

**Enduring question:**

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

1. Realist theory has been the most central or prominent theory in the past. Do you think it will be as important in the future? Why or why not? Which theory seems to have a more promising future?
2. Which assumptions of the various IR theories do you think are unwarranted, Western-dominated, or are based on implicit biases? Can you think of ways that leaders in international relations could minimize/correct for these unwarranted or prejudiced assumptions? What about students of international relations?
3. This chapter is about different lenses through which students and scholars of international relations can understand the behavior of actors on the global stage. What about if the actors themselves have beliefs about these theories? For example, how might a leader who subscribes to realism respond differently to a situation than one who belongs to the constructivist school of thought?
4. Consider the United States’ Cold War concern about ‘falling dominos’ – that one state’s fall to communism would cause similar takeovers in neighboring countries. Which theory of IR does ‘Domino Theory’ most reflect? How so?
5. How would Constructivism explain the increase in decolonization during the aftermath of World War II?
6. How do you think a feminist scholar might interpret the rise of dictators in the 1930s, the collapse of the interwar peace, and the path to World War II?
7. The Cold War is often cast as a battle of capitalism versus Marxism. Given what you know about the Cold War, to what extent do you think the Soviet strategy can be called ‘Marxist’? Is it better described by one of the other theories discussed in this chapter? If so, which one?
8. Discuss Hitler’s attempts to take over Europe. Try to explain his actions from the perspective of each of the main theories of IR.
9. Explain how scholars of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism might respond to a security dilemma.
10. Which of the six major theories do you find the most compelling in explaining the complexities of international relations? Which do you find the least compelling? Why?
11. Think about the role that trade might play in the relations between two countries. What would proponents of each of the six major theories say about the effects of trade on interstate relations?