

**BLOCK : I**

**THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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**Unit 1:**  
**Growth of International Relations as a Discipline**

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**Unit Structure :**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Meaning of International Relations
- 1.4 Development of the Study of International Relations
  - 1.4.1 Development till the Second World War
  - 1.4.2 Development after the Second World War
- 1.5 Nature and Scope of International Relations
  - 1.5.1 Nature of International Relations
  - 1.5.2 Scope of International Relations
- 1.6 Summing up
- 1.7 References and Suggested Readings

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**1.1 Introduction**

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The scientific and technological advancement and improvements in the means of communication have brought the countries of the world closer. In modern times, the world has greatly shrunk as a result of the scientific and technological development. As a result, events occurred in a particular country influence the other countries of the world. Besides, the countries are mutually dependent on each other and no country can remain aloof. Therefore, International relationship is as much a product of necessity as social existence itself. The study of International Relations is vital for the understanding of the interpersonal relations between states. As an academic discipline, International Relations has emerged after the First World War. With the changing situations at the international sphere, the nature of International Relations is changing and its scope is also widening. As a subject of study it concerns peoples and cultures throughout the world. This unit specifically deals with the meaning of International Relations and its development as an academic discipline. Moreover, reading of this unit will also help you to understand the nature and scope of International Relations.

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**1.2 Objectives**

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International Relations comprises the norms, rules, established practices

and institutions governing the relation among sovereign states. By the end of this unit you will be able to

- Discuss the meaning of International Relations
- Examine the various definitions of International Relations
- Describe the developmental stages of International Relations
- Analyze the nature and scope of International Relations

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### 1.3 Meaning of International Relations

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International Relations primarily studies interactions/relations among all the actors of the international community. It is concerned with the behaviour of international system or the interactions and relations among nations and other international actors present in the international environment. International Relations seeks to study mainly the political dimension of the relations among nations. Jeremy Bentham first used the term 'international' in 1780 when he talked of 'International jurisprudence'. According to H. J. Morgenthau, 'International Relations includes analysis of political relations and problems of peace among nations'. Again Burton says that International Relations include the study of all such events and circumstances which affect more than one state. It is a system of peaceful communications whereby states consciously and in their own interest, would like to avoid conflict because the costs of conflicts are too high.

Hence it can be said that International Relations is a system of interactions among nations that involve the use of power. However, in the present time, International Relations also include the study of political, economic and cultural relations.

#### **Stop To Consider:**

#### **International Politics and International Relations:**

International Relations is often confused with terms like World Politics, international affairs, International Politics etc. The term International Politics has a wider connotations than International Relations because it embraces all sorts of relations among peoples and groups in the world society viz, political, social, cultural, economic, legal, official as well as non-official. Thus, all international transactions – financial and commercial, international sports, technical co-operation, cultural visits, business visits, trade and economic relations, diplomatic relations etc. form part of International Politics.

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On the other hand, 'International Relations' reduces the scope of study and is mainly concerned with the study of power-relations among nations and the study of other aspects of relations is incidental to this basic necessity. According to Prof. E. H. Carr, 'International Relations includes only those aspects of International Politics in which some conflict of purpose or interest is involved'. Despite the differences, many writers do not like to draw a line of demarcation between International Relations and International Politics. Scholars like Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson use the term interchangeably and regard International Relations as an inalienable part of International Politics. The scope and complexity of the interactions among the countries of the world is changing making the study of International Relations a challenging subject. Strictly defined, the field of International Relations concerns the relationships among the world's governments. But these relationships cannot be understood in isolation. They are closely connected with other actors (such as international organizations, multinational corporations, and individuals); with other social structures (including economics, culture and domestic politics); and with geographical and historical influences. Though International Relations and International Politics are used interchangeably, as a field of study, International Relations have uncertain boundaries.

As a part of political science, International Relations is about International Politics—the decisions of governments concerning their actions towards other governments. However, to some extent the field is interdisciplinary, relating International Politics to economics, history, sociology and other disciplines. Some universities offer separate degrees or departments for International Relations. However, in most of the universities, International Relations fall under Political Science. The focus is on the politics of economic relationships, or the politics of environmental management.

Politics is the process by which power is acquired, maintained and increased. Given the meaning to politics, International Politics may be described as a process of adjustment of relationships among nations in favour of a nation or a group of nations by means of power. Its focus is on three things: national interest, conflict and power. The first is adjective, the second is the condition and the third is the means of International Politics. International Politics, therefore, can be described as a set of these aspects of relations among independent political communities in

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which some element of conflict of interests is present. But at the same time, interests of some nations may be identical. It is, therefore, a phenomenon of recurring pattern of conflict and harmony, but cooperation is only possible only through control of conflict. Conflict at least can be channelised into a desired direction. Thus, International Politics is the study of the control of conflict and establishment of co-operation. Political relations among nations cover a range of activities—diplomacy, war, trade relations, alliances, cultural exchanges, participation in international organizations and so forth. Particular activities within one of these spheres make up distinct issue areas on which scholars and foreign policy makers focus attention. Example of issue areas include global trade negotiations, or specific ethnic conflicts such as the India-Pakistan and Arab-Israeli conflicts. But one kind of politics that can have an international character is not generally included in the field of International Politics i.e. the internal politics of foreign countries. It is necessary to understand the nature of International Politics in order to distinguish between International Relations and similar expressions like world politics, international affairs and International Relations. International Relations has been described as the process of influencing, manipulating or controlling major groups in the world, so as to safeguard and advance the interests of some against the opposition of others. This implies that International Relations is also described by some writers like Herbert Spiro as World Politics. But world politics is different from International Relations. World politics would be possible only when we are able to achieve a world state, which is still a far cry.

Similarly, International Relations should not be confused with International Affairs, as the latter includes non-political matters also. Another term often need as a synonym of International Relations is International Politics. The scope of the two yet not been well settled. Margenthau and K.W. Thompson, however, maintain that the core of International Relations is International Relations. The general approach to the study of International Relations has been in terms of international institutions, International Relations, power rivalries, international strategy and enforcement procedures which are studied under International Relations also. Yet both are not the same. The term international relations between nations, in fact, describes all aspects of relationships between nations—politics or non-political, peaceful or warlike, legal or cultural, economic or geographical, official or non-official. International Relations as such embrace the totality of the relationships among nations. On the other hand, the study of International Relations is only a subcategory of

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International Relations, although the most important one. For the time being, however, International Politics should be treated as the or etical aspects of International Relations.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Define International Relations?
2. Make a comparative analysis between International Politics and International Relations.
3. Write true or false
  - a) Jeremy Bentham first used the term 'international'.
  - b) International Politics includes analysis of political relations and problems.

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## **1.4 Development of the Study of International Relations**

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The study of International Relations is a relatively recent arrival on the academic scene. Although the study of International Relations is considered to be a modern phenomenon, the principles and techniques of its study, at least in their rudimentary form, can be traced back to the dawn of history. The ancient civilizations like the Egyptians, Chinese, Greeks and Indians developed a code of inter-state conduct. However, the International Relations at that time were designed to serve a very limited purpose and truly speaking it was not international in character. The states of that period mostly established relations with the state of the same region, thereby making it regional relation. With Renaissance and Reformation, territorial state emerged and with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the tradition of International Relations between different states set in, which continues to the present time.

As an academic discipline, the study of International Relations gained recognition in the war (1919-1939) period. The first chair of International Politics, called the 'Woodrow Wilson Chair' was founded in 1919 at the University College of Wales. Several prominent professors like Alfred Zimmern, C.K. Webster, Reynolds, E.H. Carr, all well known historians, were the early occupants of the chair. This event marks the starting point of the development of International Relations as an Independent discipline.

In 1919, the School of Foreign Service came into existence in Georgetown University, which was followed in 1924 by the establishment of the School

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of International Studies at the University of Southern California. During the period between the two world wars as many as eleven institutions relating to the study of International Relations came into existence. International Relations as a field of study experienced phenomenal growth in the post-1945 period. Devastations of the two World Wars, increase in the number of sovereign nation states, emergence of many supra-national and non-state actors and the threat of new war have given new dimensions to the study of International Relations.

Thus, in the twentieth century the study of International Relations has passed through various stages of development. According to Kenneth Thomson, it has passed through four main stages of development. Let us now discuss the stages of development of International Relations.

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#### **1.4.1 Development till the Second World War:**

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As has been mentioned earlier, the interactions among nations can be traced back to the dawn of history. However the emergence of International Relations as an academic discipline is a recent phenomenon. Here we have attempted to study the development of International Relations in the period till the breakout of Second World War and after.

- The first stage, upto the end of the First World War, was dominated by the monopoly of diplomatic historians, who generally avoided the study of current affairs. They adopted a chronological and descriptive approach and made no attempt to draw some principles from their study of historical facts. This historical orientation precluded the development of a theoretical care for the discipline. As such, no theory of International Relations could develop during the period. Their attempts brought to light certain interesting and important facts about past International Relations. This phase is also termed as the Diplomatic History Phase.
- During the second stage, starting after the end of World War I, the scholars of International Relations emphasized the study of current events and concerned themselves with the interpretation of the immediate significance of current developments and problems. It can be said that this approach was an attempt to do what had been ignored by diplomatic historians. But no attempt was made to relate the past. The review of newspapers, periodicals and journals was considered to be the right and necessary step for understanding the day to day relations among the nations. The result was that no well

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conceived theoretical or methodological foundation could emerge by which the significance of current events could be understood in the context of the totality of history and the future of international conduct. This phase is therefore described as the 'Current events stage'.

- The third period also began after the First World War and continued to exist throughout the inter-war years and after. Shocked by the First World War, the prevailing scholarship adopted an essentially legalistic-moralistic approach and looked upon war as both an accident and sin, and suggested international institutions to provide alternative to this 'ultimate argument of kings'. It stressed the institutionalization of International Relations through law and organizations and firmly believed that international problems could be solved by international institutions. The Fourteen Points listed by American President, Woodrow Wilson were together regarded as a charter of reforms for relations among nations. In general, the temper and scholarship at the early inter-war period was characterized by a spirit of optimism. Hence, the concern of the scholars led to the creation of an ideal international society. The Paris Peace Conference and the subsequent establishment of the League of Nations gave strength to the optimism that it was possible to make efforts towards an improvement of International Relations.

It must be remembered here that the main concern during the period was not to understand the nature of International Relations but to develop legal institutions and organizational devices. In short, the concentration of research and academic interests was in the field of international law and organization. This period had strong faith in the goodness of human relations. It was believed that all international problems could be solved by developing a system of international law and by successfully organizing and working international organizations. This approach, too, was not sound, as it ignored the hard realities of international life. However, this era of liberalism and optimism did not last for long. The Third stage of development of International Relations is also regarded as the 'Legal-Institutional Stage' or the 'Law and Organization Stage'.

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#### **1.4.2 Development after the Second World War:**

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International Relations assumes very important role in the post World War II period with the emergence of the new independent nations in different parts of the world. The Second World War threw a challenge

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to the approaches of the inter war period and necessitated a search for a new approach to the study of International Relations. In this new environment, the fourth phase of the development of the study of International Relations started. In this phase, the emphasis has shifted from International Law and organization to forces and influences which shape and condition the behaviour of the states. It is no longer restricted to diplomatic history or the form and structure of international organization. Instead, our main concern now is fourfold: motivating factors of the foreign policies everywhere, techniques of the conduct of foreign policies, mode to the resolution of international conflicts, and the creation of a new international order based on socio economic justice. While during the inter-war years the League of Nations had been at the centre of international studies, now world politics is the setting in which International Relations are studied. Even the functions and purposes of the United Nations are now studied in a political rather than in a constitutional context. The purpose of studying the world issues now is not to praise or condemn them but to understand them.

An important aspect of the impact of the Second World War was the realization of the unsoundness of the earlier assumption that there was a global common interest in peace. Consequently, our attention shifted from the presumed availability of this common interest to finding what people and nations really wanted and why there was conflict among them. This is what marked a new phase in the development of the study of International Relations.

This phase is essentially concerned with theoretical investigation. Commendable efforts have, however, been made during the post-1945 period to develop scientific theories of International Relations. It started with the development of Realist theory in the late 1940s. Although a general and satisfactory theory of International Relations is yet to be evolved, these efforts have given rise to various new scientific approaches to the study of International Relations.

The emergence of Behavioural Revolution in politics has also influenced the approaches and methods to the study of International Relations in the post-Second World War period. The scholars of International Relations used inter-disciplinary approach, which was favoured by the Behaviouralists. Emphasis was also given to the development of more and more sophisticated tools and methods in the study of International Relations. Thus, in the fourth stage of development, International

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Relations became a very vast and complex field of study.

