Theories of International Relations

COURSE CODE: M23PS08DC

Postgraduate Programme in Political Science

Discipline Core Course

Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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Semester - II

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(With Model Question Paper Sets)

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Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.   22-05-2025

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Introduction to IR

UNIT 1

Evolution of the Discipline

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the historical development of International Relations (IR) as a distinct academic discipline, including key milestones and foundational theories
- analyze the influence of historical events, such as the World Wars and the Cold War, on the evolution of IR theories and approaches
- evaluate the contributions of early scholars in shaping the discipline, particularly their impact on contemporary IR theories and debates
- explore the interdisciplinary nature of IR and its connections with other disciplines

Background

The discipline of International Relations (IR) has evolved significantly since its formal inception in the early 20th century. Emerging out of the devastation of World War I, IR was initially focused on understanding and preventing future conflicts. Early scholars like E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau laid the foundation by introducing concepts such as realism, emphasizing power politics and state-centric approaches.

During the interwar period (1918-1939), the principal theory dominated was Liberalism, commonly known as Idealism. This theory advocated for international cooperation and institutions like the League of Nations. However, the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent Cold War reinforced the relevance of Realism as the dominant theory of IR. The Cold War era saw the development of new theories like neorealism and neoliberalism.

The discipline further expanded in the post-Cold War period, incorporating critical theories, constructivism, and feminist perspectives, reflecting the growing complexity of global politics. Today, IR is recognized as an interdisciplinary field, drawing from various domains to address issues like globalization, security, and international governance.

Discussion

1.1.1 Evolution

The origin and development of International Relations (IR) as a subject of study and as a distinct academic discipline involve various theories and interpretations. The constantly changing nature of global events and the expanding scope of IR make it challenging to pinpoint the exact trajectory of its evolution.

□ Development of Discipline

The roots of IR can be traced back thousands of years, such as the interactions among Sumerian city-states around 3500 B.C. and the Greek city-states, which had their own international system with established norms for war and peace. The history of modern International Relations is more closely linked to the emergence of the nation-state system in the 17th century. In this regard, the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which established the concept of sovereign nation-states, is viewed as marking the true beginning of International Relations.

□ Historical Foundations

The Treaty of Utrecht, signed in 1713, played a pivotal role in shaping the modern framework of international relations. It brought an end to the War of the Spanish Succession and introduced the concept of maintaining a balance of power among European states to avoid dominance by any single nation. This principle later became a cornerstone of diplomatic practice. The treaty also emphasized the recognition of state sovereignty and the importance of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations—ideas that significantly influenced the development of international law.

□ Balance of Power Doctrine

1.1.2 Stages of Evolution

From the First World War to the present, International Relations (IR) has undergone various stages of evolution. Following the conclusion of the First World War, the movement towards establishing IR as a distinct academic discipline also began in earnest. Understanding the journey of IR as a separate field of study involves examining its evolution and the shifting patterns of interactions among states.

□ Evolution of IR as a Discipline

1.1.2.1 Diplomatic History Stage (1648-1914)

Before the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918), the study of IR was predominantly the domain of historians rather than political scientists. During this period, the focus was mainly on the state system, with scholars largely identifying with sovereign states and using them to pursue their interests. Consequently, there was no structured or systematic study of International Relations in universities around the world. Efforts were made to explore various contemporary international issues through courses related to history, law, and theology. A notable exception was the pioneering work of Paul S. Reinsch, who delivered lectures on world politics at the University of Wisconsin in 1900.

Even with the existence of a state system, not all states recognized each other, and the principles of universality and sovereign equality were often vague and challenged by more powerful states. Some states had only partial sovereignty, existing as small principalities or fiefdoms under the influence of larger empires or powerful leaders. States held significance for various reasons, such as their geographic location, economic or military strength, cultural or ethnic characteristics, or strategic importance. These factors shaped inter-state relations and formed the core agenda of international relations.

The relationships between states became increasingly complex and varied, influenced by factors such as economic interests, geography, military power, history, social and cultural elements, religion, ideology, strategic considerations, and leadership dynamics. These complexities led to situations of both conflict and cooperation among states, which in turn became focal points of study within the field of International Relations.

Despite the development of nation-states, IR did not significantly advance as a formal discipline until after the First World War. The study of IR thus continued to encompass both the dimensions of conflict and cooperation inherent in state interactions. During the period when the study of International Relations was dominated by diplomatic historians, several key trends characterized the field:

1. The majority of studies were descriptive in nature, with little effort made to establish causal relationships.

2. Rather than analyzing events through the lens of various underlying factors and forces, research during this time consisted of chronological descriptions, often recorded incompletely.

❒ Pre-Disciplinary Foundations

❒ Unequal Sovereignties

❒ Complex Inter-State Dynamics

❒ Pre-Scientific Phase of IR

3. Studies were primarily focused on understanding historical events, with minimal effort dedicated to analyzing contemporary occurrences.

