them.
- **Morality reflects power.** International morality and law tend to reflect the preferences of the strong.
- **Failure of the League.** Collective security failed against Japan (Manchuria, 1931), Italy (Abyssinia, 1935–36) and Germany, because states would not risk war for others' security.
- **Balance, not rejection.** Carr was not a pure realist. He argued that sound political thought must combine realism (analysis of what is) with utopianism (a goal to aim at). Pure realism, he warned, becomes sterile.

Worked example: structuring "Why did idealism fail?"

Step 1: define. Idealism is the inter-war belief that reason, law, public opinion and collective security could abolish war.

Step 2: give the realist explanation (Carr). It ignored power. The "harmony of interests" hid the interests of satisfied powers, and dissatisfied powers (Germany, Italy, Japan) rejected it.

Step 3: give the institutional explanation. The League lacked the United States, which never joined. It needed unanimity and had no armed force of its own.

Step 4: add the historical context. The Great Depression after 1929 fed nationalism and autarky

and undermined the economic interdependence Angell had relied on.

Step 5: evaluate. Revisionist historians note that many idealists were not naïve. Their ideas later shaped the United Nations (1945), the Bretton Woods institutions and European integration, so idealism was "defeated" in the 1930s but partly vindicated after 1945.

Step 6: conclude with a judgement. A defensible conclusion is that idealism failed chiefly because it lacked enforcement and great-power commitment, not because its goals were wrong. A candidate who argues the opposite (that its goals ignored power and were therefore flawed from the start) also earns marks if the argument is well supported.

3. Realism

3.1 Core assumptions shared by all realists

- **Statism:** sovereign states are the main actors.
- **Anarchy:** there is no world government above states.
- **Survival:** the first goal of every state is to survive.
- **Self-help:** states cannot rely on others for their security.
- **Power:** relative power, above all military power, decides outcomes.

Realists trace their tradition to Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War (especially the Melian Dialogue, where the Athenians tell the Melians that the strong do what they can and the weak endure what they must). They also draw on Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), which describes the "state of nature" as a war "of every man against every man". The better-known Latin phrase "war of all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) comes from Hobbes's *De Cive* (1642).

Definitions to learn

Anarchy: the absence of a central authority above sovereign states that can make and enforce rules among them. It does not mean chaos.

Security dilemma (John Herz, 1950; Herbert Butterfield): a situation in which measures one state takes to make itself more secure (for example arms build-ups) reduce the security of others. They respond in kind, so all end up less secure.

Balance of power: a distribution of power among states such that no single state can dominate the rest. It also means the policy of forming alliances or building strength to prevent such domination.

3.2 Classical realism

Classical realism locates the cause of conflict in **human nature**, a permanent drive for power. Its leading figure is Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (1948). Others include Reinhold Niebuhr and George Kennan. Morgenthau set out six principles of political realism, which were added in the second edition (1954). They are summarised here in paraphrase:

1. Politics follows objective laws that are rooted in human nature.
2. The key to understanding politics is "interest defined in terms of power".
3. Interest defined as power is a universal category, but its exact content changes with time and

place.

4. Universal moral principles cannot be applied directly to state action. The supreme political virtue is **prudence**, meaning weighing the consequences of actions.
5. No nation's moral aspirations should be mistaken for the moral law of the universe.
6. The political sphere is autonomous. It must be judged by its own standard (power), not by legal, economic or moral standards.

Classical realists value diplomacy and statesmanship and are wary of ideological crusades. Morgenthau opposed the Vietnam War on realist grounds.

3.3 Neorealism (structural realism)

Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) moved the cause of conflict from human nature to the **structure of the international system**. In *Man, the State and War* (1959) he had distinguished three "images" or levels of analysis: the individual, the state and the international system. Neorealism is a "third image" theory.

Waltz defines structure by three elements:

Element of structure	In the international system	Consequence
Ordering principle	Anarchy (not hierarchy)	Self-help; states worry about survival
Character of the units	States are "like units" performing the same functions	Functional differences drop out of the theory
Distribution of capabilities	Varies: unipolar, bipolar, multipolar	This is the only element that changes and so explains variation in outcomes

Key neorealist claims: states are concerned with **relative gains** (who gains more), not only absolute gains. Balances of power recur whatever states intend. Waltz argued that **bipolarity** is more stable than multipolarity, because it involves fewer miscalculations and clearer responsibility. He also argued, controversially, that the gradual spread of nuclear weapons may make war less likely ("more may be better"). Scott Sagan famously disputed this.

3.4 Defensive and offensive realism

Structural realists split over **how much power** states need.

Feature	Defensive realism	Offensive realism
Key thinkers	Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, Robert Jervis, Stephen Van Evera	John Mearsheimer (<i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> , 2001)
Goal of states	Security maximisers: enough power to be safe	Power maximisers: as much relative power as possible
Ultimate aim	Preserve the balance	Regional hegemony (global hegemony is impossible because of the "stopping power of water")
View of expansion	Usually self-defeating, because it provokes balancing	Rational when opportunities arise

Supporting concepts	Offence–defence balance (Jervis, 1978); balance of threat (Walt, <i>The Origins of Alliances</i> , 1987)	Uncertainty about intentions; buck-passing; blackmail; bait-and-bleed
Example claim	States balance against threats (power, proximity, offensive capability, aggressive intentions), not power alone	A rising China will try to dominate Asia, and the US will try to contain it

A later strand, **neoclassical realism** (a term introduced by Gideon Rose in 1998), keeps systemic pressure as the main driver. It adds domestic "intervening variables" such as leaders' perceptions, state capacity and domestic politics to explain particular foreign policies.