However, what is important for our present purpose is the fact that the study of International Relations has very much changed in its content and nature after the Second World War. Technological development, liquidation of colonialism, the rise of new nations, the emergence of new international values and crystallization of old ones, end of cold war, wave of globalization, the role of international morality and public opinion, and above all, the desire for seeking a theoretical order in the knowledge of international affairs brought changes in the nature of International Relations. In other words, the nature of International Relations cannot be studied in absolute isolation from what Joseph Roucek calls the sociological nature of the twentieth century.

In this connection, two other things must also be borne in mind when we study the development of International Relations in this twenty first century. One, that a proper understanding of the present nature of International Politics is not possible with a clear understanding of its nature in the pre-1945 period of last century; and two, that the change in the present nature of International Relations is not the total change in any contrasting terms. It is true that International Relations of today has freed itself from some of its old dimensions and has assumed some new ones. But it is also true that it has retained a few of its old dimensions.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **International Relations and International Laws:**

International law is understood as law between nations, but also those relating to international organizations, private companies and NGOs, private international law, state laws, relations between domestic politics and international law and other related questions. International law is diverse. Therefore it is impossible to talk about the role of International Law in universal and trans-historical terms. The same is true with International Relations. There are a variety of International Laws, depending on forms or 'sources', the particular area they are supposed to regulate, the way they are understood and perceived in different countries and indifferent historical periods and so on. Some scholars of International Relations, especially institutionalists and constructivists, have dealt with relevant treaties and decisions and resolutions of international organizations in such fields as international trade, global environment, disarmament, human rights and humanitarian intervention. Thus, the study of International

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Relations after behaviouralism generally showed lack of interest in the role of international law in the context of International Relations. However, many scholars believe that International Law is still relevant and plays an important role in International Politics. The scope of International Relations is much wider than that of International Law.

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**SAQ:**

Do you think that World War II changed the scenario of International Politics? Give arguments in favour of your answer. (80 words)

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## 1.5 Nature and Scope of International Relations:

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In the previous section, we have dealt with the various stages of the development of International Relations. We have also found that with the development of the International Relations, subject-matter and the field of the discipline is also widening. Therefore, it can be said that the nature as well as the scope of International Relations is changing and widening with the passage of time. Now in this section we are going to discuss nature and scope of International Relations.

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### 1.5.1 Nature of International Relations

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International Relations, as the name suggests, is concerned with relations and interactions among nations. While politics is defined as struggle for power, International Relations has been defined as struggle for power among nations. According to Morgenthau, ‘International Relations like all politics is struggle for power. Whatever may be the ultimate aim, its immediate aim is always power’. While discussing the nature of International Relations, it is pertinent for you to know the basic elements of it which are as follows:

- Nations are the primary actors in International Relations as groups are in politics. However, with the passage of time, several non state ,trans-national and supra-national groups and organizations have also come to play an important role here.
- Each nation has its own national interest for the fulfillment of which

its policies are formulated. International Relations involves the art of preserving or securing goals of national interests by using control over other nations.

- Since every nation has its own national interest, the interests of various nations may be in conflict with each other at the international level. This results in disputes among various nations. Therefore, methods are worked out for accommodation, reconciliation and adjustment of the conflicts among the nations. Hence, conflict and co-operation, as well as coercion and persuasion are present in International Relations.
- In a conflicting situation, every nation wants to secure its own the goals. For securing these goals nations use power. That is why each nation is continuously engaged in the process of acquiring, maintaining and increasing power. Power is defined as the ability to influence, control and regulate behaviour and actions of other nations for securing intended results.
- Power is also considered as the means and end of International Politics. Nations use power for securing the goals and always seek to increase and maintain power.
- International Relations is also regarded as the process of conflict resolution among nations. We have already learnt that there are conflicts of interests among nations at the international level.

However, existence of conflicts compels the nations with similar goals to cooperate with each other. Thus, International Relations aims at resolving conflicts among nations.

- International Relations involves continuous interactions among nations. Because of the existence of conflicts, attempts must be made to adjust the relations among nations. Therefore, the nations are always are always engaged in the process of interactions.
- Foreign policy serves as a means for fulfilling national interests. Therefore, the relations among nations at the international sphere take the form of interactions among the foreign policies of the nations.

The above mentioned points describe the nature of International Relations. Now let us discuss the scope of the subject matter of International Relations. As has been mentioned earlier, the scope of International Relations has been widening with the passage of time. It encompasses much more than relations among nation states and international

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organization and groups. Globalisation, scientific and technological advancements have brought the nations of the world closer. If we examine the nature of International Relations today, it is found that it includes variety of transnational relationships at various levels, above and below the level of the nation states. Now, International Relations goes beyond the political relations among nations to include economical, geographical, historical, legal, sociological, psychological and cultural relations.

**Stop To Consider:**

**Globalization and International Relations**

By globalization we simply mean the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that events in one part of the world have effects on peoples and societies far away. In other words we can say that a globalized world is one in which political, economic, cultural, social events become more and more interconnected. On the other hand International Relations primarily studies interactions/relations among all the actors of the international community. International Relations seeks to study mainly the political dimension of the relations among nations, but to a limited extent. But in the contemporary period due to the advancement of science and technology International Relations gets a more expanded global character unlike its traditional dimensions. For example, the incident of 11th September 2001 probably more than any other events, brought into the mind how just globalized the contemporary world is. The incident followed by the war in Afghanistan (2001-2002) and the controversial attack on Iraq in 1990, and subsequent insurgency and Civil war, are some of the examples of the current International Relations which is more globalized. Because in the above mentioned incidents, states involved international coalitions and transnational violent networks in conflicts that linked events in different parts of the world.

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**1.5.2 Scope of International Relations**

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Already we have learnt the nature of International Relations. Regarding the scope of International Relations we can say that in the initial stages International Politics studied only diplomatic history. But soon the study of International Law was included in its scope. After World War I, with the establishment of the League of Nation, the study of international

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institutions was also included in its scope. After World War II, its field further widened and thus at present, International Relations have become very extensive. The scope of International Relations includes the following major areas in the contemporary period:

- Nation-states occupy a primary place in International Relations. International Relations is all about the relations and interactions among two or more nations. Therefore, the scope of International Relations always includes the study of relations among the nations.
- National interests and National powers are two important areas of International Relations. Each nation's behaviour is guided by its own interest at the international sphere. Therefore, in the study of International Politics, national interest needs to be studied. Moreover, through the national interests, the nations try to maintain and enhance the national power. It has been observed by scholars like Morgenthau that International Relations can be understood only if viewed as 'interest defined in terms of power'. Hence, it can be said that, power is the basis of inter-state relations and as such it forms an important part of the subject matter of International Relations.
- National interest is closely associated with the Foreign policy of the nations. Foreign policies aim at securing the objectives of the national interests. In fact, a study of foreign policies of various nations alone can explain the nature of relations and interactions among the nations.
- International Relations also includes economic instruments and trade relations among various nations in the Modern period. Today, economic instruments like foreign aid, loans, global markets etc. influence the course of International Relations. Political relations are also guided and shaped by economic relations.
- International Institutions and the regional organizations have come to occupy very important position in International Relations today. Besides UNO, several regional organizations like NATO, OAS, OAU, OPEC, ASEAN, EU, SAARC etc. play very important role in the International Politics today. Moreover, several trading blocs like G-8, G-77, G-20, G-24 etc. have also come to play an important role in International Relations and become a subject-matter of International Relations today.

Again, several non-state international or supra-national or trans-national actors, NGOs, Human Rights Organizations, Peace movements have also come under the scope of International Relations.

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- Several concepts have controlled the behaviour of the nations in the international environment. The concepts of Balance of Power, Regionalism, Disarmament and arms Control, International Law, World Public Opinion, diplomacy etc. are the important principles, processes and concepts of International Relations. These have been continuously influencing the actual operation of the foreign policies of all the nations and hence have come to assume very important role in International Politics.
- The scope of International Relations has been widening with the inclusion of major contemporary issues and problems like international terrorism, protection of Human Rights, issue of Climate Change, environmental protection, ethnic conflicts, sustainable development etc. Thus, it can be said that the core concepts of International Relations are international organizations, international law, foreign policy, international conflict, economic relations, military strategy, international political economy, peace and conflict studies etc. It also covers state sovereignty, ecological sustainability, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, human security etc.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Describe the scope of International Relations.
2. Analyze the scope of International Relations.
3. Write a note on the changing nature of International Relations.
4. How does globalization affect International Relations? Give a critical view.

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**1.6. Summing up**

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After reading this unit, you are now in a position to discuss the meaning of International Relations. You have also learnt that International Relations assumes a very important role in the present time because no state can remain isolated from the rest of the world. Moreover, technological and scientific advancements have brought the nations of the world closer necessitating the study of International Relations. Now you are in a position to distinguish between International Relations and International Relations. International Relations has a wider meaning and is concerned with every form of interaction between and amongst nations. Such interactions can also occur between corporation and social groups. Moreover, this unit has also helped you in learning the development of International Relations as an academic discipline. In the post Second

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World War period, International Relations assumes new direction with the emergence of new nation states. You have also learnt that with the changing time and scope, the nature of International Relations is also changing. Now besides the states, several non-state, trans-national and supra-national groups and organizations are also playing very important role in the study of International Relations. It serves as a platform for the interaction of foreign policies of the nations. Moreover, economic associations and trade relationships have also come to play very important role in International Relations in modern times. Its changing scope can also be understood from the inclusion of contemporary issues and problems like international terrorism, the protection of Human Rights, the issue of Climate Change, environmental protection, ethnic conflicts, sustainable development etc. In the next unit of this block we shall deal with at length the major approaches to the study of International Relations.

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### **1.7. References and Suggested Readings**

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1. Mahendra Kumar: Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, Shiva Lal Agarwal & Co
2. Jashua S. Goldstein: International Relations, Fifth Edition, Pearson Education, 2003
3. C.W. Kegley (Jr), E. R. Wittkopt: World Politics, Trend and Trnsformation, seventh Edition, 1999
4. Urmila Sharma, S.K. Sharma: International Relations, Theory and History, 2000

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## **Unit 2**

### **Theories of International Relations**

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2.1 Introduction

2.2 Objectives

2.3 Realist Theory

2.4 Other theories of International Relations

2.4.1 System Theory

2.4.2 Decision Making Theory

2.4.3 Game Theory

2.4.4 Communication Theory

2.5 Summing up

2.6 References and Suggested Readings

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### **2.1 Introduction**

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A theory attempts to explain something systematically or a set of guiding principles to study a phenomenon or some events. Theory gives meaning and clarity to our knowledge of facts by drawing generalizations and values to concepts, hypotheses, models and variables in social science research. In international Relations, theories allow us to understand the world through different lenses. For studying International Relations systematically, the scholars have adopted different theories in different periods of time. After 1940s there was a change in the International scenario which forced the political thinkers to formulate new theories for studying new emerging situations. This has resulted in the development of several other theories for studying International Relations. In this unit an attempt has been made to discuss different approaches to the study of International Relations.

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### **2.2 Objectives:**

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The scope of International Relations has greatly expanded over the years. Therefore, the earlier methods used in the study of International Relations have failed to analyze the new emerging situations. Under such circumstances new approaches to the study of International Relations have emerged. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Discuss the idealist and realist approaches to the study of International Relations.
- Elaborate modern approaches like system or decision-making

approaches.

- Examine game theory and communication theory of International Relations.

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### **2.3. Realist Theory:**

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Realism in International Relations emerges out of the individual belief that others are always trying to destroy him and therefore, he must be ready to destroy others whenever needed in order to protect himself. The basic assumption underlying the realist theory is the perpetual existence of conflicts among nations in one form or the other. This approach held the belief that a contest of power is going on in the world and this can neither be controlled nor regulated by international law or world government. Political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli provided the ground for the emergence of realist approach. Advocates of the new, ascendant paradigm known as realism, as a general philosophy, emerged to frame an intellectual movement whose message reads like the antithesis of idealism. In the International Relations, among the principal advocates of realism are E.H. Carr, George F. Kennan, Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr and Kenneth W. Thompson. Realism regards politics as the struggle for power and seeks to explain it with the help of such factors as power, security and national interest. Conflicts of interests among the states are assumed to be inevitable. According to realism, the main challenge before the state is to survive in a hostile environment. To this end, no means is more important than the acquisition of power, and no principle is more important than self-help. In this conception, state sovereignty gives the heads of state the freedom and responsibility to do whatever is necessary to advance the state's interest and survival.

As it has been mentioned earlier, realism opposes the principles of idealism. For realism, respect for moral principles is a wasteful and dangerous interference in the national pursuit of national power. A state's philosophical or ethical preferences are neither good nor bad -what matters is whether they serve its self-interest. Thus, the game of International Politics revolves around the pursuit of power: acquiring it, increasing it, projecting it and using it to bend others to one's will. At the extreme, realism appears to accept war as normal and rejects morality as it pertains to relations between individuals. The basic assumptions of Realism are as follows:

- People are by nature narrowly selfish and ethically flawed, and cannot free themselves from the sinful fact that they are born to watch out for themselves.