4. Because systematic methodology was absent, these studies lacked the scientific rigor necessary for building theories.

5. Due to the descriptive nature of these studies, the field of International Relations lacked empirical and scientific foundations.

Consequently, prior to World War I, the study of International Relations was mainly confined to historical and diplomatic narratives rather than focusing on analysis and theory building from a contemporary perspective. Therefore, this period saw little progress in terms of theory development or the systematic and comprehensive growth of International Relations as a field of study.

❑ Narrative-Centric Approach

1.1.2.2 The Inter-War Stage (1919-1939)

The aftermath of the First World War significantly influenced the study of International Relations (IR). It was only after the war that the teaching of IR as a distinct academic discipline began to emerge in universities across the United Kingdom, the United States, and Switzerland.The formal academic study of International Relations started with the establishment of international professorships in the UK. Notably, in 1919, the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Relations was founded at Aberystwyth, University of Wales (now Aberystwyth University), with Alfred Eckhart Zimmer as its first occupant. That same year, the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service was established at Georgetown University in the USA.

❑ Post-World War I Institution-alization of IR

In the early 1920s, under the influence of Nobel Peace Prize winner Philip Noel-Baker, the Department of International Relations was created at the London School of Economics (LSE). It became the first institution to offer a wide range of degrees in IR. Other universities in the USA and Switzerland soon followed suit.Further advancements were made with the establishment of the Montague Burton Professorship in International Relations at Oxford and LSE, which boosted the study of IR. In 1927, the Graduate Institute of International Studies was founded in Geneva, specifically to train diplomats for the League of Nations.

❑ Expansion of IR Education in the 1920s

The University of Chicago began offering a graduate course in IR in 1928, and in 1933, Harvard and Tufts University jointly established the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, which was the first school in the USA dedicated to offering

a graduate degree in International Relations. This trend continued with other universities introducing similar programs. The interwar period (1919-1939) saw a marked focus on the growth of international legal organisations, emphasising the institutionalisation of international relations through the creation of a legal and organisational framework. The prevailing belief was that establishing such institutions would naturally resolve the problems of the international system. This era's approach prioritized identifying goals and values that would foster a peaceful world order.

Rooted in idealism, optimism, and hope, this perspective held that the development of legal and institutional structures could prevent conflict, violence, and war. Supporters of this approach, like Woodrow Wilson, Norman Angell, Alfred Zimmern, Leon Bourgeois and Jan Smuts, had an emotional and visionary outlook, which led to the creation of the League of Nations as part of the peace treaty following the First World War. They believed that past conflicts and wars were caused by a focus on power enhancement, balance of power, and displays of power, which were seen as inappropriate. Instead, it was thought that peace could only be achieved through law and organized institutions, relying on the strength of individual and collective morality within states and their leaders.

Several significant changes marked this era in the study of International Relations:

1. This period saw a shift in focus towards current events and developments in international relations, moving away from the earlier emphasis on diplomatic history.

2. Although the emphasis on current affairs marked a departure from historical descriptions, the lack of historical context meant that a comprehensive understanding of international relations was still not achieved.

3. Relying exclusively on current events for understanding IR was inadequate. This narrow approach resulted in a skewed perspective of international relations.

4. The study of IR lacked a comprehensive analysis of past and present events and appropriate connections between them. Consequently, theory-building remained absent during this period.

The emphasis on law and organization during this period had several implications for the field of international relations:

1. Although the focus on creating legal and organizational structures was driven by idealism, morality, and a vision for peace, it often overlooked the practical realities and national interests that prevailed at the time. Consequently, this approach was disconnected from the actual dynamics of international relations.

2. Establishing global peace depends on numerous complex factors, far beyond the simplistic outlook of legal and organizational frameworks. The focus on institutionalization failed to account for the dynamic nature of international relations, a shortcoming that became evident when the League of Nations could not maintain international peace.

3. Despite efforts to create a framework for peace through the establishment of the League of Nations, no comprehensive theories of international politics were developed during this period.

4. There was a notable disparity between the states' recommendations for international reforms and their pursuit of national interests. While major powers agreed to the League of Nations' Charter in principle, they often chose to leave the League rather than adhere to its mandates.

In summary, this era did not fully grasp or analyze the complexities of international relations. The creation of international legal and organizational frameworks did not lead to lasting peace, and no general theory was developed to understand the phenomenon of international relations better.

1.1.2.3 Scientific Studies Stage (1945-1991)

Following the conclusion of World War II (1939-1945), international politics experienced a substantial transformation in both its nature and scope. The emergence of new states in Asia and Africa increased global community membership, making international politics genuinely global. Concurrently, the onset of the Cold War (1945-1991) between the two superpowers introduced new issues to the study of international relations, including conflict, proxy wars, arms races, nuclear threats, détente, and balance of power. Additionally, non-state actors such as Amnesty International and multinational corporations began to significantly influence the dynamics of international relations.

