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Q1(c)

Discuss the commonalities between the Marxist and Realist approach to the study of International Politics.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Approaches to the Study of International Relations

Approaches to the Study of International Relations: Idealist, Realist, Marxist, Functionalist and Systems theory.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the commonalities between the Marxist and Realist approach to the study of International Politics
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Both approaches deny that trade and law automatically pacify world politics.

Carr's critique of utopia feeds realist and Marxist readings.

Morgenthau and **Waltz** stress State power; **Lenin** and Wallerstein stress capital and hierarchy.

Institutions are treated as masks or tools, not as a world government in waiting.

The commonality is conflictual materialism; the split is State versus class.

Introduction

Marxism and realism are rival maps of International Politics. They still share a hard core: conflict, material power, and distrust of liberal harmony. **E. H. Carr** already stood near that overlap.

Body**Shared starting points**

- Both reject Wilsonian and commercial-liberal claims that law, trade, or public opinion by themselves produce peace.
- **E. H. Carr**'s Twenty Years' Crisis attacked utopianism. Realists read him as power politics. Marxists read him as a critique of liberal ideology.
- Politics is conflictual. For Hans **Morgenthau** it is interest defined as power. For V. I. **Lenin** it is imperialism as monopoly capitalism.
- Material capability matters. Kenneth **Waltz** counts poles of power. Marxists count class and the world-economy, as in Wallerstein's later system.

Shared scepticism

- The State is not a moral person. Realists treat it as a security actor. Marxists treat it as tied to class and capital, yet still as a unit of war and law.

- International institutions can mask hierarchy. Realists see them as tools of the strong. Robert Cox's critical theory, drawing on **Marx**, asks whose order a regime serves.
- History is struggle, not a smooth legal community.

The remaining divide

- **The unit of analysis differs:** State versus class and capital. The commonality is the refusal of a harmony-of-interests story.

Flow diagram

Liberal harmony -> Rejected by both
Realism Carr Morgenthau Waltz -> Conflict and power
Marx Lenin Wallerstein -> Conflict and power
Conflict and power -> International Politics as struggle

Conclusion

Marxist and realist approaches meet in conflict, material power, and suspicion of liberal peace. They part on whether the motor is anarchy among States or capitalism and class. Carr is the hinge writer for that overlap.

Facts & figures

E. H. Carr

Twenty Years' Crisis (1939) attacked liberal utopianism and placed power at the centre of IR.

Lenin

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism tied war and partition of the world to monopoly capital.

Morgenthau

Politics Among Nations: interest defined as power, a realist maxim Marxists can accept as description of State behaviour.

Waltz

Theory of International Politics: anarchy and polarity explain outcomes that liberals attribute to regimes.