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- Of all people’s evil ways, none are more prevalent or dangerous than their instinctive lust for power and their desire to dominate others.
- The possibility of eradicating the instinct for power is a utopian aspiration.
- International Politics is—as Thomas Hobbes puts it a struggle for power, “a war of all against all”.
- The primary obligation of every state is to promote its national interest, and to acquire power for this purpose.
- The nature of the international system dictates that states acquire sufficient military capabilities to deter attack by potential enemies.
- Economics is less relevant to national security than its military might; economics is important primarily as a means of acquiring national power and prestige.
- Allies might increase a state’s ability to defend itself, but their loyalty and reliability should not be assumed.
- States should never entrust the task of self-protection to international security organizations or international law and should resist efforts to regulate international conduct.

Morgenthau is the most popular of all the realist thinkers. He has offered a realistic theory of International Relations. According to him, ‘International Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever, the ultimate aims of International Politics, power is always the immediate aim.’ Morgenthau in his realist theory laid down six principles which are as follows:

- a) Politics is governed by objective laws which are based on human nature and psychology. We can understand the political phenomena by developing a political theory based on human psychology and reason.
- b) Morgenthau lays great emphasis on the concept of national interest which he defines in terms of power. He states that politics cannot be understood in moral and religious terms but only on rational basis.
- c) According to him, interest is not fixed and is moulded by the environments.
- d) He believes that the universal moral principles cannot be applied to state’s actions and these must be modified according to the circumstances of time and place.
- e) Morgenthau does not find any identity between moral aspirations of a nation and the moral law which governs the universe and asserts that all political actors pursue their national interests.

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- f) He is of the view that political sphere is as autonomous as the spheres of economist, or the lawyer or the moralist. The Realist approach is also subjected to criticism because of the boldness with which its proponents stated assumptions about political behaviour. Moreover, the concept of 'national interest' has been the object of considerable criticism as there is no operational meaning to the concept. Thus this approach suffers from ambiguity.

The Realist thinkers are also criticized for their efforts to draw from the past a series of political concepts for the analysis of the contemporary international system. Pursuit of limited national objectives, the separation of foreign policy from domestic politics, the conduct of secret diplomacy, the use of balance of power as a technique for the management of power, and the pleas for nations to place reduced emphasis on ideology as a conditioner of international conduct, have little relevance to the international system today. By urging that nations return to the practices of an earlier period, some realist writers over estimate the extent to which such change in the present international system is possible.

In emphasizing power as the principal motivation for political behaviour, the Realists have made themselves the objects of criticism. According to the critics, no universally acceptable definition of power has been offered by the Realists. Prominent realist thinker, Morgenthau considers power as a psychological relationship. But psychological relationships themselves are very vague. In addition, the Realists have been criticized for allegedly having placed too much emphasis on power, to the relative exclusion of other important variables. Despite the shortcomings of realist approach, it is still relevant in analyzing international problems, especially in times of global tension. This happened, for example, in the early 1980s when the cold war competition between the United States and Soviet Union entered an embittered new phase and their arms race accelerated.

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## **2.4 Other theories of International Relations**

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Traditional theories to the study of International Relations have failed to a large extent to analyze international situations because of their inherent drawbacks. As a result, modern approaches to the study of International Relations have come up. In this section, let us discuss some of the modern approaches to the study of International Politics.

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### **2.4.1 System Theory:**

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This approach emerged in the field of International Relations in the twentieth

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century. It can be regarded as a result of Behavioural Revolution in social sciences. There has been no unanimity among the scholars regarding the meaning of a system. This approach seeks to analyze International Relations as a system of interactions which are interdependent and interrelated. It studies International Relations as a system of behaviour of international actions. It should be remembered here that a system is probably the most widely used term in political science and International Relations today.

System describes

- (a) a theoretical framework for the coding of data about political phenomena;
- (b) an integrated set of relationship based on a hypothetical set of political variables, e.g., an international system involving world government;
- (c) a set of relationships among political variables in an international system, and
- (d) any set of variables in interaction.

International Relations involve describable regularities in the interactions among nations and as such it can be explained and analyzed as international system. Morton Kaplan views international system as ‘an analytical entity for explaining the behaviour of international actors and the regulative, integrative and disintegrative consequences of their policies’. System analysis describes a variety of techniques, such as cost-effectiveness studies, that are designed to allow rational choices in decisions regarding the allocation of resources. But in the literature of political science, ‘System analysis’ has often been used interchangeably with ‘System theory’ in so far as it is employed to describe conceptual frameworks and methodologies for understanding the operation of political systems. It aids in determining a political system’s capacity for maintaining its equilibrium in the face of stress and for adapting to changes that are forced internally and externally.

Again, a system may be loosely or tightly organized. It may be stable or unstable. Smaller systems (or subsystems) may exist within larger systems. Every system, in some sense, involves communications which do not permit the flow of information leading to a self adjusting process. Every system has inputs and outputs; the output of one system may become the input of another with which it is coupled. When systems are coupled in two directions, we speak of the occurrence of “feedback”. Some inputs may affect the state of the system and create disturbances in its equilibrium, after-which the system returns to its former normal state. Other inputs may have such an impact as to transform the characteristic behaviour of the system; instead of returning

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to its former state of equilibrium, it might achieve equilibrium at a different level and under different characteristic operating conditions.

The system theory was first expounded by Mc Clelland in 1955. The system theory in International Relations has been elaborately discussed by Morton A. Kaplan, Stanely Holfmann, Kenneth Bulding and Harold Guetzkow. Of all writers who discussed the system theory in International Relations in detail, Morton A. Kaplan has made the greatest effort to specify rules and patterns of interaction within his model of the international system.

Kaplan has constructed six models of hypothetical international systems which provide a theoretical framework within which hypotheses can be generated and tested. Within each model he has developed five sets of variables: the essential rules, the transformation rules, the actor classificatory variables, the capability variables and the information variables. The so-called “essential” rules are essential because they describe the behaviour necessary to maintain the equilibrium in the system. The actor classificatory variables set forth the structural characteristics of the actors. Capability variables indicate armament levels, technologies and other elements of power available to actors. Information variables refer to the levels of communication within the system.

Kaplan maintains that there is some coherence, regularity and order in International Politics. According to him, International Politics implies two things: international system and nation-state system. Nation States are the main actors in International Politics but their role changes with the change of international system. Kaplan identified six models of international system in his analysis of International Politics.

The first model of Kaplan is the balance of power system which roughly corresponds to that which was prevalent in the western world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The operation of balance of power system has six important rules which may be enumerated as follows:

- (1) Each State can increase its power without war,
- (2) The primary obligation of each national actor must be to itself by protecting its interests even at the risk of war,
- (3) One actor should not eliminate an important national actor,
- (4) The national actor should oppose any coalition acquiring a preponderant position,

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- (5) The national actor should prevent others from subscribing to supra-national principle, and
- (6) Defeated actor should be permitted reentry into the system.

The balance of power system worked well as an absolute system for two (18th and 19th) centuries in Europe and appeared as a rule of universal applicability. But since the beginning of the twentieth century these rules are not operating well.

The second model is described by Kaplan as a bipolar system. He believes that the breaking of balance of power system may result in the bipolar system—the ‘loose bipolar system’ and the ‘tight bipolar system’. In the loose bipolar system each block has a leading actor. What followed just after the Second World War was the loose bipolar system. In this system both supra national actors as well as national actors participate. The loose bipolar system is characterized by two major block actors (North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Warsaw Treaty Organization), non-aligned actors (India, Egypt etc.) and universal actor (United Nations). However, this system has a considerable degree of inherent instability. The third model as has been identified by Kaplan is tight bi-polar. The loose bi-polar system may be transformed into a ‘tight bi-polar system’. In this model, non-aligned states or non-members of either block would either disappear or shall have little importance. Even the universal actor shall not be in a position to mediate between the two block actors and may possibly cease to exist. However, the tight bipolar system has failed to materialize.

According to Kaplan the fourth model is Universal system. It would be possible when the United Nations becomes sufficiently strong to check war and when the block system ceases to exist. It would be like a world federation with governmental powers, yet leaving sufficient authority to the nation states. The fifth model of Kaplan is called ‘hierarchical international system’. It may come into existence when a universal actor absorbs the whole world and only one nation is left as the universal actor with unchallenged authority. In this unipolar system, national actors will be just territorial/administrative subdivisions of the international system rather than independent political units. This system can be both directive and non-directive. It will be directive if it is formed as a result of world conquest by a national actor. But it would be non-directive if power is distributed among nations according to the hierarchy under the overall domination of a single national actor. The sixth model projected by Kaplan is the ‘unit-veto system’. The essence of this system is that all states will be equally able to destroy each other. This system is

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possible in a condition in which all actors come to possess weapons of such a nature that any actor is able to destroy another actor, even though at the risk of his own destruction.

Thus, the sixth models of international systems proposed by Morton Kaplan have only limited merit. The balance of power system is impracticable in contemporary times. Kaplan was wrong in predicting that the balance of power system leads first to loose Bi-polar system and then to a tight Bipolar system. The course of evolution of International Relations in the post-World War II reflected that the opposite was true. He also overlooks the fact that the concept of national interest has already undergone a transformation so as to be compatible with the universal interest. Again, the fourth hypothetical models of Kaplan also appear to be totally impracticable. It is really doubtful that the existing international organization, the United Nations, to become a really powerful and effective universal actor. Likewise, unit veto system is also far from practicable.

His models ignore the role of the economic, technological, personal, geopolitical and political factors of international organizations. Therefore, it can be said that the system theory is only a theoretical tool which has many operational difficulties. Again, being behaviourally oriented, it is value- neutral. Another major shortcoming with system analysis is its attempt to reduce things to quantitative variables. But human material is complex and the behaviour of statesmen is difficult to predict. Moreover, system theory ignores the psychological and social forces affecting the operations of a system.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Genesis of System Approach**

Genesis of system approach can be found in natural resources. This idea is developed from biology and then adopted by the social scientists. The German Biologist Ludwig Van Bertalanfly was the first to state the formulations of the general systems theory way back in 1930s. He defined system as a set of 'elements studying in interaction'. The post-Second World War era period witnessed, in the USA particularly, a fundamental shift in the writings of numerous American scholars when they began to borrow a lot from other social and natural sciences so as to give new empirical orientation to political studies which helped ultimately to examine numerous concepts, out in the process enriched their findings.

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### 2.4.2 Decision-Making Theory:

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Decision-making approach is a very popular approach in International Politics. Decision-making is simply the act of choosing among available alternatives, about which a certain amount of uncertainty exists. It furnishes a comprehensive and useful checklist of the factors which one ought to take into account in any attempt to analyze policy making, either as a process in a specific case. Its central focus is upon something much smaller than the whole political system.

The intellectual origins of the decision making theory go back to the eighteenth century. In 1738 Daniel Bernouli produced formulations of the decision-making theory. Anthony Downs in 1957 produced formulations of governmental decision-making in terms of economic theories also contributed to the growth of the decision- making theory. In the late 1950s and early 1960s several writers like William Riker, James Robinson and Herbert Simon brought about an enrichment of the decision making approach to the study of political science. Thinkers like Richard C. Synder, H.W. Bruck and Borton Sapin have made significant contributions towards the growth of this approach in the later period.

Decision making is a process or a sequence of activities involving stages of problem recognition, search for information, and definition of alternatives. The object of the decision making theory is to devise a conceptual framework that can help us in the reconstruction of the situation as defined by the decision makers. The setting consists of internal and external parts. The internal settings include domestic politics, public opinion, personalities and organizations. The external setting implies all the relevant factors in the total situation of the international system existing at a particular time e.g. the factors beyond the territorial boundaries of the state, the decision of other states and the nature of their society. There is difference of opinion among the theorists of this approach and different lines are followed by them. The first line places emphasis on environmental factors which mean how the environments influence the decision making. The environment has two aspects—one which the decision makers can see and the other which is beyond their perception and estimation. This aspect was emphasized by Herold Sprout and Margaret Sprout. The second includes the personality factor. The study of the personality of the decision makers can be helpful in explaining things at least so long as the same decision makers continue to control the foreign policy. This factor was emphasized by Alexander George and Juliettee George. Third line of approach is related to a study of those actors who actually

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participate in the formulation of foreign policy. There are at least five elements which influence the foreign policy making: the public opinion, interests groups, and the media of mass-communication, and specific agents in the executive branch and specific committees of a legislature. According to Synder, there are two fundamental purposes of decision making approach. They are :

- To help identify and isolate the ‘crucial structures’ in the political realm where action is initiated and carried out and where decisions must be made
- To help analyze systematically the decision-making behaviour ‘which leads to action and which sustains action’. While discussing the decision-making approach, Synder has also pointed out certain variables of decision-making approach. They are:
  - a) Decision Actors: This approach focuses enquiry on a class of actors called decision-makers, who make the decisions and are actually responsible for them.
  - b) Decision-makers as actors in a situation: The behaviour of the decision maker has to be studied in terms of action analysis and they should be treated as actors in a situation.
  - c) The setting: It is important to take into account the environment or the situation in which they formulated and implemented the decisions.
  - d) Decision situation: It should also be taken in to account as to whether the situation was certain, risky, stressful, crucial, hostile, threatening, short of time, controllable or uncontrollable.
  - e) Decision Process: Snyder’s model gives key importance to the study of decision-making process. Decision making theory in International Politics should be taken as the interaction of foreign policies and that for the understanding of the interaction the only useful approach can be to study it in the context of foreign policy decisions. But the theory suffers from several short comings. In the first place it is too empirical. It completely ignores the norms values or high principles which exercise profound influence on International Politics. Moreover, the theory offers a ‘state-centric’ model of International Politics. It merely tries to prove that the decision makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories and images. Furthermore, the theory mainly focuses on the motives and actions of the decision makers and completely ignores the role of other factors which influence the pattern of International Politics. Finally, it ignores the objective nature of

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international developments. It does not supply any criteria either to explain the patterns of power politics or to prescribe the rulers of international behaviour. The decision-making framework is intended to show how and why a nation acts in the International Politics. However, a general study of the International Relations cannot be fruitfully made with the exclusive help of the decision making theory even though it is very useful as a tool in the foreign policy analysis.