These developments, coupled with power rivalry and Cold War tensions, brought theoretical approaches focused on peace and global order to the forefront of international relations studies. As

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❏ Challenges of Idealism and Institutionalism

❏ Limitations of Early Idealism in IR

❏ Post-WWII Transformation in International Relations

❏ Shift Towards Realism and Scientific Approaches

a result, the field expanded to include new dimensions, moving away from earlier idealistic, moralistic, legal, and institutional perspectives towards more rational and scientific approaches.

1. **Realism and Neo-Realism:** The changes in international relations led to a focus on Realism and behavioralism. Hans J. Morgenthau is considered the first thinker to develop Realism as a theory for the study of modern international relations. Since the end of World War II, Realism has been a dominant approach in IR. In 1948, Morgenthau's work Politics among Nations became a cornerstone of Realist thought. Classical Realism, rooted in history, philosophy, and theology, began to decline in the 1960s with the rise of behavioralism in social sciences. The 1970s saw the emergence of **Neo-Realism** (or **Structural Realism**), championed by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz argued that the anarchical structure of the international system, rather than human nature or domestic variables, primarily explained the behavior of states.

Unlike Classical Realists, Waltz aimed to provide a scientific foundation for his ideas, drawing on economic principles and attempting to distance Neo-Realism from historical, sociological, theological, and human nature considerations.

2. **Systems Theory:** Another major development in the post-World War II period was the application of systems theory to international relations, developed by Morton Kaplan, aiming to make the study more scientific using quantitative methods and behavioral analysis. Systems theories prioritize the structure of the international system to explain state behavior. States are viewed as units within a broader system, and their actions can be understood by examining how the international system's structure influences and shapes them. Systems theory marked a shift by treating the international system as an independent variable influencing state behavior.

Systems theory assumes that the fundamental parameters of the international system can be integrated, enabling the development of a general systems theory. Despite differing interpretations of what constitutes a "system," systems theory has enriched theoretical studies of IR by broadening the scope of inquiry to include dimensions that previously received inadequate attention.

3. **Other Theoretical Frameworks:** The influence of behaviouralism led to the development of partial theories such as decision-making theory, game theory, communication theory, and bargaining theory. These theories focused primarily on foreign policy analysis through the study of decision-makers' behavior. These frameworks employed scientific and value-free approaches, as advocated by behaviouralism. During this era, Realists and behaviouralists sought to study international relations through scientific and realistic lenses rather than utopian, idealistic, historical, diplomatic, ethical, legal, or institutional frameworks. However, these approaches were criticized for not offering a holistic interpretation of international relations.In fact, regardless of its scientific basis, no theory can foresee major upheavals and transformations in the global political scenario. The expectation that a theory must have predictive power reflects an older positivist view within the discipline, which has since been challenged by various critical and post-positivist approaches.

□ Behaviouralism and its Critiques

1.1.2.4 Post Cold War Stage (1991-2019)

The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in the nature and dynamics of international relations, prompting a new kind of discourse to emerge for analyzing and understanding global politics. This era witnessed the rise of multiple critical theories, including constructivism, feminism, and post-modernism, which began addressing normative questions that were largely absent during the Cold War period. This shift in theoretical perspectives is often referred to as a "paradigm shift" in the field of International Relations.

□ Post-Cold War Paradigm Shift

Unlike the earlier "post-Westphalian" phase, this period is characterized as a "post-sovereignty" era. Critical theories of this time were less concerned with scientific or analytical frameworks and more focused on problem-solving, making them emancipatory in nature. These theories sought to provide answers to contemporary questions in international relations, critiquing existing dogmas and advocating for the de-legitimization of the status quo. Their primary concern was not merely to establish a theoretical framework but to engage in a thorough social and political critique. Key scholars in these areas include Andrew Linklater, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe, Christine Sylvester, J. Ann Tickner, Richard Ashley, Robert Cox, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas.

□ Post-Sovereignty Critical Theories

1.1.3 Structural Changes in Global Politics

The period following World War II was dominated by the intense Cold War rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union. To bolster their positions in global politics, both superpowers established their own blocs. The United States aligned with liberal democratic and capitalist countries, creating alliances such as NATO and SEATO. In contrast, the Soviet Union led the socialist countries under the Warsaw Pact. This intense rivalry divided the world into two opposing blocs, creating a bipolar global order. The emergence of new centers of power, including the European Community, Japan, Germany, China, India, and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), further eroded the strict bipolarity of the early Cold War years, giving rise to a trend toward multipolarity or polycentrism. As both superpowers continued to influence international relations, the global system in the 1970s was often described as bi-multipolarity, a combination of bipolarity and multipolarity.