3.5 Strengths and criticisms of realism

Strengths	Criticisms
Explains recurring war, arms races and alliances across history	Neorealism failed to predict the peaceful end of the Cold War (a point stressed by constructivists)
Parsimonious: a few assumptions explain much	Neglects non-state actors, economics, identity and domestic politics
Guards against moralistic crusades; stresses prudence	Can become a self-fulfilling prophecy: expecting hostility produces it
Fits nuclear deterrence and great-power rivalry well	Feminists call its "rational, autonomous" state a masculine abstraction
Explains why international institutions are weak when great powers disagree	Hard to explain durable cooperation such as the European Union

Worked example: applying realism to Pakistan–India nuclear deterrence

Step 1: identify the structure. South Asia has two nuclear-armed rivals with no regional authority above them and a history of wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971, and Kargil 1999).

Step 2: apply the security dilemma. India's nuclear tests (11 and 13 May 1998) were answered by Pakistan's tests of 28 and 30 May 1998 in Balochistan (the Ras Koh hills in Chagai, then Kharan). Each side's search for security raised the other's insecurity.

Step 3: apply defensive realism. Pakistan's doctrine of **credible minimum deterrence**, later developed into "full-spectrum deterrence", aims at enough power to deter a conventionally larger India, not at dominating it. That is security maximisation.

Step 4: apply balance of threat (Walt). Pakistan's close strategic partnership with China is balancing against a proximate, more powerful state it perceives as threatening.

Step 5: apply offensive realism. A Mearsheimer-style reading would expect India, the larger power, to seek regional hegemony in South Asia and Pakistan to resist it, with China supporting Pakistan to prevent an Indian hegemon.

Step 6: note the "stability–instability paradox" (Glenn Snyder, 1965). Deterrence has prevented full-scale war, but limited crises have continued, such as Kargil (1999), 2001–02, 2019 and the brief armed conflict of May 2025. Realists see this as consistent with the theory.

Step 7: evaluate. Many analysts conclude that realism explains the rivalry well but says little about why it persists after both sides gained secure deterrents. Constructivists answer this with identity (see section 6).

4. Liberalism

4.1 Core assumptions

Liberalism starts from the individual and holds that **progress and cooperation are possible**. Its intellectual roots include John Locke, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant and the nineteenth-century free-traders. Liberals accept that anarchy exists but deny that it condemns states to permanent conflict. Three mechanisms can soften it: **trade and interdependence** (commercial liberalism), **democracy** (republican liberalism) and **institutions** (liberal institutionalism). Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795) rested peace on republican constitutions, a federation of free states and cosmopolitan right (the right of hospitality). Bruce Russett and John Oneal (*Triangulating Peace*, 2001) later restated this as a "Kantian tripod" (or triangle) of peace: democracy, economic interdependence and international organisations. Liberals also give weight to non-state actors and domestic politics.

4.2 Liberal institutionalism (neoliberal institutionalism)

Neoliberal institutionalism, associated above all with Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony* (1984), accepts several neorealist starting points: states are rational, self-interested actors in anarchy. It argues that **institutions** nevertheless make cooperation possible because they:

- reduce **transaction costs** of bargaining;
- provide **information** and transparency, reducing fear of cheating;
- create **reciprocity** and link issues together;
- lengthen the "**shadow of the future**". Robert Axelrod (*The Evolution of Cooperation*, 1984) showed that in repeated prisoners' dilemmas, strategies like tit-for-tat can sustain cooperation.

The "neo-neo debate" of the 1980s–90s turned on **absolute versus relative gains**. Neoliberals said states care mainly about their own absolute gains. Neorealists such as Joseph Grieco (1988) replied that fear of relative gains limits cooperation.

Definition to learn: international regime (Stephen Krasner, *International Regimes*, 1983)

Krasner's widely used definition: an international regime is a set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given issue-area. Examples of issue-areas are trade, nuclear non-proliferation and climate change. Name Krasner when you use this definition in the exam.

4.3 Complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye)

In *Power and Interdependence* (1977), Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye presented **complex interdependence** as an ideal type opposed to the realist picture. It has three characteristics:

1. **Multiple channels** connect societies: interstate, transgovernmental (officials dealing directly with officials) and transnational (firms, banks, NGOs).
2. **No hierarchy of issues:** military security does not always dominate the agenda. Trade, energy,

finance and the environment can matter as much.

3. **Military force plays a minor role** between states bound by complex interdependence, though it may still matter in other relationships.

They also separated two dimensions of dependence. **Sensitivity** is how quickly and how much a state is affected by changes elsewhere. **Vulnerability** is how costly it is for the state to adjust or find alternatives. Asymmetric interdependence can itself be a source of power. Nye later developed the concept of **soft power** (1990): the ability to get others to want what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment.

4.4 Democratic peace theory

The democratic peace thesis claims that **established liberal democracies rarely, if ever, fight wars against each other**, although they do fight non-democracies. The claim is **dyadic**: it concerns pairs of states. It is not a claim that democracies are more peaceful in general (the "monadic" claim, which is much more disputed). It draws on Kant and was revived by Michael Doyle (1983) and Bruce Russett (*Grasping the Democratic Peace*, 1993).

Explanation	Mechanism
Normative (cultural)	Democracies settle domestic disputes peacefully and extend these norms to other democracies, which they trust
Institutional (structural)	Elections, legislatures and a free press slow down decisions for war and make leaders accountable for its costs
Commercial add-on	Democracies tend to trade heavily with one another, which raises the cost of war

Criticisms: definitions of "democracy" and "war" can be adjusted to remove awkward cases. Christopher Layne (1994) argued that crises between democracies were resolved by power considerations, not democratic norms. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995) found that states in transition to democracy can be more war-prone. The correlation may reflect shared alliances (for example US leadership during the Cold War) rather than democracy itself. Kargil (1999), fought when both India and Pakistan had elected governments, is often raised in the democratic peace debate as a possible exception. Defenders of the theory reply that Pakistan was not then a consolidated democracy.