**SAQ:**

To what extent the variables put forwarded by Synder affect the decision making process? Discuss. (80 words)

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**2.4.3 Game Theory**

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Game theory is a specialized form of decision-making theory and a controversial one. This theory attempts at applying different models of game to International Politics. When we deal with international strategic situations, game theory helps us to clarify our thought about available choices, suggests novel possibilities which might not otherwise have occurred to us, and induces us to penetrate to a deeper, more generalized level of comprehension at which more powerful analytic methodologies might usefully be brought into play. The theory of game has been developed mainly by the mathematicians and the economists. Martin Shubnik, Oscar Morgenstern and Karl Deutsch were among the first two, who recognized the importance of game theory. It is a method of analysis and also of reflecting the best course of action. This theory attempts to give a decision regarding what action is rational in a particular situation. Game theory is based upon an abstract form of reason in garising from a combination of mathematics and logic. Nearly all game theorists would agree that the theory with which they deal is addressed to what is “rationally correct” behaviour in conflicting situations in which the participants are trying to “win”, rather than to the way individuals actually do behave in conflicting situations. Each game is characterized by the following elements:

Conflict: In the game of International Relations, nations are in conflict with each other. Each one tries to defeat the other. In other words, International Politics is a game between opponents.

- **Rules of the Game:** The opponents in International Relations observe certain rules or norms which condition their behaviours like in every game.
- **Rational behaviour:** The players are guided by rational behaviour and each tries to choose the best course of action that can bring him maximum gains.
- **Strategy:** The concept of strategy is a core concept of game theory. A strategy means a skillful plan or the previously decided set of moves to be taken when the anticipated moves of the opponents require them. The model which the theory employs is that of a game of strategy and not a game of chance. Game theory envisages several types of games. The basic game is known as the 'two person-zero sum' game. In this game, there are only two players. The struggle is decisive, the victory destroys the loser. Another type of game is called the 'constant-sum game'. The game in which both the players try to acquire equal benefit is known as the 'non-zero sum game'. In this game there is both conflict and co-operation between the players. It is a game in which neither side loses and both may win. The game theory is particularly applicable to the study of those social phenomena in which the actors are struggling hard for their own advantage but do not have any real control over the factors which are crucial in deciding the outcome of the game. The range of such phenomena is extremely wide and covers all the economic, political, military and social aspects. The game theory has been applied to all these aspects, in varying degrees.

Game theory is a model of rational behaviour. If used as a descriptive model it can provide a standard by which policy actions can be judged as rational or irrational. But it fails to tell us why states as actors sometimes behave irrationally. It assumes that participants have similar objectives, norms and leadership characteristics, a situation that obviously can never be obtained in reality. Further, it assumes that decision makers are perfectly rational and a moral in their decisions and have perfect information or intelligence available to them. But conscious rational decisions appear to be an exception rather than a rule.

The real weakness of the game theory is that it can be applied with some success to cases of 'two-person zero sum' games. But in International Politics, there are few such situations. Most often there

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are mixed games in International Politics. Some have questioned the validity of the game theory in its zero-sum form. The main objection is that the game theory in this form has contributed very little to problems like limited war, deterrence, surprise attacks, atomic blackmail, and massive retaliation. International Politics does not relate only to war. The concept of zero-sum game is losing its importance since the conflicting parties no more want war. The balance of nuclear power and devastating nature of wars have placed a premium on negotiations rather than confrontation. Hence, to avoid the pit-falls of zero-sum game, some other game theories such as 'chicken game' and the game of "philosopher's dilemma" are developed. But they too have their own limitations.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Other Modern Approaches to International Politics:**

The scientific or modern approaches to International Politics attach more importance to the methods and techniques. The advocates of this approach try to build up theory of International Relations on the basis of logical, mathematical and empirical grounds.

Equilibrium approach is an approach which according to Quincy Wright, is a relationship among the forces operating upon or within an entity or group of entities so that the whole manifests in some degree of stability. George Liska and Morton Kaplan are the main exponents of the equilibrium approach. Equilibrium is of two types: static and dynamic. In static equilibrium a self maintaining system of automatic compensatory reaction occurs after disturbances, restoring the original conditions. This type of equilibrium is found in constitutional cases as well as in general cases. Since all elements are interdependent and inter-related, a process of action and reaction ultimately leads to dynamic equilibrium. A country with relatively equal distribution of power provides the example of constitutional or institutional order or equilibrium. It is a theoretical norm and an actual tendency towards equilibrium. According to George Liska, multiple equilibrium involves political, economic, military, socio cultural aspects of a society. It is a desirable step towards stability. Morton Kaplan states that equilibrium approach can define balance of power system in the true sense of the term. According to George Catlin, equilibrium is not a process but an actual condition. Equilibrium assumes that International Relations tend towards stability and equilibrium. However, one of the defects of this approach lies in

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the fact that since the variables of International Politics are not measurable in exact proportion, the possibility of empirical verification is very limited. Besides, Karl Deutsch developed Quantitative theory and developed certain measurable indices of community development. Behavioural approach tries to analyze International Relations as a strife between various national characters.

**SAQ**

In your opinion which kind of game is more applicable in contemporary world politics? (60 words)

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**2.4.4 Communication Theory**

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The communication theory, relatively the latest in the study of International Politics, is related to cybernetics—the science of control and communication system. If politics is a system, the control of the system depends on communications and the ability of the state is related to its ability to deal with the information. The communication system is of great importance in understanding a political system because no operation of political system can communicate with each other. Communication links together the parts of the system and also the present with the past and the future, so that demands are followed by politics. Communication has been used both in narrow and broad sense. In the narrow sense it includes the procedures by which one mind may affect another. In the wider sense it involves not only oral speech but all human behaviour. In a still wider sense it is used with reference to the ways in which the political environment excites signals in the central nervous system together with the ways in which the human beings operate upon the physical environments.

It may be observed that the term ‘political communication’ as an approach to the analytical study of International Relations is different from the term communication used in relation to the media of dissemination of information. As students of International Relations we are not concerned with the channel of communication like press, radio, though they may form a part of the study of political communication. On the other hand we are concerned with

the study of communication approach in relation to the study of international political system.

Political communication envisages certain concepts pertaining to operating structures viz, flow, processes and outcomes. As regards to operating structure every system has 'reception system' dealing with the intake of information. It also covers other functions like scanning operation, selection of information and data processing. The intake, along with the relevant past experiences, is used by the decision making part. The 'flows and processes' deal with the channels and other terms like loads and loan capacity. Load relates to the overall intake of information of any given time. Load capacity is related to factors like responsiveness (taking account of and handling incoming information), fidelity (accuracy with which information is transmitted in the various processes), voice and distortions (the distortions that tend to affect the accuracy of information transmitted). The outcome manifested in the form of decisions is the result of inputs.

For a proper understanding of the operation of communication we must understand other terms like feedback, lag, gain and lead. Feedback refers to the message about the actions which are returned to the system and enable the decision makers to access their success or failure. Leg is a measure of delay in reporting and acting on information about the consequences of the decisions and actions. Gain represents the extensiveness of a system's response to the information. Lead refers to the capacity to respond to the forecasts of future consequences. The element which leads to the integration in the system is the communication process. Lasswell formulated it as "who says what in what channel, to whom with what affect." In other words when we make use of psychological methods to influence others, we essentially engage in an exercise in 'communication'.

According to Karl Deutsch, there are three processes of cybernetics which can be applied to politics. First, the use of models in social sciences that help man to understand complex processes. Second, as the existing models are incapable of effectively representing the crucial relationship in social sciences, the cybernetic model should be developed so that these crucial relationships can be isolated, identified and measured. Third, cybernetics model can be offered to politics in general as well as International Politics. In the international sphere Deutsch is concerned with security politics in the context of peace and war. Referring to Security Community, a group which has developed the institutions and processes to assure peaceful changes, he says, it is the result of integration process which includes psychological role-

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taking and process leading to mutual interdependence and mutual responsiveness.

The communication theory is of great importance in so far as it tries to explain the International Relations in terms of a single objective, viz., national interest. It asserts that International Politics is no more important and the state is fast losing its status as a monolithic sovereign body. The theory does not look at power as the key factor in the political phenomena and emphasizes the dependable condition of human efforts and expectations for the attainment of the good of the society. Moreover, this theory makes use of quantitative data which could be used as complementary tool to check, and confirm the judgement of the political analysis. Thus it provides a deeper and a systematic understanding of the various events. But probably the most important contribution of the communication theory is that it has greatly widened the concept of political process by including the role of the individual and the groups within the political framework of the state. At the international level, it has emphasized that the consideration like boundaries of state, political and military security (which were the dominant objectives and motivations of state) have lost their importance in the present context because of the concept of single system of interdependent world.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss Realist theory of International Relations
2. What is system theory? Analyze its main models.
3. Analyze the three types of game forwarded by the game theory.
4. Critically examine the communication theory in the study of International Relations.

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**2.5 Summing up**

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After going through this unit now you are in a position to illustrate different theories to the study of International Relations. In this context it is pertinent to mention here that an approach is similar to a theory. It includes generalization, explanation and prediction of international scenario just like a theory. Here you have also learnt that the difference between a theory and an approach lies in the fact that a theory tries to give a complete picture of International Relations, whereas approaches are partial and through them International Relations can be studied in parts or compartments. Nevertheless, there are various approaches to study

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International Relations systematically. All you know that in International Relations the sovereign nation state is the actual or real participant. And the approaches to the study of International Relations analyze the structure and the mechanism of these nation state systems. However no approach is free from criticism. After reading this unit, it can be said that, the theories of International Relations have become increasingly inter-disciplinary, behavioural, comparative and scientific. Considering the changing scenario of International Politics different approaches have emerged to analyze international system from various contemporary perspective, for example social constructivism theory, feminism theory, environmental approaches etc. In this changing scenario International Relations has transformed from state centric study to the study of global strategic phenomenon.

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## **2.6 References and Suggested Readings**

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**Unit 3 :**  
**Levels of Analysis**

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**Unit Structure :**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 objectives
- 3.3 Levels of Analysis
- 3.4 The Three Level of analysis
  - 3.4.1 International or Systemic Level
  - 3.4.2 State Level
  - 3.4.3 Individual Level
- 3.5 Structures, institutions, and levels of analysis
- 3.6 Summing Up
- 3.7 Reference and suggested Readings

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**3.1 Introduction**

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As we have already learnt that, the study of international relations takes a wide range of theoretical approaches. Some emerge from within the discipline itself; others have been imported, in whole or in part, from disciplines such as economics or sociology. Indeed, few social scientific theories have not been applied to the study of relations amongst nations. Many theories of international relations are internally and externally contested, and few scholars believe only in one or another. In spite of this diversity, several major schools of thought are discernable, differentiated principally by the variables they emphasize. We shall start with the origins of the theoretical study of international relations, the traditional scientific and post behavioral schools in international relations and then move on to the various theories, for example systems theory, functional theory, decision making theory, simulation and games theory. Finally we shall get down to the application and utility of these theories.

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**3.2 Objectives**

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The major objective of this unit is to interpret and describe international relations, to study a variety of explanations for various events and non-events, and to consider various prescriptions or solutions to different

kinds of problems. At a more prosaic level, it is hoped that you will become a more intelligent consumer of news about international issues. As you become familiar with the various approaches to the study of IR, and with their particular strengths and weaknesses, you will be able more readily to identify the options available to international actors and the constraints within which they operate.