❒ Bipolarity and multipolarity in the Cold War

The early 1990s saw this bi-multipolar system transform into a virtually unipolar world, with the United States as the sole superpower, bolstered by NATO. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Russia's inability to challenge U.S. power, the lack of substantial counterbalances from the EU, Germany, Japan, France, and China, the UK's support for U.S. policies, the decline of NAM, and the economic dependence of developing countries and former socialist states all contributed to this new reality in international relations. As the only remaining superpower, the United States came to dominate the international system and held significant sway over institutions like the United Nations Security Council. The lack of a credible challenger allowed the U.S. to maintain a dominant position in world affairs, solidifying unipolarity in the global order. This trend was further reinforced by the growing influence of neoliberal economic ideas.

❒ Unipolarity and U.S. Dominance in the Post-Cold War Era

However, the early 21st century saw signs of a shift towards a more multipolar world. Countries such as Russia, China, Japan, the European Union, India, and Brazil, along with groups like the G-20, began to play more active roles in global affairs. These nations expressed a commitment to fostering and maintaining a multipolar international system. The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, also underscored the need for broad international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, prompting the U.S. to engage more actively with other nations. These developments indicate a clear trend towards the re-emergence of polycentrism, or multipolarity, in international relations. The current global system is gradually moving towards a more balanced and multipolar structure.

❒ Shift towards multipolarity in the 21st Century

1.2.4 Economic Changes and the advent of Globalisation

Globalization has increasingly captured the attention of nations and has become a widely accepted objective in contemporary international relations. It represents both the active process of cross-border corporate expansion and the growing network of economic and logistical connections that span the globe. Like its counterpart, "free trade," globalization functions as an ideology aimed at minimizing resistance to integration by portraying it as both highly beneficial and inevitable.Globalization is anticipated to facilitate significant economic, political, and cultural transformations, effectively turning the world into a global village. It also aims to promote sustainable development and environmental protection.

However, critics argue that globalization often serves corporate interests and can reinforce neo-colonial dominance by developed nations over the economies and policies of developing countries. Many developing nations have experienced more negative impacts than benefits from globalization. Despite these criticisms, the reality of global problems—such as financial crises, transnational health issues, and environmental challenges—demonstrates the necessity for global solutions. Thus, while globalization remains a fact of international relations, achieving effective global participation is crucial.

1.2.5 Changing Nature of International Relations

The successful integration of Western European economies through the European Common Market and other institutions has inspired other nations. By creating supranational institutions, Western European countries achieved significant economic, industrial, and technological advancements. This success motivated the creation of a single economic zone in Europe, featuring a common currency and banking system. The European Economic Community (now the European Union) emerged as a powerful supranational entity and regional organization in modern international relations.

The dissolution of the Socialist bloc and the political transformations in Eastern Europe during the 1990s further advanced economic cooperation across Europe, leading to the inclusion of several Eastern European states into the EU and others waiting to join.The EU's success has prompted other regions to explore similar cooperative frameworks. Southeast Asian nations have utilized ASEAN, while South Asia has established the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

□ The Rise of Globalization

□ Critiques of Globalization

□ European Integration and Supranationalism

□ Regional Cooperation and Expansion

The Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) includes nine countries from West Asia and Central Asia, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) comprises China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. Various other regional groupings, such as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the African Union (AU), and the Arab League, reflect diverse regional and functional objectives. Economic and trade blocs like NAFTA and APEC, along with groups such as ARF, G-8, G-15, and G-20, underscore the growing significance of regional economic integration. States are increasingly partnering regionally to advance economic development and there has been a substantial increase in international, regional, and bilateral institutions aimed at managing socio-economic and cultural relations. This trend towards institutionalization represents a move towards mutual benefits through organized efforts and reflects the new drive for international integration.

1.1.3 Conclusion

The examination of various stages in the evolution of International Relations (IR) shows that this discipline is not only challenging but also highly dynamic and complex. In its initial phase, IR emerged as a distinct field of study, primarily focused on the concept of nation-states, first formalized by the Treaty of Westphalia. The Treaty of Utrecht further refined this concept by establishing the idea of complete external sovereignty for nation-states. However, during this early period, the study of IR was largely limited to diplomatic history and descriptive analyses. The interwar period was crucial for the development of IR as a discipline. During this time, there was a significant emphasis on current affairs, and the role of law and international organizations was highlighted. It was believed that a robust legal and institutional framework could address issues of war and peace among nations. After World War II, the focus shifted towards scientism and the adoption of the Realist paradigm, which dominated the study of IR.