4.5 Strengths and criticisms of liberalism

Strengths	Criticisms
Explains cooperation through the UN, WTO, EU and climate regimes	Institutions often reflect great-power interests (the realist critique)
Recognises non-state actors and economics	Interdependence did not prevent 1914 or, more recently, the Russia–Ukraine war (2022)
Strong statistical support for the dyadic democratic peace	The "liberal international order" is seen by Marxists and post-colonial writers as Western dominance
Allows for progress and change	Struggles to explain why interdependence fails to develop between rivals (India–Pakistan trade stays low despite obvious gains); here realist and constructivist accounts of security and identity do better

Worked example: liberalism and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Step 1: identify the case. CPEC, launched in 2015, is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative. It links Gwadar to Xinjiang through energy, road, rail and special economic zone projects.

Step 2: apply commercial liberalism. Economic links are expected to create shared prosperity and a stake in stability, both between Pakistan and China and potentially across the region (the "connectivity" argument).

Step 3: apply complex interdependence. Multiple channels exist: governments, provincial authorities, state-owned enterprises, banks and workers. Security of projects and energy issues sit alongside traditional defence ties, so the agenda has no fixed hierarchy.

Step 4: apply sensitivity and vulnerability. Pakistan's heavy reliance on Chinese finance and energy investment creates **asymmetric** interdependence. Pakistan is more vulnerable than China, which gives China leverage.

Step 5: evaluate. Liberalism captures the cooperative logic. Realists stress the strategic motive (China balancing India and the US, and securing a route to the Arabian Sea). Dependency theorists warn of debt and unequal exchange (section 7). A strong answer presents all three.

5. The English School

The English School, also called the "international society" approach, emerged from the **British Committee on the Theory of International Politics**, founded in 1959. Its central figures include Martin Wight, Herbert Butterfield, Hedley Bull (*The Anarchical Society*, 1977), R. J. Vincent and, later, Robert Jackson, Tim Dunne, Nicholas Wheeler and Barry Buzan. Its core claim is that states form an **anarchical society**. There is no world government, yet states share rules, norms and institutions that bring order.

Definitions to learn (the first two follow Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 1977)

International system (Bull): exists when states interact enough that each must take the others into account in its calculations.

International society (Bull): exists when states, aware of common interests and values, consider themselves bound by a common set of rules and take part together in common institutions.

World society: ties among individuals, non-state groups and humanity as a whole, above and beyond states.

Martin Wight described three traditions of thought. The English School deliberately sits in the middle one:

Wight's tradition	Associated thinker	Image of world politics
Realist	Hobbes, Machiavelli	International anarchy; a state of war
Rationalist	Hugo Grotius	International society governed by law and diplomacy
Revolutionist	Kant	Moral unity of humankind; transformation of the states-system

Bull identified five **institutions of international society** (institutions here means established practices, not organisations): the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war (as a regulated activity) and the special responsibilities of great powers ("great power management").

Inside the School there is a debate between **pluralists** (Bull in much of his work, Jackson) and **solidarists** (Vincent, Wheeler). Pluralists say states agree only on minimal rules such as sovereignty and non-intervention, and should protect order among diverse cultures. Solidarists argue that international society can enforce shared values such as human rights, including through humanitarian intervention. The pluralist–solidarist debate maps directly onto the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), endorsed at the 2005 UN World Summit.

Strengths: the School is historically rich and bridges realism and liberalism. It explains why weak states survive (sovereignty norms protect them) and captures diplomacy and law. **Criticisms:** its concepts are vague and hard to test. It is Eurocentric in its story of a European society "expanding" to the rest of the world, and critics note that colonised peoples were excluded from that society. It also gives limited attention to economics.

Pakistan application: Pakistan's diplomacy relies heavily on the institutions of international society. It has been a UN member since 30 September 1947 and has served several terms as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, including 2025–26. It is a long-standing, large contributor to UN peacekeeping. It frames the Kashmir dispute in terms of UN Security Council resolutions and self-determination. Pakistan called India's April 2025 decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty (1960) "in abeyance" a breach of the treaty. It argues that the treaty has no provision for unilateral suspension, since Article XII(4) allows termination only by a new treaty ratified by both states. India cites cross-border terrorism and changed circumstances to justify its decision. Read through English School theory, Pakistan's position is a pluralist argument: order depends on respect for agreed rules, and treaty commitments should not be dropped unilaterally.

6. Constructivism

6.1 Core ideas

Constructivism became prominent at the end of the Cold War, partly because rationalist theories had not foreseen that event. Nicholas Onuf introduced the term in *World of Our Making* (1989). Alexander Wendt gave it its most famous statement in the article "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (*International Organization*, 1992) and in *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). Others include Peter Katzenstein, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink.

- **Ideas matter as much as material forces.** Material facts gain meaning only through shared ideas. Wendt's illustration ("Constructing International Politics", *International Security*, 1995) is that 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean ones, because of the relationship between the countries, not the numbers.
- **Identities shape interests.** A state's view of who it is (ally, rival, Islamic republic, non-aligned state) shapes what it wants.
- **Agents and structures are mutually constituted.** States create international norms, and norms in turn shape states.
- **Norms** have a "logic of appropriateness" (a term from James March and Johan Olsen), meaning actors do what is considered proper for an actor of their identity. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)

described a **norm life cycle**: emergence (driven by norm entrepreneurs), cascade and internalisation.