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### 3.3 Levels of Analysis

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As we know that, International relations, or the relationships and interactions between different nations and ethnicities, is inherently complex, both in practice and as an academic discipline. Since the publication of Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State, and War* in 1959, scholars and diplomats have found it useful to think about the numerous factors that shape international relations by breaking them into different levels of analysis -- individual, state and international. These different levels of analysis illuminate different reasons for why countries go to war, sign treaties or pursue alliances -- is it due to the personalities of individual leaders, the values of particular nations as a whole or the characteristics of the international system as a whole?

Thinking of different levels of analysis in International Relation means that the observer and analyst may choose to focus on the international system as a whole, parts of the system in interaction with each other, or some of its parts in particular. What forms the parts or components of this system is again a matter of perspective. The international system can be conceived of as made up of states, groups of states, organisations, societies or individuals within and across those societies. International Relation generally distinguishes between three levels of analysis: the system, the state, and the individual – but the group level is also important to consider as a fourth. To be able to use the level of analysis as an analytical device, we need to be clear about what we are most interested in. We have to clarify for ourselves what it is exactly that we want to look at when discussing a particular theme or issue concerning the ‘international’ sphere.

If we were to study and understand the 2008 global financial crisis and its consequences, for example, there would be various ways of approaching, discussing and presenting the issue. To determine the level of analysis we would need to determine what those levels are and ask ourselves some questions, which we can explore below.

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**Background**

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The level of analysis debate in IR began in the late 1950s when Kenneth Waltz(1959) published his classic text, Man, the state, and war. In it, he posits three ‘images’ as independent variables to explain state behaviour as the dependent variable—in his case, the decision of a state to go to war. The first image is the individual, in which properties of humans are examined in terms of their causal impacts on whether a state goes to war. The main property considered is the material condition of human nature, but this image is also consistent with ideational properties such as social identities. The actual term ‘levels of analysis’ was coined by Singer in his 1960 review of Waltz (1959). In it, he argues that all three levels are needed, but that ‘the key variable is not the system itself, but the way in which that system is perceived, evaluated, and responded to by the decision makers in the several and separate states’ (Singer 1960, 461). In other words, Singer initially suggested the individual level to be the most important. However, by the following year, when he published his famous article on the topic, Singer had substantially rethought his positions.

**Self Asking Questions**

Make an attempt to trace the origin of the concept of Level of Analysis (50 words)

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By level of analysis, we mean the recognition of the existence of different levels of analyzing foreign policy. Generally there exist five levels of analysis in foreign policy. Each of these can provide an insight into the foreign policy action of a given state. It also presents a case study approach to the examination of the state’s foreign policy action. The levels of analysis are as follows:

**a) Individual:**

If we take the individual for example and focus our attention on the activities or statements or writings of the foreign minister of a state, we can conduct a study into the foreign policy of such a state. We can, for example, using this level of analysis, collect all the speeches and writings

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of Henry Kissinger while in office as American Secretary of State, and on the basis of this, make some analysis of United States foreign policy at that particular period. However, even though this approach will provide useful insights into the foreign policy of the United States for example, it has its limitations in the sense that we would be ignoring other levels of analysis which may also provide useful input into foreign policy study.

**b) Legislature:**

At this level, we can study the debate and contributions of the legislature as regards foreign policy. In the United States, Russia and Nigeria, for instance, both arms of the legislature have committees on foreign relations. The activities of such committees could be thoroughly examined and studied. The attitudinal posture and deliberations of these committees on the country's foreign relations matters a lot. In conducting such a study, one is focusing attention on a broader spectrum (legislature) than the individual.

**c) Bureaucracy:**

In looking at this level of foreign policy analysis, one is considering the activities of the various branches of bureaucracy vis-à-vis foreign relations. The process of decision-making which rests in the hands of the bureaucrats quite often reflects all shades of opinion held by them. Problems encountered in reaching foreign policy decisions are also considered in this respect.

**d) National:**

Here, we are moving towards the completeness of the process of foreign policy analysis of a state. This level includes interest groups and it gives a broader picture of the foreign policy. Articulate groups in the state express their views on what should constitute the foreign policy. Government can ill-afford to ignore the opinions while formulating the state's foreign policy.

**e) International:**

In the study of foreign policy, the external environment has some bearing in shaping the foreign policy of a state. Here, we study various external stimuli in the process of the foreign policy. Assuming that there is war between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the external stimuli will be the stimuli generated by a third party like India. When a state reacts to external

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stimuli, the reaction would enhance the study of the foreign policy of the state.

**Stop to consider :**

**Marxism and Levels of Analysis**

Most theories of international relations fall into one of the three levels of analysis. Marxism, however, does not rely simply on individual, state or international levels, but sees class as the category that underlies all political relations. Decisions are made by power brokers who are members of the ruling, or elite class. The wealthy, capital-holding class exerts power over the working class, and will continue to do so until the working class gains control over the means of production. On an international level, imperialism is also explained by class relations. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, capitalist nations needed raw materials as well as outlets for their factory-made products. These factors led to the imperialist foreign policies of most of Western Europe, something that Marxists argue has continued to shape international relations today through the international financial oligarchy of multinational banks and corporations. In the Marxist view, it is class relations that motivate and underlie decisions at the individual, state and international levels.

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**3.4 The Three Level of analysis**

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The fact that levels of analysis have been used in so many different ways indicates a demand for language that will give expression to these various related concepts. To grant us sufficient leverage, a definition of the term should be able to clearly specify how levels of analysis, micro- and macro-structure and agent and structure fit together. It should be consistent with how the concept has been used historically since its inception, but it should also enable scholars with different ontological and epistemological commitments to converse about the nouns which constitute IR, even if their views about the ontological status of these nouns differ.

IR generally distinguishes between three levels of analysis: the system, the state, and the individual – but the group level is also important to consider as a fourth. To be able to use the level of analysis as an analytical device, we need to be clear about what we are most interested in.

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**3.4.1 International or Systemic Level**

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The international or systemic level of analysis argues that all foreign policy

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can be understood without even looking at the internal characteristics of nations or individuals. Rather, characteristics of the international system lead nations to behave in particular ways based upon how much power they hold. The most easily understood example of international level analysis is the Cold War, when there was a bipolar system where two nations -- the United States and the USSR -- both held substantial power. When two nations hold the majority of international power, there will inevitably be tensions between the two nations, and all their decisions will be based on maintaining their power among nations and preventing the other nation from gaining more power. As China gained power in the 1970s, a tripolar system emerged, and no one wanted to be the "odd man" out, with the other two nations allied against the third. The United States used this to its advantage by reopening relations with China and thus forcing the USSR's hand in diplomatic relations. A more modern example would be U.S. intervention in Iraq; supporters of international level analysis argue that the United States is the only power -- the superpower -- in a unipolar system, necessitating its military action to demonstrate and maintain its power.

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### Self Asking Questions

Which level of analysis is more appropriate according to you in the context of International relation. (50 words)

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### 3.4.2 State Level

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Supporters of state level analysis argue that the international system level tells only part of the story of international relations, but looking at the backgrounds of states -- type of government, economic performance, geography, history and cultural values -- can offer a more complete explanation. In this view, it is important to note that the Cold War was not just a conflict between two superpowers but that one of the two powers was a democracy. Similarly, the economic systems of the two powers -- capitalist and communist -- are also significant. A state-level analyst could point to the collapse of the USSR's economy in the 1980s as one of the factors leading to the end of the Cold War. The U.S. intervention in Iraq could be explained by the U.S. cultural belief that its

political and economic systems are "good" while other systems are "bad."

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### 3.4.3 Individual Level

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Finally, the individual level emphasizes the "great man in history" concept. In this view, the very personalities of leaders shape foreign policy. Leaders are not simply mechanically responding to international or state systems, but taking an active role in determine international relations. Perhaps the most obvious example of a individual level analysis is explaining World War II through Adolf Hitler's leadership; another would be when scholars attribute the end of the Cold War to the relationship between President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev. Once again using the Iraq War example, an individual level analysis would examine the character and ideology of George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and other key players in influencing the U.S. military action.

#### **Stop to Consider :**

#### **Marxism and Levels of Analysis**

Most theories of international relations fall into one of the three levels of analysis. Marxism, however, does not rely simply on individual, state or international levels, but sees class as the category that underlies all political relations. Decisions are made by power brokers who are members of the ruling, or elite class. The wealthy, capital-holding class exerts power over the working class, and will continue to do so until the working class gains control over the means of production. On an international level, imperialism is also explained by class relations. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, capitalist nations needed raw materials as well as outlets for their factory-made products. These factors led to the imperialist foreign policies of most of Western Europe, something that Marxists argue has continued to shape international relations today through the international financial oligarchy of multinational banks and corporations. In the Marxist view, it is class relations that motivate and underlie decisions at the individual, state and international levels. (source: <https://classroom.synonym.com/describe-realism-liberalism-beliefs-20338.html>)

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### 3.5 Structures, institutions, and levels of analysis

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Since the 1970s the study of international relations has been marked by a renewed debate about the relationship between structures and

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institutions in international systems. On one side of the controversy was a revival of the school of realism, known as neorealism, which emerged with the publication of Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics in 1979. Neorealism represented an effort to inject greater precision, or conceptual rigour, into realist theory. While retaining power as a central explanatory notion, Waltz's neorealism also incorporated the idea of structure as it is reflected in alliances and other cooperative arrangements among states of varying sizes, strengths, and capabilities. A bipolar system, for example, is a structure in which two states are dominant and the remaining states are allied with one or the other dominant state. According to Waltz and other neorealists, the structure of the international system limits the foreign-policy options available to states and influences international institutions in important ways. The United Nations (UN), for example, mirrors the structure of the existing international system insofar as it is dominated by leading powers such as the permanent members of the Security Council. Changes in international structure, including the rise of new powers, eventually lead to changes within international institutions. Thus, some neorealists have suggested that the Security Council's permanent membership will eventually be expanded to include countries such as Germany, India, Japan, and others.

On the other side of the structures-institutions debate have been the neoliberal institutionalists, who contend that institutions matter beyond simply reflecting or codifying the power structure of the international system. Although neoliberal institutionalists accept the realist conception of states as the principal actors in a fundamentally anarchic environment, they argue that state behaviour can be modified by interaction with international institutions such as the European Union (EU), NATO, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the UN. Such interaction, they contend, reduces the long-term potential for international conflict.

Although neorealist structuralists and neoliberal institutionalists generally agree that international cooperation is possible, neorealists are much more skeptical of its chances for long-term success. According to neorealist logic, NATO should have dissolved in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar structure that had led to its formation. Instead, NATO was transformed in the decade following the end of the Cold War, taking on new tasks and responsibilities. This contradiction may be apparent, however, only because such adaptation can be viewed as reinforcing the neorealist thesis that institutions reflect the existing international structure: when that structure changes, they must

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change accordingly if they are to survive. Thus, NATO was able to survive because it underwent a transformation. At the same time, NATO's adaptation reflects the neoliberal-institutionalist contention that international organizations can modify national interests through the process of cooperation. Thus, NATO countries have altered their policies to take account of the needs of other members, and potential members have undergone rigorous internal reform in order to qualify for membership. Consequently, each theory appears to offer useful insights, and both together can form the basis of a unified approach to the relationship between structures and institutions.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Constructivism**

In the late 20th century the study of international relations was increasingly influenced by constructivism. According to this approach, the behaviour of humans is determined by their identity, which itself is shaped by society's values, history, practices, and institutions. Constructivists hold that all institutions, including the state, are socially constructed, in the sense that they reflect an "intersubjective consensus" of shared beliefs about political practice, acceptable social behaviour, and values. In much the same way, the individual members of the state or other unit continuously construct the reality about which policy decisions, including decisions about war and peace and conflict and cooperation, are made.

Central to neorealist structural theory is the levels-of-analysis question—i.e., the question of whether international inquiry should be focused at the individual, state, international-system, or other level. Introduced in the 1950s as part of an attempt to make research in international relations more scientific, the levels-of-analysis question provided a conceptual basis for addressing issues such as the effect of structure (bipolar or multipolar) on the behaviour of states or other units. At the same time, it offered a means of distinguishing between different sources of explanation and different objects of analysis. Thus, assuming that the international system shapes the options available to states as actors, it is plausible to suggest that the way in which decision makers respond to such options depends on how they perceive them and on the related opportunities and constraints created by domestic-level forces. In the 1980s this perspective was reflected in the burgeoning literature on "democratic peace theory," an approach that President Wilson undoubtedly had in

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mind when he called on Congress to support an effort “to make the world safe for democracy.” Democratic peace theorists appealed to the internal characteristics of democratic states in order to explain why democracies tend not to fight each other. According to them, the peaceful norms that democratic states have developed for resolving differences with each other are an outgrowth of their domestic traditions of law and order, compromise, due process, protection of individual rights—including property rights and the right to freedom of speech—and an independent judiciary. In *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1939), E.H. Carr contended that individuals’ interest in the creation of a peaceful world could determine the foreign policies of democracies. A world constituted entirely of democracies, according to this view, would be peaceful.

