reflection upon what freedom may mean in any given or possible context. For this reason it is also
difficult to categorize critical theory as “a” theory of international relations as it is conventionally
understood. Its place is more complex, as it incorporates both “grand theory” and more “applied”
studies.

Robert Cox and Timothy J. Sinclair argue that only by understanding the interests and
behaviour of global capital can we make sense of State behaviour. This focus has lead, for example,
to notions of security that move beyond State security which is of vital importance to Realists to
notions of human security. In such a perspective the effects of war, for example, reach far beyond
the battlefield to family life and other aspects of social relations.

Critical Theory claims that there is no possibility to withdraw yourself from your subject of
study and therefore all social analysis has to be done subjectively, with values involved in
analysis. In this context, Critical Theory has two important beliefs: Firstly, the Kantian belief that
considering the limits of what we can know is a fundamental part of theorizing. Secondly, the
Marxian and Hegelian point that knowledge is always and irreducibly conditioned by historical
and material contexts; i.e., knowledge is always situated knowledge.

As a result of these points and beliefs, Critical Theorists always try to find the purposes and
functions of any given theory. The main aim of the Critical Theory is to incorporate human
element into the making of the theory and foreign policy, and therefore improve human existence
by eliminating injustice.

In 1981, Robert Cox distinguished between critical and traditional (or problem-solving)
theories. Problem-solving theories use positivist methodology and try to legitimise existing social
and political structures. Because the traditional theories are based on natural sciences and to
positivist point of view, they suppose that positivism is the only legitimate way to obtain
knowledge and to solve problems. They believe that facts and values can be separated and so can
subject and object. This view leads to the idea that there is a different, separate objective world
which exists independently from human consciousness. Cox argues that problem-solving theories
take the world as it is and treat it as if it is a framework for action and theory. They do not question
the present order, therefore they just legitimise it by commenting on it and by accepting the
dominant ideologies which rule this order.

Critical International Theorists, on the other hand, believe that because the human cognitive
process is within the framework of and inside political interests, these cognitive processes
themselves have to be critically evaluated. Theories of International Relations, just like any other
social theory, are conditioned by social and ideological influences. The major task of Critical
Theory is to reveal the effect this conditioning. Critical theory aims at finding the interests,
commitments, or values that shape and condition any given theory. However, this does not mean
that critical theory ignores present world order. It just claims that it is not natural, necessary, nor
historically invariable. It looks at global power relations and tries to find out how it came into
existence, what are the costs it brings with it, and what alternative possibilities are available.

So, the Critical Theory starts from the place we are in terms of the world order and tries to
examine its principles and values and exposes the contradictions in the present human society.
For instance, Fiona Robinson argues that ethics should be a part of international relations.
The biggest contribution of critical international relations theory is that it keeps the question of
individual human freedom and its relationship to political community from disappearing from
the language of the study of international politics.