Definitions to learn

Intersubjective understanding: a meaning shared among actors, which exists neither in one mind alone nor in the physical world alone. Sovereignty and money are examples.

"Anarchy is what states make of it": Wendt's argument that anarchy has no fixed logic. Whether it produces conflict or cooperation depends on how states understand one another.

6.2 Wendt's three cultures of anarchy

Culture	Role states assign each other	Typical behaviour	Illustration
Hobbesian	Enemy	Unlimited violence; the survival of the other is not accepted	Pre-modern conquest; extreme ideological rivalries
Lockean	Rival	Competition but mutual recognition of sovereignty; war is limited	The modern states-system since 1648 (Westphalia)
Kantian	Friend	Disputes settled without war; mutual aid against threats	A "security community" such as the EU or US–Canada

These cultures can be internalised at different depths: through force, through self-interest or because actors believe the norms are legitimate.

6.3 Strengths and criticisms

Strengths: constructivism explains change, such as the end of the Cold War through Gorbachev's "new thinking" and the spread of norms against landmines or apartheid. It explains why similar power distributions produce friendship in one case and hostility in another. It also shows how identity drives foreign policy. **Criticisms**: realists (Mearsheimer) say it cannot explain which ideas win or why, since power decides that. Its predictions are weak. Critical theorists say mainstream constructivism, like Wendt's "thin" version, stays too close to state-centrism and positivism.

Worked example: constructivism and Pakistan's foreign policy identities

Step 1: identify the identities. Pakistan's founding identity rests on the two-nation theory and a Muslim homeland. It has an Islamic constitutional identity (1973 Constitution) and a strong "security state" self-image shaped by partition and 1971.

Step 2: link identity to interest. The Muslim-world identity explains active OIC membership and support for Palestinian statehood. Pakistan does not recognise Israel, a position explained more easily by identity and domestic norms than by material interest.

Step 3: apply the cultures of anarchy. Pakistan–India relations resemble a **Hobbesian–Lockean** culture. Each side's national narrative casts the other as the defining "other", so crises reproduce enmity. Pakistan–China relations, described officially as an "all-weather" strategic partnership, look closer to a **Kantian** friendship role.

Step 4: show mutual constitution. Repeated practices, such as rhetoric, textbooks, media and

military exercises, reinforce these roles. Change would therefore require changes in practice and discourse, as partly attempted at the Lahore Declaration (1999).

Step 5: evaluate. Constructivists argue that this explains the durability of rivalry better than realism does. A realist would reply that China–Pakistan "friendship" rests on a shared interest in balancing India.

7. Marxist and critical theories

7.1 Marxist foundations

Marxist approaches treat **class and the global capitalist economy**, not states, as the basic units of analysis. The state is seen largely as serving dominant class interests. International conflict and inequality are traced to capitalism's need for markets, raw materials and cheap labour. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917) argued that monopoly capitalism drives colonial expansion and rivalry among capitalist powers.

7.2 Dependency theory

Dependency theory emerged mainly from Latin America in the 1950s–70s. It challenged "modernisation theory", which held that poor countries would develop by following the path of rich ones.

- **Raúl Prebisch**, of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, and Hans Singer argued (the Prebisch–Singer thesis, 1950) that the terms of trade of primary commodity exporters tend to decline against manufactured goods.
- **Andre Gunder Frank** coined "the development of underdevelopment" (1966): the periphery is underdeveloped *because* of its incorporation into world capitalism, not in spite of it.
- **Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto** (*Dependency and Development in Latin America*, 1969) argued that "associated-dependent development" is possible: some growth happens in the periphery, but it is shaped and limited by foreign capital. Peter Evans later called this pattern "dependent development" (1979).

Policy responses linked to these ideas include import-substitution industrialisation, the Group of 77 (1964) and the call for a New International Economic Order (UN General Assembly, 1974).

7.3 World-systems theory (Wallerstein)

Immanuel Wallerstein (*The Modern World-System*, first volume 1974) argued that since the "long sixteenth century" a single **capitalist world-economy** has existed, with a single division of labour. It is divided into three zones:

Zone	Economic role	Typical features
Core	High-skill, capital-intensive, high-profit production	Strong states; absorbs surplus from other zones
Semi-periphery	A mix of core and peripheral activities	Buffers the system politically; states can move up or down
Periphery	Low-wage, low-skill production; raw materials	Weak states; surplus drained to the core

Surplus flows from periphery to core through **unequal exchange**. Hegemonic powers rise and decline in cycles; the examples usually given are the Dutch Republic, Britain and the United States.

7.4 Critical theory

Critical theory in IR draws on the Frankfurt School and on Antonio Gramsci. Robert Cox's 1981 article "Social Forces, States and World Orders" made the much-quoted point that **theory is always for someone and for some purpose**. Cox distinguished **problem-solving theory**, which takes the existing order as given and helps it run smoothly (he placed neorealism here), from **critical theory**, which asks how the order came about and how it might change. Gramscian scholars use **hegemony** to mean domination based on consent as well as coercion. On this reading, the US-led order has been sustained by institutions and ideas that present particular interests as universal (compare Carr's "harmony of interests"). Andrew Linklater focused on **emancipation** and widening moral community beyond the nation-state.