By the late 1990s neorealist structuralist theory had been supplemented, in what was termed neoclassical realist theory, by explorations of the implications of structure, not just at the international-system level but also at the state level and within the state at the individual and group levels. Realist theory continued to be marked by major disagreements, however, a situation that supporters claimed was a reflection of rich intellectual resources and that detractors cited as an indication of fractured conceptual foundations. In any event, the contemporary effort to update, refine, and broaden realist theory, as well as the ongoing debate between neorealism and neoliberalism, may represent a trend toward a synthesis of the various realist schools of thought.

Although the study of international relations must account for the unique, new, and non-recurring phenomenon, it is also concerned with recurring processes and patterns of behaviour. These patterns occur with much regularity and often transcend specific historical episodes. They provide opportunities for scholars to draw generalisations and conceptualisations that cut across historical events. The generalisations provide a platform for the formulation of explanatory paradigms on such issues as the causes of war, imperialism, escalation, crises, alliance, deterrence, etc. without having to describe specific historical wars, alliances, crisis and other issues. It is the possibility of drawing such generalisations and concepts, building explanatory models and paradigms, which underlines the importance of the theoretical study of international relations.

Since World War II, international relations scholarship has moved from more description of events, the analysis of international treaties with a

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legalistic and moral tone, to the development of explanatory theories and paradigms on international phenomena. The process evolved towards the development of a “predictive science’ of international relations. The logic of international relations as a predictive science is based on the claim that when enough basic propositions about the behaviour of policy makers, states, and international systems have been tested and verified through rigorous research methods, predictive statements, i.e., theories, can be advanced with sufficient clarity.

#### **Check your Progress**

1. What do you mean by level of analysis in International Relation?
2. Discuss the Three Level of analysis in International Relation.
3. Examine the role of institutions in the study of level of analysis in International Relation.

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### **3.6 Summing Up**

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From the study we have a clear picture that theories are methods of organizing information in order to lead to understanding of observed phenomenon. The international studies literature often refers to the “level of analysis problem.” From this unit the points out that what has often passed for a single problem actually consists of at least three separate issues: the use of aggregate data to make ecological inferences in statistical analyses; the definition of primitive units in international relations theory; and the identification of the effects of systems on their individual constituent units. The paper goes on to show that some of the problems that have been discussed under the “level of analysis” rubric can be better understood if each of these different issues is considered separately. Levels of Analysis is related to the explaining of causes of phenomenon (Buzan, 1995). The coming to the fore of levels of analysis in international relations was the result of the behavioral movement during the 1950s that was attempting to apply methodology of natural sciences in social sciences. Before that, traditional approaches were dominant, and they were more oriented towards history and law. The works of Kenneth N. Waltz, Morton A. Kaplan, and J. David Singer have had major roles in bringing levels of analysis into international relations (Buzan, 1995). Since then, the works of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver have added the level of regional analysis to International Relations studies. This article reviews the three main levels of analysis and also explains the regional level of analysis in international relations.

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**Unit 4 :****Non-western International Relation theory**

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**Unit Structure :**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Non-Western International Relation (IR) Theory
- 4.4 Explanations for the dominance of the West
- 4.5 Non-Western IR Theory
  - 4.5.1 Criticisms
- 4.6 Evolution: “Global IR”
- 4.7 Summing Up
- 4.8 References and Suggested Readings

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**4.1 Introduction**

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As we have learnt International Relation to denote the academic discipline of International Relations and ‘international relations’ to refer to its substantive domain of study (i.e. the practice of global politics). More specifically, in this first short article, I examine whether the reasons given for the need to theories a “non-Western” International Relation are well grounded and how we could further galvanise the project. In the second (follow-up) article, I will attempt to show why the ongoing enterprises must refocus their attention, broadening the range of their own questions and undertakings. Here we call our attention to reflexive solidarity. The discussion in the two articles is by no means exhaustive in scope. Nor do we imply that the discussion represents the total view of the non-Western International Relation communities. Nonetheless, I hope that, despite its necessary brevity, my engagement will be useful for understanding and advancing our debate on non-Western International Relation theorisation and theoretical diversity in the field. Discussion of the Western centrism of international relations theory is not a recent trend for International Relation scholars. Since the 1960s and the 1970s, especially with the decolonization period, Western-centric International Relation has been criticized by the Dependency School and World System theorists.

However, efforts aiming to generate a non-Western International Relation

Theory within peripheral states is a phenomenon of recent years. Even though the majority of such studies are located in Asian countries, the Turkish academy is not an exception, regarding the debate on the possibility of an Anatolian school of International Relation his review critically examines one of such efforts by another Turkish scholar, Seyfi Say, who in his book *İbn Haldun'un Düşünce Sistemine Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramı* (Ibn Khaldun's System of Thought and International Relations Theory) aims to go beyond the Western centrism of International Relation by employing the ideas of Ibn Khaldun.

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## 4.2 Objectives

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After going through this unit we will be able to

- Discuss Non-Western International Relation (IR) Theory
- Explain the reasons for the dominance of the West

In these contexts, whether there are any substantial merits to developing a 'non-Western' International Relation theory and what such a theory would (or should) look like are topics of heated debate in contemporary International Relation. This interest in the theorisation of 'non-Western' International Relation results largely from discontent with the epistemic value of mainstream theories, namely realism, liberalism, and constructivism, all of which have 'Western' – or, more specifically, 'Eurocentric' (Patomaki, 2007) – analytical or normative underpinnings (Acharya and Buzan, 2017; Johnston, 2012). Western/Eurocentric theories, the criticism goes, misrepresent and therefore misunderstand much of 'the rest of the world' (Acharya, 2014: 647). In addition, advocates of 'non-Western' IR theory building often point out that Asia has cultures, institutions, norms, and world views that are inherently different from those derived from or advanced in Europe.

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## 4.3 Non-Western International Relation (IR) Theory

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In this light, the main challenge that the IR discipline has to address is the legacy of 'Western cultural imperialism', in an idealist fashion, rather than the specific social and geo-economic structure that both enabled and shaped the form in which 'Western IR' has been materialised since 1919. As a result of this idealist critique, it is widely recognised that 'cultural representation' (Acharya, 2014) is indeed the deep structural problem of the IR discipline rather than the material historical pillars and infrastructure that enabled its emergence. The logical consequence of this has been the mainstream approach that understands 'non-Western IR thought' as the

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theory produced in non-western societies, which are in opposition to the conventional geography of an eternal 'West'. Hence the apparent importance of Confucianism, Hinduism or political Islam as 'non-Western' ontological sources in the new theoretical formulations.

The activation of such cultural imaginaries as ontological foundations from 'non-Western' societies in the context of the production of 'non-Western IR theory' is conceived as the logical step towards a more pluralistic and 'cultural' egalitarian discipline. It is worth clarifying that we are not arguing against cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is the very foundation of humanity. On the contrary, I argue that it is important to critically engage with the very enterprise of 'non-Western IR theory' in its current disciplinary form. Despite the respectable efforts to turn the IR discipline into a more pluralistic field, critical scholars have taken for granted the essentialist notion of 'non-Western IR theory', uncritically assuming that such theory is only produced in non-Western societies in a binary contrast to that of conventional IR. This not only reifies 'the West' as an eternal and fixed entity but also orientalises the 'non-West'. For this reason, this article seeks to answer the following question: what constitutes 'non-Western IR theory'? To properly analyse the production of 'non-Western IR theory', we first need to sketch out what we mean by 'the West' and its relationship with the emergence of the IR discipline. In the next section, following the work of Kees van der Pijl, I will define the 'West' as what he describes as the 'Lockean Heartland'.

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#### **4.4 Explanations for the dominance of the West**

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It is not contested that Western IR was the first in the field as a self-conscious academic discipline attempting to understand and theorize about the dynamics of world politics. Nor is there much doubt that the main ideas in this discipline are deeply rooted in the particularities and peculiarities of European history, the rise of the West to world power, and the imposition of its own political structure onto the rest of the world. Taken together, these two facts mean that non-Western attempts to develop thinking about IR, like late industrializers, necessarily have to make their way in an environment already heavily conditioned by earlier developments. It is therefore not surprising that nobody disputes that, although academic IR is now a global activity (albeit very unevenly distributed, even within the West), it remains massively dominated by Western thinking. While this situation is not intrinsically puzzling, it is

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helpful to look in more detail at the reasons. Some explanations leave little or no room or reason for remedial action. Others suggest that the condition of Western dominance is likely to be temporary. Western IR Theories have discovered the right path to understanding IR. If true, this explanation would put IR Theories on a par with physics, chemistry, and mathematics whose theories can reasonably claim universal standing regardless of cultural context. This special issue would then have no point other than to exhort non-Westerners to engage themselves more in the established theoretical debates. One would not expect the laws of physics, or IR, to vary just because they were being discussed by Asians rather than Westerners, but one might well expect a larger body of participants to improve the quality of criticism, insight, and application. We think that this claim cannot be defended in any absolute sense, not least because so much of Western IR theory is drawn from modern Western history. One consequence of this ‘Westphalian straightjacket’ is an over-emphasis on anarchy and an under-emphasis on the many possibilities for how international systems and societies could (and have) been constructed. In pursuit of ‘scientific’ status, mainstream Western IRT has also been excessively concerned with rather narrow, rational choice, views of motive in power politics, strategy, and economics. It is only beginning to come to terms with the wider range of possibilities such as identity, honor, tradition, etc. There can be no doubt that Western IR Theories have generated significant insights and deserves to be taken seriously by all who are interested in the subject. However, equally there can be no doubt that it is rooted in a very specific history, and that a more world historical perspective should open up additional perspectives.

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#### **4.5 Non-Western IR Theory**

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Many critical IR scholars have called for “broadening” the theoretical horizon of IR beyond “the current West-centrism” (Buzan 2016: 155). One of the early responses to this call was to draw renewed attention to non-Western societies’ histories, cultures, and philosophies and incorporate them in the theorisation of international relations; in this context, whether there are any substantial merits to developing a non-Western IR theory and what such a theory would (or should) look like have now become topics of heated debate. Of course, as will be discussed in detail in the following section, contemporary events such as the rise of China have contributed to the development of non-Western (or indigenous) theories and concepts (Qin, 2011, 2016a; Yan, 2011; Zhang, 2012; Zhao, 2009). Advocates of Chinese IR and (by extension) non-Western IR theory building often point out that

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Asia has histories, cultures, norms, and world views that are inherently different from those derived from or advanced in Europe.

This idea has also resonance with discontent with the epistemic value of mainstream IR theories, namely realism, liberalism, and constructivism, all of which have Western—or, more specifically, “Eurocentric” (Patomäki, 2007)—analytical or normative underpinnings (Acharya and Buzan, 2017; Johnston, 2012). Western theories, the criticism goes, misrepresent and therefore misunderstand much of “the rest of the world” (Acharya, 2014: 647). For example, in his well-known piece, “Gettings Asia Wrong,” David Kang (2003: 57–58) notes that “most international relations theories derived from the European experience of the past four centuries . . . do a poor job as they are applied to Asia.” Indeed, critiques of this kind have long served as a starting premise in theoretical studies on the international politics of Asia. Almost two decades ago, Peter Katzenstein (1997: 1) wrote as follows: “Theories based on Western, and especially West European, experience have been of little use in making sense of Asian regionalism.” Similarly, Jeffrey Herbst (2000: 23) commented that “international relations theory, derived from an extended series of case studies of Europe, has become notorious for falling short of accounting for the richness and particularity of Asia’s regional politics.”

It is in this respect that Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan have put together a special issue and a follow-up edited volume (Acharya and Buzan, 2007; 2010), asking “Why is there no non-Western international theory?” despite the fact that “the sources of international relations theory conspicuously fail to correspond to the global distribution of its subjects” (Acharya and Buzan, 2010: 1-2). With the help of a group of scholars examining the status of IR theory or theoretical studies in various countries and sub-regions in Asia, Acharya and Buzan’s contributions show the reasons for the marginalisation of non-Western voices and histories in the global debates on IR theory and what needs to be done to mitigate the issue. Since Acharya and Buzan’s seminal forum was published, there has been a great deal of studies by non-Western IR communities that aim to develop new theories and concepts from their own perspectives.

Here, China’s rise has added momentum to attempts to build new or indigenous theories—especially within the Chinese IR community. Yaqing Qin at the China Foreign Affairs University states that Chinese IR theory “is likely and inevitably to emerge along with the great economic and social transformation that China has been experiencing” (Qin, 2007: 313). The

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scholarly practices of building an IR theory “with Chinese characteristics” are a case in point. Although consensus on what “Chinese characteristics” actually are has yet to be determined, many Chinese (and non-Chinese) scholars hold that the establishment of a Chinese IR theory or a “Chinese School” of IR is desirable or “natural” (Kristensen and Nielsen, 2013: 19; Qin, 2016b); in this light, Confucianism, Marxism, “Tianxia” (all-under-heaven), and the Chinese tributary system are all cited as theoretical resources for Chinese IR (see, e.g. Kang, 2010; Qin, 2016a; Xinning, 2001; Wan, 2012; Wang, 2011; Xuotong, 2011; Zhang, 2012; Zhao, 2009).