The end of the Cold War brought about a complex and unpredictable landscape, both politically and economically. This period saw the rise of alternative critical theories in global politics. However, these new approaches have also struggled to formulate a comprehensive general theory of International Relations. At the same time, the economic developments post-1991, characterized by globalization, have not been able to provide solutions to all the economic challenges and issues faced by many states. Therefore, a deeper understanding of International Relations requires further efforts. Given the dynamic and complex interdependence among nation-states,

achieving a complete and comprehensive explanation of International Relations may remain difficult, if not impossible, in the foreseeable future.

Summarised Overview

The unit "Evolution of the Discipline" traces the historical development of International Relations (IR) from its emergence as a distinct field of study to its current status as an interdisciplinary domain. The roots of IR lie in the aftermath of World War I, with early scholars seeking to understand the causes of war and peace. The initial focus on idealism, which promoted international cooperation, was soon overshadowed by realism, which emphasized the role of power and state interests in global politics.

The interwar period and the subsequent Cold War played pivotal roles in shaping the discipline, as new theories like neorealism and neoliberalism emerged to explain state behavior in a bipolar world. The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift, as IR expanded to include critical theories and new perspectives that challenged traditional views.

Today, IR is a dynamic and multifaceted field, encompassing various approaches and methodologies to address the complexities of global politics. The unit provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the discipline's evolution, highlighting the interplay between historical events and theoretical developments.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What were the key factors that led to the emergence of International Relations as a distinct discipline?
2. How did the outcomes of World War I influence the early development of IR theories?
3. Describe the main principles of realism and its significance in the study of IR.
4. What were the key differences between idealism and realism during the inter-war period?
5. How did the Cold War shape the development of neorealism and neoliberalism?
6. What role did critical theories play in expanding the scope of IR after the Cold War?
7. Explain the interdisciplinary nature of IR and its connections with other fields.
8. How has globalization influenced contemporary IR theories?
9. What are some of the challenges faced by IR scholars in addressing modern global issues?
10. How have feminist perspectives contributed to the understanding of international relations?

Assignments

1. Analyze the impact of World War I on the emergence of International Relations as a distinct discipline.

2. Evaluate the contributions of realism and idealism to the development of IR during the interwar period.

3. Discuss the influence of the Cold War on the evolution of IR theories, with a focus on neorealism and neoliberalism.

4. Explore the interdisciplinary nature of IR and its relevance in understanding contemporary global issues.

5. Assess the significance of critical theories in expanding the scope of IR since the end of the Cold War.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Nature and Scope of International Relations

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the fundamental concepts and principles that define the nature and scope of International Relations (IR)

- analyze the various theoretical perspectives in IR

- evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to studying IR

- explore the expanding scope of IR

Background

The unit explores the foundational aspects of IR as a field of study, examining the core principles, concepts, and actors that shape global interactions. At its heart, IR is concerned with the relationships between states—the primary actors in the international system. However, the discipline also recognizes the importance of non-state actors, such as international organizations, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations, in influencing global politics.

The nature of IR is defined by the interplay of power, interests, and values among these actors. The scope of IR has broadened over time, moving beyond traditional concerns of war and diplomacy to include a wide range of issues like economic interdependence, environmental sustainability, and human rights.

Theoretical perspectives, such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism, provide different views to analyze these interactions, each offering unique insights into the dynamics of international politics.

Keywords

State sovereignty, Non-state actors, Foreign policy, World War, Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism

1.2.1 Introduction

☐ Broadening Scope of International Relations

☐ Contemporary Relevance of International Relations

☐ Foundations and Interdisciplinarity of IR

☐ Relevance of IR in a Globalized World

International Relations (IR) as a field of study came into focus after the First World War, largely shaped by the desire to prevent future global conflicts. What began as an attempt to understand war and diplomacy has since evolved into a broad area of inquiry that examines the workings of the international arena. Today, IR engages with a wide range of global issues, ranging from peace and security to global trade, human rights, and environmental challenges.

The study of International Relations (IR) has emerged as one of the most dynamic and evolving fields within the social sciences. At its most fundamental level, IR seeks to understand the interactions among sovereign states, but over time, it has grown to encompass a much wider array of global actors, issues, and theoretical perspectives. The modern international system is marked by increasing interdependence, rapid technological changes, persistent power struggles, and emerging transnational challenges, making the study of international relations not only relevant but indispensable in understanding the complexities of global life.

The academic inquiry into IR formally began in the aftermath of the First World War, driven by a desire to establish a framework for lasting peace and to comprehend the causes of global conflict. The creation of the first chair in International Politics at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1919 is often cited as a foundational moment for the discipline. Since then, IR has expanded far beyond its original scope, incorporating diverse subjects such as war and peace, diplomacy, foreign policy, global governance, economic development, international law, environmental issues, and human rights.International Relations does not follow just one method or perspective. It draws ideas from many subjects, such as political science, economics, law, history, sociology, and philosophy. This helps scholars study global issues from different points of view. Realist theories focus on power and security, while constructivist approaches look at identity and shared ideas. These various views help make the subject richer and more useful in explaining world events.