7.5 Strengths and criticisms

Strengths: these theories place global inequality, colonial history and economic power at the centre of analysis. They explain persistent North–South gaps and reveal the interests hidden behind "neutral" theory. **Criticisms:** East Asian growth (South Korea, Taiwan, later China) contradicts strong versions of dependency theory. The theories can be economically reductionist, neglecting nationalism and security. They are better at critique than at practical policy. Liberal and neoclassical economists (for example Anne Krueger) argue that import substitution often produced inefficiency and rent-seeking.

Worked example: dependency theory and Pakistan's external debt and IMF programmes

Step 1: describe the case. Pakistan has entered IMF programmes many times since the 1950s. The most recent is a 37-month Extended Fund Facility of about US\$7 billion approved in September 2024. Programmes typically require fiscal tightening, energy-tariff increases and a wider tax base.

Step 2: apply dependency theory. Pakistan's exports remain concentrated in lower-value goods (textiles and agriculture), while it imports capital goods, fuel and technology. Dependency writers would predict recurring balance-of-payments crises, the pattern of "boom–bust" cycles.

Step 3: apply world-systems theory. Pakistan sits in the periphery or lower semi-periphery. Surplus leaves through debt service and profit repatriation, and conditions are set by institutions whose voting shares favour core states.

Step 4: apply critical theory (Cox). Conditionality embodies a neoliberal "common sense" presented as technical necessity. This is hegemony by consent, as domestic elites accept it.

Step 5: evaluate. Liberal economists answer that the crises stem largely from domestic choices: a narrow tax base, energy-sector circular debt and low savings. East Asian cases show that peripheral states can move up. A balanced answer notes that both structural and domestic factors are at work.

8. Feminist IR

8.1 Why gender?

Feminist IR developed from the late 1980s. It asks two questions: where are women in world politics,

and how do ideas of masculinity and femininity shape concepts such as security, power and the state? It treats **gender** as a socially constructed set of roles and meanings, distinct from biological sex.

8.2 Key thinkers

- **J. Ann Tickner.** Her 1988 article in *Millennium* offered a feminist reformulation of Morgenthau's six principles. Her book *Gender in International Relations* (1992) argued that realism's "objective" laws reflect a masculine view of human nature. She called for a broader, multidimensional idea of security that includes economic and ecological security and freedom from violence at every level, from the household to the international system.
- **Cynthia Enloe**, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989). She asked "Where are the women?" and showed that women's labour holds up international politics: as diplomats' wives, plantation and factory workers, domestic workers abroad and women living around military bases. She extends the feminist slogan "the personal is political" into "the personal is international", and adds that "the international is personal".

8.3 Three strands

Strand	Main claim	Typical agenda
Liberal feminism	Women are excluded from decision-making; the solution is equal rights and equal access within existing institutions	More women in diplomacy, militaries and peacekeeping; gender mainstreaming; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security
Radical feminism	Patriarchy is a system of male domination built into the state and the international system; simply "adding women" is not enough	Critique of militarism and gendered violence; wartime sexual violence as a strategy; transforming the concept of power itself
Post-colonial feminism	Western feminism treats "Third World women" as a single, passive, victimised group and ignores the combined effects of race, class and colonialism	Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes" (1984); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988); listening to local women's own agency

Two further strands are often mentioned: **standpoint feminism**, which holds that women's marginalised position gives insight into power, and **post-structural feminism**, which analyses how language constructs gender.

8.4 Strengths and criticisms

Strengths: feminist IR reveals actors and forms of violence that other theories ignore. It widens security to human security and has had a real policy impact through the Women, Peace and Security agenda. **Criticisms:** mainstream critics (for example Robert Keohane in a 1989 exchange) asked feminists to produce testable hypotheses. Some argue that gender is not the main driver of interstate war. Post-colonial feminists criticise Western feminism from within. Critics also note a risk of essentialism, as in claims that women are "naturally" peaceful. Tickner and others explicitly reject that claim.

Worked example: a feminist reading of the 2022 floods and security in Pakistan

Step 1: ask Enloe's question. Where were the women? In the 2022 floods, which affected

around 33 million people, women faced particular risks: loss of maternal health care, unsafe displacement camps and heavier care burdens.

Step 2: apply Tickner. A state-centric, military definition of security misses these harms. A multidimensional (human and ecological) security concept captures them.

Step 3: apply liberal feminism. The recommendation is women's representation in disaster-management bodies and peace processes, in line with UNSCR 1325. Pakistan can point to precedents such as Benazir Bhutto (1988), the first woman elected to lead a Muslim-majority country, and to its women peacekeepers.

Step 4: apply post-colonial feminism. Avoid portraying rural Pakistani women only as victims. Recognise their agency and local knowledge, and question donor programmes that impose external categories.

Step 5: evaluate. The feminist lens adds real insight into who bears the costs of crises. It says less about interstate issues such as deterrence, where other theories dominate.

9. Comparing the theories

Theory	Main actors	Key driver	View of anarchy	Can cooperation last?
Classical realism	States (statesmen)	Human lust for power	Dangerous	Limited; diplomacy can manage conflict
Neorealism	States	System structure; distribution of power	Fixed logic of self-help	Hard, because of relative gains
Liberalism	States, individuals, firms, institutions	Interests, trade, democracy, institutions	Can be softened	Yes
English School	States in a society	Shared rules and institutions	An "anarchical society"	Yes, within an order
Constructivism	States and other agents	Identities, norms, ideas	"What states make of it"	Depends on shared identity
Marxist / critical	Classes, capital, the world-system	Capitalist accumulation, hegemony	Secondary to economic structure	Not under current capitalism; emancipation is possible
Feminism	States, individuals, gendered institutions	Gender hierarchies	A gendered construct	Yes, if power and security are redefined

Theory	Key thinkers
Classical realism	Morgenthau, Niebuhr, Carr (in part)
Neorealism	Waltz, Mearsheimer, Walt
Liberalism	Kant, Keohane, Nye, Doyle, Russett

English School	Wight, Bull, Vincent
Constructivism	Wendt, Onuf, Katzenstein, Finnemore
Marxist / critical	Lenin, Wallerstein, Frank, Cox, Linklater
Feminism	Tickner, Enloe, Mohanty

10. How each theory explains a current issue relevant to Pakistan

CSS answers gain marks when theory is tied to Pakistan. The table below takes one issue per theory. In the exam, pick the most relevant pair and **contrast** them.