Although there have been multiple voices and different narratives about “Chinese IR,” let us look at three established Chinese scholars and their approaches to IR theory as representative of indigenous Chinese thinking on international relations: Qin Yaqing’s relational theory, Yan Xuotong’s moral realism, and Zhao Tingyang’s Tianxia theory.

Qin Yaqing’s relational theory begins with his belief that existing mainstream IR theories fall short of answering how the world works. He holds that these theories, founded on the European Enlightenment’s belief in reason and ontological individualism, privilege individual actors’ rationality over social and processual relationality. By contrast, indigenous Chinese traditions, including Confucianism, foreground social contexts and relations, and the relationality that emerges from them. Qin (2016: 36) writes: it is “relationality” that determines human actors’ existence and meaning; we can exist only as “actors-in-relations.” From this perspective, interactions between and among states are defined by various types of relationships: equality, hierarchy, and relationships that fall between the two. Thus, the analysis of international relations “should start from a study of relations rather than taking nation-states as independent entities. . . . It is the social relationships that define what is rational and appropriate” (Qin 2016: 38). Also, Qin argues that relational theory is an evolutionary theory whose epistemology is based on the traditional Chinese understanding of dialectics, namely Zhongyong. Unlike the Hegelian understanding of dialectics, based on thesis, antithesis, synthesis, the two ends in Zhongyong dialectics are non-conflictual: they interact not as thesis and antithesis, but as co-theses, giving rise to a complimentary and co-evolutionary process (Qin 2018: 153-174).

Like Qin’s work, Yan Xuotong’s work on moral realism also draws on Chinese traditional thought and history, specifically those of pre-Qin dynasty thinkers and rulers. Although Yan is cautious about the possibility of establishing a distinctive “Chinese School” of IR, he believes that Chinese

scholars should have “an interest in rediscovering traditional Chinese IR concepts” and enrich IR theories “with traditional Chinese thought” (Yan 2011: 255-259). The central questions posed by Yan’s moral realism are why only some rising states can achieve their goals and why a hegemon cannot remain a hegemon forever. A related and more contemporary question is how and why China can narrow its power gap with the US. To answer these questions, he focuses on the history of the hegemony-aspiring state of Qi and the strategies taken by its prime minister, Xunzi. He then draws out key elements of moral realism, such as Wang Dao (“kingly way”). This traditional Chinese notion stresses the moral values of righteousness and benevolence over the legalistic Western values of equality and democracy. Yan’s moral realism calls for a policy of leading by example that claims to avoid the “double standards” it finds in Western practices of world politics. It also suggests what sort of Chinese foreign policy would be conducive to forming an alternative international order and ensuring China’s global leadership. While conceding that Chinese traditional values do not necessarily compete with Western liberal norms, such as justice and equality, Yan emphasises that they “can by all means transcend the hegemonic values of the United States” (Yan 2013:17).

Zhao Tingyang is probably the best-known scholar who has applied the Chinese concept of Tianxia to the study of international relations. In Chinese history and philosophy, Tianxia literally means “the earth or all lands under the sky” (Zhao 2005). The historical backdrop of Zhao’s work is the events of the displacement of the Shang dynasty by the Zhou dynasty and the resulting challenge facing Zhou nationals. As a small tribe, the Zhou had to be able to control a large number of more powerful tribes, including the collapsed Shang. In coping with this challenge, the Zhou devised the system of Tianxia so as to maintain their legitimacy and manage the stability of the newly established political order. The Tianxia system aspires to “‘harmony’ through a universal agreement in the ‘hearts’ of all people” (Zhao 2005: 21-34). From the analysis of these historical experiences, Zhao develops the notions of world sovereignty and world order based on the Tianxia system. The highest unit of international relations is, he argues, the “world” and not the state; as such, the challenge of statecraft is world-building, not nation-building (Zhao 2005, 2009). He rejects the Westphalian nation-state model and criticises it for causing international conflicts and failed states. Relatedly, Zhao associates Tianxia with fairness and impartiality to all: Tianxia “envisions a world system characterized by harmony and cooperation without hegemony” (Zhao 2005: 35-43). He argues that Tianxia offers a “far better model of a future world order that takes into account the interests of the entire world,” whatever its constituent elements (Zhao 2018: 123).

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### 4.5.1 Criticisms

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As is clear from the above, there has been a great deal of interest in non-Western IR theorisation; this trend includes a strong and increasing commitment to the development of indigenous IR theories among Chinese IR scholars. At the same time, however, a number of empirical, epistemological, and normative criticisms have been raised against attempts to develop a Chinese IR theory and (by extension) non-Western IR.

Empirically, the international relations of the Asian region are not fundamentally different from those of Europe, in the sense that anarchy, survival, and the balance of power have been the key operating principles of state-to-state interactions since the pre-modern period. For example, based on a detailed archive analysis of China's foreign relations under the Song and Ming dynasties, Yuan-kang Wang concludes that in the "anarchical" international environment at that time "Confucian culture did not constrain ... [Chinese] leaders" decisions to use force; in making such decisions, leaders have been mainly motivated by their assessment of the balance of power between China and its adversary" (Wang, 2011: 181). This finding leads Wang to defend the theoretical utility of structural realism based on the Westphalian system.

Epistemologically, too, critics point out that it is "unscientific" to emphasise and/or incorporate a particular culture or the worldview of a particular nation or region into IR theory, for a legitimately "scientific" theory should seek "universality, generality" (Choi, 2008; Xinning, 2001). Mainstream (positivist) IR theorists and methodologists argue that IR studies ought to seek observable general patterns of states' external behaviour, develop empirically verifiable "covering law" explanations, and test their hypotheses through cross-case comparisons. For example, Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba make it clear that generality is the single most important measure of progress in IR, stressing that "the question is less whether ... a theory is false or not ... than how much of the world the theory can help us explain" (King et al., 1994: 101, emphasis in original). From this perspective, any attempt to develop an indigenous IR theory, be it non-Western or Western, is suspect because it delimits the general applicability of theory. In the case of a Chinese IR theory, criticism of this kind can increasingly be found in studies by younger Chinese IR scholars. According to Xinning Song (2001: 68), Chinese scholars, especially younger ones who have studied in the West, think that it is "unscientific or unnecessary to emphasize the so-called Chinese characteristics." A similar criticism can be found among Korean IR scholars in regard to attempts to build a "Korean-style" IR theory

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(Cho, 2015). Critics of the “Korean School” of IR frequently ask how can we make a distinctively Korean IR theory while trying to be as generalisable as possible? Any theory or theorisation based on Korea’s unique historical experiences, the criticism goes, “must be tested under the principle of generality” (Choi 2008: 215).

Normative criticisms of attempts to build a non-Western IR theory highlight the relationship between power and knowledge. Critics point out that although theory-building enterprises in the non-West contexts commonly begin by problematising Western-dominated IR, the ongoing scholarly practices and discourses associated with non-Western IR can also entail (or reproduce) the same hierarchic and exclusionary structure of knowledge production, which can fall prey to particular national or regional interests. For example, in his discussion of Chinese visions of world order, William Callahan doubts the applicability of Tianxia. He claims that what the notion of Tianxia does is “blur” the conceptual and practical “boundaries between empire and globalism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism”. Rather than help us move towards a “post-hegemonic” world, Tianxia serves to be a philosophical foundation upon which “China’s hierarchical governance is updated for the twenty-first century” (Callahan, 2008: 749). Echoing this view, Ching-Chang Chen (2011: 16) notes that although it is our “responsibility” to make IR more pluralistic and democratic, “most intellectual endeavors to construct non-Western IR theory in Asia run the risk of inviting nativism.” Relatedly, Andrew Hurrell (2016: 149–150) has added that although developing culturally specific ways of understanding the world “undoubtedly encourages greater pluralism,” attempts to do so can also lead to a national and regional “inwardness” that works to reproduce the very “ethnocentricities” that are being challenged.

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#### **4.6 Evolution: “Global IR”**

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These concerns, particularly that about the potential nativist undercurrent of the non-Western IR theory-building enterprise, are indeed shared by many non-Western IR scholars (see, e.g., Behera 2010; Chen 2012; Kosuke 2015; Shahi and Ascione 2016); for this reason, they often use the term “post-Western” IR, as opposed to “non-Western” IR. But their priority—as is the case in non-Western IR theorisation—is to address “the current West-centrism of IR” (Buzan, 2016: 156); to this end, they, too, draw attention to their cultural or philosophical traditions. Of course, this interest in traditions is intended not to establish a national or indigenous “school” of IR, but to embrace a wider range of histories, knowledge claims, and philosophies.

Going a step further, more recent studies, in the name of “Global IR” have begun to pay greater attention to how to overcome the West/non-West (self-other) binary when it comes to opening up the present parochial landscape of IR. Global IR sets out to safeguard against a tug of war between Western and non-Western IR and subsumption of one of them in favour of the other. Being wary of both problems, namely the current West-centrism in IR and the potential danger of nativism of non-Western IR theorisation, Global IR attempts to render international relations studies more inclusive and pluralistic in terms of theory and knowledge claims. The idea of Global IR was first introduced by Amitav Acharya. In his presidential address at the annual convention of the International Studies Association in 2014, Acharya explained what Global IR is or should be. His background assumption is this: IR does “not reflect the voices, experiences ... and contributions of the vast majority of the societies and states in the world” (Acharya 2014: 647). Yet, instead of arguing for a counter (i.e. ‘anti-Western’) approach, he presented the possibility of a global discipline that transcends the divide between “the West and the Rest.” In his views, IR should be a “truly inclusive” discipline that recognises its multiple and diverse foundations and histories. In this light, Global IR disagrees with the view that existing IR theories and methodologies need to be discarded and displaced. This is neither possible nor desirable. Instead, Global IR argues that these theories and methodologies need to be challenged and broadened with insights from the ideas and practices of non-Western societies. Acharya and Barry Buzan have recently noted as follows: “our key concern about any national school is whether it can “deprovincialize”—i.e. travel beyond the national or regional context from which it is derived in the first place...” (Acharya and Buzan 2017: 361). In short, what Global IR seeks is not to discard or disavow mainstream theories and concepts sourced from the West, but to render our discipline more inclusive and broader, so that it reflects voices and experiences outside the West more fully.

Epistemologically, Global IR is grounded in “pluralistic universalism” and “theoretical pluralism” (Acharya 2016: 4-5)—which reject any form of monistic universalism that puts forth a singular idea of truth or modernity. Instead, it calls upon scholars to respect the geo-epistemic diversity of truth claims and the empiric-historical existence of multiple modernities. It is thus interested in developing alternative but equally valid theories of knowledge through bringing in indigenous ideas and experiences of societies and cultures other than those of the West; but, more importantly,

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Global IR reminds us that scholarly enterprises of this kind should not lead to a nativist or self-centred binary thinking. As such, one of the key issues central interest to Global IR is to build bridges among divergent intellectual concerns and claims across the West/non-West divide. “Encouraging debate and dialogue across perspectives ... is a core purpose of the Global IR project,” Acharya writes, because a conversation “among the like minded”—for example, among those interested in non-Western IR theory building—not only “carries a greater risk of the fragmentation of the discipline,” but also fails to achieve mutual learning and a “truly” global and inclusive field (Acharya 2016: 14; Acharya and Buzan 2017: 362). In this respect, there has recently been the emerging literature on “dialogue” beyond the West/non-West distinction in the Global IR debate (see, e.g., Hutchings, 2011; Bilgin 2016; Eun 2018).

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#### **4.7 Summing Up :**

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After reading this unit you have got clear idea about various non-Western theories of International Relations. Many scholars of international relations have called for broadening the theoretical horizon of IR beyond the current West centrism. The currents of debate over “broadening” the theoretical or discursive horizons of IR beyond the Western disciplinary dominance have evolved over the past decade or so, embracing a wide range of epistemic concerns; their contributions to grappling with the problem of the Western-dominated IR are dense. However, despite such a meaningful effort, be it “non-Western IR,” “post-Western IR,” or “Global IR,” and its recent contributions, several critical questions and issues still remain unclear or under-explored. In the next article, I will discuss what is missing in the debate and how we could further galvanise the project of the “broadening” of IR.

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**Unit 5 :****International Relations: Gap between theory and practice**

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**Unit Structure :**

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Objectives

5.3 Theorising International Relation

5.4 Theory and International Relations

5.5 Gap between theory and practice

5.6 Summing Up

5.7 References and Suggested Readings

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**5.1 Introduction**

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The discipline of International Relations (IR) is the academic study of the origins and consequences (both empirical and normative) of a world divided among states. So defined, IR is a very broad discipline. It includes a variety of sub-fields such as diplomatic statecraft and foreign policy analysis, comparative politics, historical sociology, international political economy, international history, strategic studies and military affairs, ethics, and international political theory. In addition to its wide scope, the study of international relations is shaped by the interplay between continuity and change in its subject-matter. Accordingly, the contents of this unit reflect both the scope of the discipline as well as dramatic developments in world politics that have taken place since the end of the cold war.