Today, the line between domestic and international matters is not always clear. A financial crisis, a disease outbreak, or a conflict in one place can quickly affect other parts of the world. This makes the study of International Relations more important than ever. It helps students, researchers, and decision-makers examine global events closely, understand how countries

and other actors behave, and find practical ways to deal with international challenges.

1.2.2 Understanding the nature of International Relations

At its core, International Relations is shaped by contributions from various disciplines. It borrows methods and concepts from political science, law, history, sociology, and economics, among others. This blend of perspectives allows IR scholars to study not only the behaviour of countries but also the underlying structures and ideologies that shape international life.In its earlier stages, the study of IR was primarily concerned with the role of sovereign states. Realist scholars like Hans Morgenthau and later Kenneth Waltz considered the state to be the central player in a world marked by the absence of a global authority. According to this view, states act primarily to protect their own survival and interests, often resulting in conflict and competition.

☐ Interdisciplinary Foundations and Realist Perspective

However, this traditional focus has gradually expanded. Contemporary scholars now pay close attention to international organizations, non-governmental actors, multinational businesses, and even social movements. These actors increasingly influence global developments and challenge the long-standing state-centric perspective. This shift reflects the complex, interconnected nature of today's international environment. An important characteristic of the discipline is its theoretical diversity. While realism and liberalism remain dominant frameworks, other perspectives—such as feminism, Marxism, and constructivism—have opened up new ways of looking at global issues. These theories differ in how they interpret power, cooperation, identity, and inequality in international contexts.

☐ Theoretical Pluralism and Expanding Actors

Another key theme running through IR is the concept of anarchy, not in the sense of chaos, but in the absence of a higher authority to regulate relations among states. How this condition is interpreted shapes much of the theory-building in the field. Realists view anarchy as a driver of competition, while others argue that shared norms and institutions can reduce its harsh effects.

☐ Anarchy and Interpretations

1.2.3 Expanding Scope of International Relations

The study of IR covers a vast landscape of issues. One of its traditional concerns is diplomacy—the practice of negotiation and communication between governments. The analysis of foreign policy decisions, alliance formations, and international treaties remains central to the field. Understanding how countries navigate the global stage helps explain both cooperation and conflict.Another significant area is the study of war, peace,

☐ Diplomacy and Security Studies

and security. Realist thinkers have long emphasised military power and strategic interests, but newer perspectives also explore peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and human security. In recent decades, issues such as terrorism, cyber security, and transnational crime have added new dimensions to security studies.

❏ Global
Institutions
and Political
Economy

IR also closely examines the role of global institutions. Organizations like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund shape the rules and norms that govern international behaviour. Scholars assess how these institutions operate, the limits of their authority, and their role in promoting cooperation or maintaining power structures.Economic relations form another vital part of IR's scope. The global political economy investigates how states and markets interact on an international scale. Topics such as trade policy, economic inequality, globalisation, and development are addressed within this subfield. Writers like Susan Strange and Robert Gilpin have contributed significantly to this area, showing how economic interests influence political decisions and vice versa.

❏ Human Rights,
Justice,
and Global
Challenges

Human rights and global justice have also gained prominence. In the wake of global humanitarian crises and growing awareness of international inequalities, scholars and practitioners alike have turned their attention to ethical questions. When, for instance, should states intervene in others' affairs? What rights do individuals hold under international law? These questions challenge traditional understandings of sovereignty and responsibility.Lastly, the discipline increasingly engages with environmental issues, global health threats, and migration—all of which defy national borders. These complex problems require cooperative solutions, and IR helps analyse both the obstacles to and possibilities for such global collaboration.

1.2.4 Post Second World War Developments

❏ Post-WW-II
Developments in
IR

Since the end of the Second World War, International Relations (IR) has expanded its focus, incorporating new components and undergoing various processes. Some key developments include structural changes, economic transformations, reforms in international organizations, concerns over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the emergence of non-traditional security threats.

1.2.4.1 Structural Changes

International relations have been experiencing significant structural changes, particularly in two main areas: the nature and role of the nation-state and shifts in the global political

landscape. It has always been characterized by growing complexity and a highly dynamic nature. Following the significant changes brought about by World War II, relations among nations have continued to evolve rapidly. The end of the Cold War, in particular, led to profound shifts in the global power structure. Since the disintegration of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), IR has experienced subtle yet substantial changes. The Cold War concluded, and the Warsaw Pact disbanded. With the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, Russia emerged as its successor state, forming the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an association of nine former Soviet republics. This event had a significant negative impact on Russia's economy.

