

Critical Theory and International Relations

Lien-Te Hung

Professor, Institute of National Development

National Taiwan University, Taipei, TAIWAN

Abstract

Critical theory is a new trend in the study of international relations (IR) arising in the 1980s. It aims at criticizing the so-called rationalism and positivism and its derivative schools of thought, namely neoliberalism and neorealism. This article traces the origins of critical theory in Kant's and Marx's philosophical ideas, especially the critical sociology of the Frankfurt School, and Habermas' theory of communicative action and discursive ethics. The essay then discusses the application of critical theory on world politics and global economy. It elaborates on the critiques of Cox, Ashley and Linklater of the mainstream IR theories and expatiates upon their views on the importance of political community, particularly the ethical, sociological and practical dimensions. Finally, the treatise raises some issues and problems of this new trend of theory and its responses and deals with its possible further development.

Keywords: Critical theory, inclusion and exclusion, ethical dimension, deliberative democracy and world citizenship