Theory	Issue	Explanation
Classical realism	Pakistan–Afghanistan tensions over cross-border militancy (TTP)	Leaders pursue national interest defined as power; prudence calls for coercive diplomacy combined with negotiation
Defensive realism / balance of threat	Pakistan–China strategic partnership; the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (September 2025)	Balancing a proximate, stronger threat and diversifying security guarantees
Offensive realism	US–China rivalry and India's role in US Indo-Pacific strategy	The US backs India to contain a would-be Asian hegemon (China), which squeezes Pakistan's room for manoeuvre
Liberal institutionalism	Pakistan in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (full member since 2017) and WTO trade disputes	Institutions provide forums, information and rules even between rivals (India and Pakistan both sit in the SCO)
Complex interdependence	CPEC; Gulf remittances	Multiple transnational channels; asymmetric vulnerability shapes bargaining power
Democratic peace	Pakistan–India relations	Weak democratic consolidation and low trade mean that the conditions for the dyadic peace are only partly present
English School	Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty	Pakistan appeals to the rules of international society: UNSC resolutions, treaty obligations and third-party mechanisms. It calls India's 2025 "abeyance" of the treaty a breach; India cites cross-border terrorism and changed circumstances
Constructivism	Durability of the Pakistan–India rivalry	Mutually constituted enemy identities reproduced through narratives and practices

Dependency / world-systems	Debt and IMF conditionality; climate finance	Peripheral position and unequal exchange; Pakistan contributes a very small share of global emissions yet suffers heavily. As chair of the G77 in 2022, it pressed for the loss and damage fund agreed at COP27
Critical theory	The "war on terror" narrative after 2001	Dominant powers framed security in ways that served their purposes; "for whom" was this theory of security?
Feminist IR	Climate disasters, displacement and women's political participation	Security understood at the human level; the Women, Peace and Security agenda; the agency of local women

Key terms

Term	Definition
Anarchy	The absence of a world government above sovereign states
Self-help	The principle that, under anarchy, each state must provide for its own security
Security dilemma	One state's efforts to increase its own security reduce the security of others, producing spirals of mistrust (Herz, Butterfield)
Balance of power	A distribution of power that prevents any one state from dominating; also the policy of maintaining it
Balance of threat	Walt's claim that states balance against threats, judged by aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability and perceived intentions
Polarity	The number of great powers in the system (unipolar, bipolar, multipolar)
Relative gains	Gains measured against those of other states; stressed by neorealists
Absolute gains	A state's total gain regardless of others' gains; stressed by neoliberals
Hegemony	Dominance by one state (realist usage), or leadership resting on consent as well as coercion (Gramscian usage)
Collective security	An arrangement in which all members agree to respond jointly to aggression against any one of them
International regime	Krasner (1983): principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in an issue-area
Complex interdependence	Keohane and Nye's ideal type: multiple channels, no hierarchy of issues, minor role for military force
Sensitivity / vulnerability	How much a state is affected by outside changes, and how costly it is for it to adjust to them
Soft power	Nye's term for influence through attraction (culture, values, policies) rather than coercion or payment

Democratic peace	The observation that consolidated liberal democracies rarely or never go to war with each other
Kantian tripod	Russett and Oneal's (2001) three pillars of peace: democracy, economic interdependence and international organisations
International society	States bound by common rules and institutions that they recognise as binding (English School, Bull)
Pluralism / solidarism	English School positions favouring minimal shared rules and non-intervention, or enforcement of shared values such as human rights
Intersubjectivity	Meanings shared among actors that shape how material facts are understood
Norm	A standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity
Core / semi-periphery / periphery	Wallerstein's zones of the capitalist world-economy, ranked by their role in the division of labour
Unequal exchange	Trade through which value is transferred from peripheral to core economies
Development of underdevelopment	Frank's thesis that the periphery is underdeveloped by its integration into world capitalism
Problem-solving theory	Cox's term for theory that accepts the existing order and helps it function
Gender	Socially constructed roles and meanings attached to masculinity and femininity
Human security	Security centred on individuals' freedom from fear and want, not only on the territorial state

Recall drill (MCQ-style)

The objective part of the paper tests author, book and date recall. Cover the answers in brackets and test yourself.

1. Who wrote *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, and when? (E. H. Carr, 1939)
2. In which edition of *Politics Among Nations* did the six principles of political realism first appear? (The second edition, 1954)
3. Who wrote *Theory of International Politics* (1979)? (Kenneth Waltz)
4. Who developed the balance of threat theory? (Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 1987)
5. Who wrote *After Hegemony* (1984)? (Robert Keohane)
6. Who wrote *The Anarchical Society* (1977)? (Hedley Bull)
7. Who wrote "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (1992)? (Alexander Wendt)
8. Who coined "the development of underdevelopment"? (Andre Gunder Frank, 1966)
9. Who said that theory is "always for someone and for some purpose"? (Robert Cox, 1981)
10. Who wrote *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989)? (Cynthia Enloe)

Quick check

Questions 1–2 are warm-up questions. Questions 3–12 are CSS-style questions (each worth 20 marks in the exam). The paper normally begins with a compulsory objective (MCQ) section, followed by a choice of 20-mark essay questions; always check the instructions printed on the current paper. For each essay question, plan for about 5 minutes and write for about 30–35 minutes. Begin each answer with a short numbered outline, as CSS examiners expect, then write an introduction, arguments with named thinkers, a Pakistan example, an evaluation and a conclusion.