Domestic political instability and economic reliance on the United States and other Western countries kept Russia in a weakened state. The Soviet Union's disintegration left the United States as the world's sole superpower. The Berlin Wall fell, leading to Germany's reunification, while the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) faced a decline and needed recalibration to address the new post-Cold War realities. In the years that followed, Russia began to recover under the strong leadership of Vladimir Putin, who assumed the presidency from Boris Yeltsin on December 31, 1999. Putin's leadership marked Russia's resurgence as a global power, solidifying its influence on the international stage.

Alongside the United States, other nations and organizations such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, India, Brazil, Germany, Japan, the European Union (EU), ASEAN, South Africa, NAFTA, and APEC started to emerge as significant centers of power. Ensuring the stability of this multi-centric structure of international relations has become a shared objective. As the world continues to change rapidly, it is crucial to understand these evolving and complex dynamics by identifying the new contours, dimensions, and directions of the current global system.

1.2.4.2 Economic Changes

Economically, the World Trade Organization (WTO) solidified the Bretton Woods system, promoting global economic integration to support the capitalist economic model. In the post-Cold War era, international economic relations became a central feature, with regional cooperation and economic integration initiatives like the European Union, BRICS, ASEAN, APEC, NAFTA, SAFTA, and CECAS becoming increasingly important. Major global concerns have included ensuring sustainable development, protecting the environment, preventing the

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☐ Post-Cold War Shifts in IR

☐ Russia's Post-Soviet Resurgence

☐ Emerging Global Power Centers

☐ Post-Cold War Global Order

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proliferation of nuclear weapons, combating terrorism, and enhancing human security. Thus, a new global order is emerging both politically and economically, presenting numerous challenges and opportunities. It is essential to comprehend these dynamic changes within the current international system and their implications for global peace, security, and development.

1.2.5 Changing Nature of the Nation-State

The role of the state in international relations has long been a topic of debate, especially with the rise of globalization, non-state actors, and growing connections between countries. Some scholars believe that states are still the most important players, while others argue that their authority has changed or even declined in today's global environment.Realist thinkers, especially from the classical and neorealist schools, believe that states continue to be the most powerful and relevant actors. Scholars like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz argue that because the international system lacks a central authority (is anarchic), states must focus on survival, rely on their own strength, and try to gain power. From their view, even in a globalized world, states are still the main decision-makers when it comes to security, diplomacy, and protecting national interests.

Liberal theorists, on the other hand, believe that states' role is changing, not disappearing. Thinkers like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, with their idea of "complex interdependence," suggest that states now work more closely with international organizations, global institutions, and other actors to deal with common problems like climate change, trade, and global health. While states still play a key role, they now share power with other groups like multinational companies and civil society organizations.

Constructivist scholars, such as Alexander Wendt, examine how ideas, norms, and beliefs shape state behaviour and identity. According to this view, the role of the state is not fixed. It changes based on how states interact with each other and define themselves over time.Postmodern and critical theory scholars challenge the idea that states act as a single, neutral unit. Thinkers like Richard Ashley and Cynthia Enloe point out that traditional views of state power often ignore gender, inequality, and voices from less powerful groups. Feminist and postcolonial perspectives argue that some states, especially in the Global South, may be limited in their independence because of global power structures that favour wealthy or powerful nations.

❒ State Sovereignty and Globalization

❒ Liberal Perspectives on State Roles

❒ Constructivist and Critical Views on State Roles

Globalization theorists like Susan Strange and Anthony Giddens focus on how growing global connections—especially through trade, technology, and finance—have reduced the power of states to act alone. For example, Susan Strange talks about how global markets now control areas that states used to manage, such as money, investment, and production. This has increased the influence of non-state actors like multinational companies and international financial institutions.

Yet, despite these challenges, the state continues to play a critical role. It still holds responsibility for national security, the enforcement of laws, and the representation of its people in international forums. During global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or major conflicts, states are often the first to act, reinforcing their enduring authority. What has changed, however, is that the state now operates in a more crowded and interconnected space, where it must engage with a variety of actors and navigate issues that cross borders.

In conclusion, while the state's importance has not disappeared, its role has become more complex. Different schools of thought offer valuable insights into this transformation. Realists emphasize continuity and the enduring nature of power politics; liberals focus on cooperation and institutions; constructivists explore the role of identity and norms; and critical theorists draw attention to hidden power structures and inequalities. Together, these perspectives help us understand how states function in a rapidly changing world.

1.2.6 Conclusion

International Relations as a field of study has come a long way from its original focus on diplomacy and interstate conflicts. Today, it encompasses a vast range of issues, including global governance, environmental challenges, human rights, economic interdependence, and the influence of non-state actors. This expansion reflects the complexities of a rapidly globalizing world where domestic and international boundaries increasingly overlap. Theories like realism, liberalism, Marxism, constructivism, and postcolonialism offer different lenses to interpret these realities, helping us make sense of power structures, cooperation mechanisms, and global inequalities. Moreover, the evolution of the international system—from bipolarity during the Cold War to today's multipolar and interdependent order—has made the discipline more dynamic and responsive to change. As new challenges such as climate change, pandemics, cyber threats, and migration emerge, the relevance of International Relations continues to grow, offering crucial insights for scholars, policymakers, and global citizens alike.