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**5.2 Objectives**

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After going through this unit you will be able to

- Theorize international relation
- Understand the gap between theory and practice

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**5.3 Theorize International Relation**

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The study of international relations takes a wide range of theoretical approaches. Some emerged from within the discipline itself; others have been imported, in whole or in part, from disciplines such as economics or sociology. Indeed, few social scientific theories have not been applied to

the study of relations amongst nations. Many theories of international relations are internally and externally contested, and few scholars believe only in one or another. In spite of this diversity, several major schools of thought are discernable, differentiated principally by the variables they emphasise. We shall start with the origins of the theoretical study of international relations, the traditional scientific and post behavioral schools in international relations and then move on to the various theories, for example systems theory, functional theory, decision making theory, simulation and games theory. Finally we shall get down to the application and utility of these theories.

The word 'theory' is used in a bewildering variety of ways in the study of international relations. It is applied to propositions and arguments at varying levels of abstraction, and debates over its most appropriate meaning have proceeded apace with little consensus achieved. If there is no agreement on how best to understand this term, let alone how best to engage in developing and criticising the existing stock of international relations theory, there is much greater consensus over the ways in which the term is used. Three in particular stand out. First, for most scholars a theory is simply an explanation of an event or pattern of behaviour in the 'real' world. This is otherwise known as empirical theory. A theory explains such patterns by elaborating on why they take place. In one famous expression, a theory explains laws of behaviour. According to this conception, theories are useful instruments. If we know why and how events relate to each other, we may then be able to intervene and perhaps change reality to suit our purposes. This conception of empirical theory rests on two important assumptions. First, there is a categorical distinction between theory and practice. The world consists of an apparently random collection of facts that need to be described and studied to discern how they are related.

Second, it is common to come across the phrase normative theory. Unlike empirical theory, normative theory is concerned to elaborate the ethical standards used to judge international conduct. Today, there exists a large body of normative theory concerned with the use of force (just war theory) and distributive justice in international relations. When is it right or appropriate to use military force? Is the present distribution of global wealth and income fair? These are the kinds of questions that normative theory seeks to answer.

**Stop to Consider**  
**Defining Theory**

By one definition, theories are collections or sets of laws pertaining to a

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particular behavior or phenomenon. In addition to income, for example, associations may be established between voters' education, their religion, and their parents' political commitment, on the one hand, and the way they vote, on the other hand. If the probabilistic laws thus established are taken together, higher correlations are achieved between voters' characteristics (the independent variables) and choice of party (the dependent variable). Theories are, then, more complex than laws, but only quantitatively so. Between laws and theories no difference of kind appears.

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### 5.4 Theory and International Relations

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Theory, in general, has had various meanings in the social sciences and, particularly in international relations. Some of the definitions that the term has elicited include the following.

- a. Deductive systems in which propositions are set forth, which purportedly contain internal logical consistency.
- b. A taxonomy, classificatory scheme, or conceptual framework which provides for the orderly arrangement and examination of data.
- c. A series of propositions about political behaviour inductively derived either from empirical studies or the comparative examination of case materials from the past.
- d. The development of a series of statements about rational behaviour based upon a dominant motive such as power. Such a theory provides a description of the political behaviour of rational actors.
- e. A set of norms or values indicating how political actors ought to behave.
- f. A set of proposals of action for the statesman.

A renowned scholar of international relations, Quincy Wright has defined a general theory of international relations as a comprehensive, coherent, and self-correcting body of knowledge contributing to the understanding, the prediction, and the control of relations among states and of conditions of the world. In his elaboration of this definition, Wright argues that the theory must necessarily cover all aspects of the field. It should, according to him, be expressed in generalized propositions in a very clear and accurate manner; and as few as possible. This, in essence, means that the theory should be parsimonious, and not as diffuse and complicated as to be confusing. Other ideal requirements that a general theory of international relations should fulfill

include the following.

- a. Every part of the theory should, as a matter of necessity, be logically consistent with every other part;
- b. The theory should be formulated in a style that is conducive to continual improvement and updating;
- c. Instead of being purely speculative, its theses should be capable of consistent verification on the basis of available evidence;
- d. It should contribute to an objective understanding of international reality, rather than one distorted by national perspective;
- e. It should enable us to predict at least some things; and, lastly,
- f. It should also help us to arrive at value judgments.

As Wright concedes, there is no doubt that it would be extremely difficult and perhaps impossible to achieve a perfect theory that could fulfil all the ideal requirements enumerated above.

### **Stop to Consider**

#### **Division of theory**

As we know that IR theories study and analyse the international Relations from a theoretical perspectives. The IR theories can be divided into:- positive/rationalist theories and post- positivist/reflectivity theories.

### **Origin and Importance of the Theoretical Study of International Relations**

Although the study of international relations must account for the unique, new, and non-recurring phenomenon, it is also concerned with recurring processes and patterns of behaviour. These patterns occur with much regularity and often transcend specific historical episodes. They provide opportunities for scholars to draw generalisations and conceptualisations that cut across historical events. The generalizations provide a platform for the formulation of explanatory paradigms on such issues as the causes of war, imperialism, escalation, crises, alliance, deterrence, etc. without having to describe specific historical wars, alliances, crisis and other issues. It is the possibility of drawing such generalisations and concepts, building explanatory models and paradigms, which underlines the importance of the theoretical study of international relations.

Since World War II, international relations scholarship has moved from

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mere description of events, the analysis of international treaties with a legalistic and moral tone, to the development of explanatory theories and paradigms on international phenomena. The process evolved towards the development of a ‘predictive science’ of international relations. The logic of international relations as a predictive science is based on the claim that when enough basic propositions about the behaviour of policy makers, states, and international systems have been tested and verified through rigorous research methods, predictive statements, i.e., theories, can be advanced with sufficient clarity.

### **Check your Progress**

1. What do you mean by theory?
2. Discuss the origin of theoretical study in international relations.
3. Explain the role of theory in International relation.

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## **5.5 Gap between theory and practice**

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Theory and practice are linked by empirical propositions that summarise the degree to which certain facts are connected to other facts. Only when we have a large body of such propositions can we engage in the hard work of attempting to explain them. Second, theories are never true or false in any absolute sense. Whilst theories must always be tested against the evidence, they can only be replaced by better theories that are either more coherent or more comprehensive in the scope of their explanatory power than their rivals.

Steve Klabnik believes there is always a tension between theory and practice. These two separate realms are connected through a process of abstraction and application. To explain this process by way of theory, theory deterritorializes practice, and practice reterritorializes theory: A theory, which is becoming practice; and a practice, which is becoming theory.

To explain, theory is abstracted practice, and practice is applied theory. The only way you can get these two camps to talk to each other is to figure out what the theory says that provides value to those who practice.

Thus from the above we can summarise the difference between theory and practice are:

- It is all too easy to explain the concepts of thirst, pain and sorrow in theory, but the person realizes the difference only when he undergoes

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these experiences in real life.

- In theory, many assumptions are made to explain the phenomenon and concepts, whereas in real life, there are no assumptions and conditions are always unique.
- The dichotomy of theory and practice will remain as these two form the backbone of all learning procedures.

John Mariotti, president and CEO of The Enterprise Group, stated in his blog that in theory, there is very little difference between theory and practice; in practice there's a hell of a lot of difference. Such it is in life and in business and in politics. Theory teaches us how things should work in a perfect world.

Experience teaches us how theory might or might not work in an imperfect world. More importantly, experience prepares us to seek other inputs and different kinds of solutions when the imperfections of the real world bite us. Only in the school of hard knocks does real world experience instill about how to deal with the difference between theory and practice. When experience is theoretical and not practical, mistakes are unavoidable and on-the-job fixes are all that is left.

To maximize one's understanding of theory and practice, there should be a balance between concepts. Nonprofit professionals are encouraged to read and understand theory to the greatest degree possible and seek to apply these theories in practice. We also need to realize there is no better education than on the job training.

It should be noted that the sheer variety of empirical theory in the study of international relations is very wide indeed. It is common to distinguish between middle-range theory and grand theory. For example, there is a big difference between a theory that tries to explain single events like the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, a theory that tries to account for the variation of patterns of war and peace among the great powers over the last 200 years, and a theory that attempts to explain why war itself takes place.

Broad range of theoretical perspectives in IR is the result of a process – one increasingly hard to keep up with – of the adaptation of insights from related and neighbouring (social) science. It is in fact a key characteristic of IR, in common with all social science disciplines, that it cannot be neatly separated from disciplines such as sociology or political philosophy and theory, nor even from economics, political geography, psychology or law. Drawing on

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the categories and concepts found in these neighbouring disciplines can often help IR achieve additional insights. This is particularly true when we consider that international relations are becoming increasingly globalized. The object of study no longer fits neatly within the boundaries of a discipline historically devoted to the study of interstate relations. It is only against this background that we can understand why the corpus of contemporary IR theory has branched off into a multiplicity of approaches, such as the huge range of critical, constructivist and postmodern theories that have proliferated since the 1990s. This has dismantled the boundaries between formerly separate academic disciplines and brought to the fore the “social” character of international relations; consequently, IR scholars now need to engage in genuine social theorizing rather than maintaining an exclusive domain of IR theories devoted to the study of interstate relations (see, for example, Albert and Buzan 2013).

Because it is a social science, there is always a close interplay between theory building in International Relations and the discipline’s historical and sociopolitical context . Progress in IR theory is closely linked with events in the “real world” of international politics, such as the development of the bipolar system following the Second World War, the decolonization of large parts of Africa and Asia in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Vietnam War and the global economic crisis triggered by the “oil price shocks” of the 1970s, the rise of emerging powers since the 2000s and what we generally perceive as the “processes of globalization”. Global political upheavals such as the end of the East–West conflict, the shift in the role of sovereign nation states associated with globalization, and the increasing impact of transnational non-state actors rooted in economy and society have exercised and continue to exercise an enduring influence on a whole generation of theory-oriented scholars, doing much to shape their theoretical ideas about international relations. The theory of IR finds itself confronted with new challenges in the light of phenomena such as “failing” or “failed states” and the resulting security and developmental tasks involved in international “state-building”, the emergence of new, globally organized forces of violence resulting from the erosion of the state monopoly of power and, not least, the increasing global economic and political importance of China and other rising powers (such as India, Brazil or Turkey) and of entire world regions (above all Asia) – all of which are highly significant in their effects on the structure of the international system and in their practical political implications. Another demonstration of the link between IR theory and the real world is the increasing number of studies that review and reappraise past theoretical work in light of the global and European crises and the political processes of the “Arab Spring”. While

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initially the end of the East–West conflict was generally interpreted – with theoretical back-up – as an opportunity to advance world peace (the key terms here being “new world order”, “peace dividend”, “nuclear disarmament”, etc.), events such as “9/11”, the fight against international terrorism, along with new international problems such as securing energy supplies, international climate protection and, not least, turbulence in the international financial and capital markets, have refocused theoretical attention on the ambivalent, transitional and conflictual nature of international politics and global order.

### **Stop To Consider**

#### **Three dimensions of theory: ontology, epistemology and normativity**

It is important to highlight three key dimensions of theories. First, a theory makes statements about the observer’s perspective on the object of investigation. This is the ontological dimension of IR theory (“theory of being”). The ontology underpinning a theory, its conception of “the way the world is” or “what the world is made of”, refers to the substantive ideas or Manuela Spindler and Siegfried Schieder world-view – understood as a system of assumptions and beliefs – that a theory engenders about its object, in this case, international relations. The question here is “What is ?” or “What is the nature of the subject matter?” In this sense, a theory of international relations formulates general assumptions about international relations, that is, the actors’ sphere of action, the type or “quality” of the key actors, their goals and preferences, as well as the driving forces of international politics and its fundamental problems and developmental prospects.

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## **5.6 Summing Up**

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From this unit you have learnt theoretical study of international relations. You have also learnt that there exists gap between theory and practice. We ought to be able to understand our society and world politics better by exploring the ways in which ideologies shape and structure the ways in which people live and act. In many respects, then, IR theory reflects these ways of living and acting too. Thus, we can think of IR theory as itself an ideological reflection of the world around us. R. B. J. Walker (1993, 6) has made the contentious suggestion that ‘theories of international relations are more interesting as aspects of contemporary

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world politics that need to be explained than as explanations of world politics.’ You might not want to go that far, but there is no doubt that there is nothing politically or ideologically neutral about IR theory – and locating IR theories in their historical and intellectual context exposes this irreversibly.

**Self Asking Questions**

What do you understand by gap between theory and practice. (100 words)

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