1. **Define** anarchy and the security dilemma, and give one South Asian example of the security dilemma. [5]
2. **State** the three characteristics of complex interdependence identified by Keohane and Nye. [5]
3. **Explain** E. H. Carr's critique of inter-war idealism. Was Carr himself a pure realist? [20]
4. **Distinguish** between classical realism and neorealism. [20]
5. **Compare** offensive and defensive realism, and **apply** them to Pakistan's security policy towards India. [20]
6. "Institutions matter." **Discuss** this claim with reference to the neorealist–neoliberal debate. [20]
7. **Critically examine** the democratic peace theory. Does it help explain Pakistan–India relations? [20]
8. "Anarchy is what states make of it." **Analyse** Wendt's argument and its challenge to neorealism. [20]
9. **Evaluate** the English School's concept of "international society". Is it more useful than realism for understanding today's world order? [20]
10. How far do dependency and world-systems theories explain Pakistan's economic vulnerability? **Discuss**. [20]
11. **Assess** the contribution of feminist theories to IR, with reference to Tickner, Enloe and post-colonial feminism. [20]
12. No single theory can adequately explain Pakistan's foreign policy. **Critically evaluate** this statement using at least three theoretical perspectives. [20]

The conclusions below are model judgements that a candidate may adopt. An opposing conclusion that is well argued and supported with thinkers and evidence also earns marks.

1. Anarchy is the absence of a central authority above sovereign states (it does not mean chaos). The security dilemma (Herz, 1950) arises when one state's measures to increase its security reduce others' security, provoking responses that leave all less secure. Example: India's May 1998 nuclear tests were followed within weeks by Pakistan's tests of 28 and 30 May 1998 in Balochistan. Missile development and doctrine changes on each side have since followed in action–reaction cycles.
2. (i) Multiple channels connect societies: interstate, transgovernmental and transnational. (ii) There is no fixed hierarchy of issues, so military security does not always dominate. (iii) Military force plays a minor role among states linked by complex interdependence.
3. **Outline.** *Introduction:* the inter-war idealism of Wilson, Angell, the League and the 1928 pact; Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939) as the classic reply. *Body:* (a) the "harmony of interests" is a disguise for the interests of satisfied powers, above all Britain and the United States; (b) morality and law reflect power; (c) the failures of collective security in Manchuria, Abyssinia and over Germany; (d) the neglect of power and of economic crisis (the Depression). *Was Carr a pure realist?* No. He argued that realism without utopia is sterile and that sound thinking combines both.

He also supported peaceful change and economic reform. Critical theorists such as Robert Cox and Andrew Linklater read him as a forerunner of critical theory. *Pakistan link*: Carr's critique applies to claims that the existing order serves everyone equally, a point Pakistan and other G77 states make about global financial rules. *Conclusion*: Carr exposed idealism's neglect of power but kept a place for moral purpose.

4. Outline. *Introduction*: both share statism, survival and self-help. *Differences*: (a) **source of conflict**: human nature (Morgenthau) against system structure (Waltz, 1979); (b) **level of analysis**: first and second images against the third image; (c) **method**: historical and philosophical against a deductive, "scientific" approach; (d) **goal of states**: power as an end or means against security; (e) **role of statesmanship**: central (prudence, diplomacy) against a minor role because structure constrains; (f) **treatment of polarity**: implicit against explicit (bipolar stability). *Evaluation*: neorealism gains parsimony but loses explanation of particular foreign policies. Neoclassical realism tries to reunite the two. *Example*: Pakistan's Cold War alliance choices, SEATO (1954) and the Baghdad Pact (1955, renamed CENTO in 1959), can be read structurally (bipolarity) or through leaders' calculations (classical). *Conclusion*: a defensible conclusion is that they are complementary levels rather than rival truths.

5. Outline. *Introduction*: both are structural realist theories; they disagree on "how much power is enough". *Comparison*: security against power maximisation; balance against regional hegemony; offence–defence balance and balance of threat against uncertainty about intentions; expansion as self-defeating against expansion as rational. Use the table in section 3.4. *Application*: Pakistan's credible minimum and full-spectrum deterrence is defensive (it seeks to deter, not dominate). Its alignment with China is balance of threat. Offensive realism explains India's pursuit of regional primacy and Pakistan's resistance, and China's interest in preventing an Indian hegemon. Deterrence crises (Kargil 1999, 2019, May 2025) show the stability–instability paradox (Snyder). *Evaluation*: both ignore identity and domestic politics; constructivists and neoclassical realists fill these gaps. *Conclusion*: many analysts conclude that defensive realism fits Pakistan's own behaviour better, while offensive realism better explains the regional structure it faces.

6. Outline. *Introduction*: the "neo-neo" debate of the 1980s–90s; both sides accept rational states in anarchy. *Neoliberal case* (Keohane, Axelrod): institutions cut transaction costs, supply information, enable reciprocity and lengthen the shadow of the future; regimes (Krasner's definition) persist even after hegemonic decline (*After Hegemony*). *Neorealist case* (Grieco; Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", 1994–95): relative-gains concerns and cheating fears limit cooperation, and institutions reflect the power of their strongest members. *Examples*: the WTO dispute system and the Indus Waters Treaty, which survived wars for decades, support neoliberals. India's decision in 2025 to hold the treaty in abeyance (which Pakistan calls a breach, and India justifies by citing cross-border terrorism and changed circumstances) and SAARC's paralysis (its summit has not met since 2014) support realists. *Conclusion*: a defensible conclusion is that institutions matter most where interests overlap and power is not directly at stake.

