

# INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES)

## THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

5th lesson

EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00007

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# LEARNING GUIDE

- Lesson length: **10** slides
- Content:
  - The breakdown of Bretton Woods
  - The Continuing Relevance of Marxism
  - Imperialism



- Recommended minimum duration for review: 30 minutes
- Suggested minimum time for learning: 2 hours
- The learning of the curriculum is aided by a course book and self-assessment questions.
- Recommended minimum duration of this full lesson: 2 hours 10 minutes

# THE BREAKDOWN OF BRETTON WOODS

- In the 1970s the regime established at Bretton Woods came under increasing strain.
- The main factor was the economic difficulty faced by the US, caused by its military activities in Vietnam.
- However, in the early 1970s the world economy came under additional stress because of steeply-rising world commodity prices.
- In response to these problems, the US became more protectionist in the early 1970s (some might say that it reverted to mercantilism).

# THE BREAKDOWN OF BRETTON WOODS

## After Bretton Woods

- In the 1980s countries like the US and the UK experienced a revival of **free market thinking**.
- In terms of some theories, the collapse of communism can be linked to the revival of free market ideas in the West, allied to a more aggressive military stance towards the ailing Soviet Union.
- However, the ‘new world order’ proclaimed by George H Bush in 1991 has turned out to be illusory, in economic and political terms.

# THE BREAKDOWN OF BRETTON WOODS

## The North-South gap

- Economic institutions like the World Bank and the IMF used the poverty of the ‘Third World’ as a reason for imposing preferred **Western policies**, such as **privatization of state assets**.
- Critics of liberalism saw such measures as a way of opening new opportunities for capitalism. Liberals, by contrast, tended to blame the sufferings of the poor on the governments of developing states.
- In reality, the relationship between poverty and ‘bad governance’ is highly complex.

# THE BREAKDOWN OF BRETTON WOODS

## **Globalization and regionalism in the Post-Cold War world**

- The prevalence of free market thinking within governments across the world has helped to foster discussion of 'globalization'.
- On an optimistic view, globalization means that people across the world can hope to enjoy rising living standards.
- A pessimist, by contrast, would argue that at best the improvements in living standards will be transitory. In the meantime, cherished cultural traditions will be swept aside by the prevailing values of the market.

# THE BREAKDOWN OF BRETTON WOODS

## **Globalization and regionalism in the Post-Cold War world**

- The most optimistic views of contemporary developments come from 'hyperglobalists', who see globalization as a vital step towards the emergence of a world without states.
- An alternative scenario is that economic forces will force the world to split into regional groups, like the EU.
- This scenario is supported by the fact that a long-standing regional bodies, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has added economic questions to its previous preoccupation with regional peace.
- Some see the formation of regional blocs as a prelude to global integration, but it is equally possible to anticipate devastating conflicts between rival blocs.

# THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MARXISM



- Marx's work retains its relevance despite the collapse of Communist party rule in the former Soviet Union.
- Marxist analyses of International Relations aim to reveal the hidden workings of global capitalism.



# THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

- Marxists are rather sceptical about the emphasis currently being placed on the notion of globalization.
- Rather than being a recent phenomenon they see the recent manifestations of globalization as being part of long-term trends in the development of capitalism.
- Furthermore the notion of globalization is increasingly being used as an ideological tool to justify reductions in workers rights and welfare provision.

# THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

- **The Essential Elements of Marxist Theories of World Politics:**
- Marx himself provided little in terms of a theoretical analysis of International Relations.
- His ideas have been interpreted and appropriated in a number of different and contradictory ways resulting in a number of competing schools of Marxism.
- Underlying these different schools are several common elements that can be traced back to Marx's writings.

# THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

- **Marx and Engels**
- Marx did not write much about international relations.
- However, his general ideas have inspired many IR scholars.
- One major contribution by Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels was an analysis of imperialism.
- In turn, their analysis can be applied to economic globalization.

# IMPERIALISM

- Marx and Engels argued that capitalism, in its relentless quest for profits, will bring the whole of the world into its exploitative system.
- For Lenin, imperialism was the highest (and final) stage of capitalism, and would be characterized by a widening gap between rich and poor nations.
- Since the Second World War, Marxist-inspired writers have explained under-development in 'Third World' nations as a direct product of imperialism.

## ABOUT THIS LESSON

The images used in the curriculum can be found online and are freely accessible.

The curriculum is for educational purposes only.

Compulsory and recommended literature sources for the given course were used as sources for the lesson.

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