7. Outline. *Introduction*: define the dyadic claim; Kant (1795), Doyle (1983), Russett (1993); Russett and Oneal's "Kantian tripod" (2001). *Explanations*: normative and institutional, plus trade. *Critical examination*: definitional flexibility; Layne's case studies; Mansfield and Snyder's finding on democratising states; the alternative explanation of Cold War alliances; the "correlation not causation" objection. *Application*: South Asia shows weak conditions for a democratic peace: interrupted democratic rule in Pakistan, low bilateral trade, and nationalist domestic politics that

reward hard lines. Kargil (1999) is debated as a possible exception. The theory implies that deeper democratic consolidation and trade could reduce conflict risk, a liberal prescription. *Conclusion*: a defensible conclusion is that the theory has strong empirical support among mature democracies but limited explanatory power for the India–Pakistan dyad.

8. Outline. *Introduction*: Wendt (1992, 1999); constructivism's rise after the Cold War. *Argument*: anarchy has no inherent logic; self-help is an institution created by practice; identities and interests are formed through interaction; the three cultures of anarchy (Hobbesian, Lockean, Kantian); the example of 500 British against 5 North Korean nuclear weapons (Wendt, 1995). *Challenge to neorealism*: it treats material structure as meaningless without ideas, explains change (the end of the Cold War) and explains variation in relationships under the same distribution of power. *Criticisms*: it is state-centric like Waltz, cannot say which ideas prevail, and makes weak predictions. *Pakistan example*: the same regional anarchy produces enmity with India and friendship with China. *Conclusion*: Wendt does not reject power but shows that its effects depend on shared meanings.

9. Outline. *Introduction*: the British Committee (1959); Bull's *The Anarchical Society* (1977); Bull's system and society distinction, plus world society. *Concepts*: Wight's three traditions; Bull's five institutions; the pluralism–solidarism debate; R2P (2005). *Evaluation*: strengths include historical depth, a middle way between realism and liberalism, and an explanation of why sovereignty norms protect weak states. Weaknesses are vagueness, Eurocentrism and neglect of economics. *Comparison with realism*: realism better explains great-power rivalry (US–China, Russia–Ukraine), but the English School explains why rules, diplomacy and the UN continue even amid rivalry. *Pakistan*: its reliance on UN resolutions, treaty law and multilateral diplomacy is an international-society strategy. *Conclusion*: one defensible judgement is that it is more useful when combined with realism than as a replacement for it.

10. Outline. *Introduction*: the Marxist roots of dependency (Prebisch–Singer, Frank, Cardoso and Faletto) and world-systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974). *Arguments for*: an export base concentrated in low-value goods; declining terms of trade; recurring balance-of-payments crises and IMF programmes (most recently the roughly US\$7 billion EFF of 2024); debt service draining resources; climate injustice, since Pakistan contributes little to global emissions but suffered roughly US\$30 billion in damage and losses in 2022, according to the government's post-disaster needs assessment. *Arguments against*: domestic causes such as a narrow tax base, energy circular debt, political instability and low investment in human capital; East Asian upward mobility undermines determinism. *Balanced view*: Cardoso and Faletto's "associated-dependent development" (Evans's "dependent development"), meaning external structure constrains while domestic policy decides outcomes within it. *Conclusion*: a defensible conclusion is that these theories explain much of the vulnerability but not all of it, and that reform needs both domestic change and fairer global rules.

11. Outline. *Introduction*: the late-1980s emergence of feminist IR; gender as a social construct. *Tickner*: reformulation of Morgenthau's principles; realism's masculine bias; multidimensional security. *Enloe*: "Where are the women?"; "the personal is international" and "the international is personal"; women's hidden labour in bases, plantations, diplomacy and migration. *Strands*: liberal (inclusion, UNSCR 1325), radical (patriarchy and militarism) and post-colonial (Mohanty, Spivak; critique of Western feminism). *Contribution*: it widened security, made new actors visible and has had policy impact (the Women, Peace and Security agenda). *Criticisms*: testability (Keohane's challenge); the risk of essentialism; its limited explanation of interstate war. *Pakistan*: women in

the 2022 floods; women peacekeepers; Benazir Bhutto; post-colonial caution about donor narratives. *Conclusion*: a defensible judgement is that feminism is less a rival explanation of war than an essential correction to what IR notices.

12. Outline. *Introduction*: theories are lenses, and Pakistan's foreign policy has several drivers. *Realism*: the India threat, nuclear deterrence, balancing with China, and alliance choices driven by security. *Liberalism*: CPEC and interdependence, SCO membership, IMF and WTO institutions, and remittances. *Constructivism*: Islamic and Muslim-world identity (OIC, non-recognition of Israel) and the enemy image of India. *Marxist and dependency theory*: debt, aid dependence and core–periphery position. *English School*: reliance on UN resolutions over Kashmir and on treaty rules over the Indus Waters Treaty. *Evaluation*: realism explains the security core; liberal and dependency theories explain the economic dimension; constructivism explains continuity and ideological commitments. Each leaves gaps. *Conclusion*: a strong answer can agree with the statement but argue for analytical eclecticism, for example a neoclassical realist frame in which systemic pressure is filtered through identity, economic constraints and domestic politics.