Summarised Overview

International Relations (IR) began to take shape after World War I, driven by a need to understand the causes of conflict and find ways to promote peace. Over time, the scope of IR expanded to include a wide array of global issues such as diplomacy, trade, human rights, environmental challenges, and international governance. Initially, the focus was on how sovereign states interacted in an anarchic world, but today the field includes a broader range of actors, including international organizations, NGOs, and multinational corporations. IR is a multidisciplinary field, drawing from political science, economics, law, history, and sociology. Different theoretical approaches like realism, liberalism, and constructivism offer various interpretations of global events, with differing views on the impact of anarchy in international relations.

As the field has evolved, it has embraced new challenges such as cybersecurity, terrorism, and climate change. The end of the Cold War brought significant shifts in global power, creating a multipolar world and highlighting the growing influence of non-state actors. Despite these changes, states remain essential in maintaining global security and governance.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is the primary focus of International Relations as a discipline?

2. How does the concept of state sovereignty shape international relations?

3. Who are the main non-state actors in the international system, and what roles do they play?

4. Compare and contrast the theoretical perspectives of realism and liberalism in IR.

5. How does constructivism differ from other IR theories in its approach to understanding global politics?

6. In what ways has globalization expanded the scope of International Relations?

7. What are some of the emerging challenges that IR scholars must address in the 21st century?

8. How do international institutions contribute to global governance according to liberal theory?

9. What role do power dynamics play in the realist understanding of international relations?

10. How can the study of IR help in addressing global environmental issues?

Assignments

1. Analyze the significance of state sovereignty in shaping the nature of International Relations.

2. Evaluate the contributions of non-state actors to the international system, using examples from recent global events.

3. Explore the impact of globalization on the scope of International Relations, particularly in relation to economic interdependence.

4. Assess the relevance of traditional IR theories in addressing contemporary issues like cyber security and transnational terrorism.

5. Examine the changing nature of International Relations

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Major Theoretical Debates

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the key theoretical debates in International Relations (IR)
- analyze the implications of these theoretical debates for the study and practice of international relations
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing IR theories in explaining international events
- explore the evolution of these debates over time

Background

The unit explores the critical discussions that have shaped the discipline's intellectual landscape. Since its inception, IR has been characterized by a series of debates among scholars regarding the nature of international politics, the behavior of states, and the role of various actors in the global arena. These debates are not merely academic exercises; they reflect deep philosophical differences about how the world works and how it should be understood.

The foundational debate between realism and idealism set the stage for subsequent discussions. Realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, argue that international politics is driven by power and self-interest, while idealists emphasize the potential for cooperation and the role of international institutions.

As the discipline evolved, new debates emerged, including the contention between neorealism and neoliberalism, which further refined these perspectives by focusing on the structure of the international system and the importance of regimes and institutions.

More recent debates have introduced constructivist, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives, challenging the traditional focus on states and power politics. These contemporary discussions emphasize the role of ideas, identities, and global inequalities, offering alternative ways of understanding international relations in a rapidly changing world.

Discussion

1.3.1 Introduction

❒ Origins of Modern International Relations

The field of International Relations (IR) has significantly advanced since World War II. Scholarly work in IR was sparse and often focused on individual country stances or the qualities of leaders, rather than building comprehensive theories that could predict future conflicts or events.Modern IR began with the establishment of nation-states in the 17th century, notably marked by the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This treaty introduced the concept of sovereign states capable of participating in international diplomacy and treaties, laying the foundation for what is now referred to as the Westphalian system of international relations.

Historically, prior to World War I, the use of force was a defining feature of IR. The inter-war period saw a brief era of Wilsonian idealism, with hopes that international legal norms and organizations would ensure global peace and security.However, it was only after World War II that IR emerged as a distinct and robust academic discipline, marked by the development of empirical and scientific theories. This period saw the creation of new organizations, institutions, and legal norms, along with the decline of European imperialism, the emergence of numerous new nations, and the Cold War's impact, including bloc politics, arms races, and nuclear weapons development.

❒ Post-WWII Development of International Relations

❒ Post-Cold War Shift in IR Scholarship

These changes prompted scholars to explore IR from new perspectives, moving beyond earlier idealistic or legalistic approaches to more rational and scientific analyses.The end of the Cold War in 1991 and the collapse of socialism led to a shift in IR scholarship. The rigid binary view of global politics, divided between capitalism and socialism, gave way to new theoretical perspectives. Critical theories emerged, aiming not only to analyze but also to challenge and change the international system. These perspectives addressed the shortcomings of dominant theories like Realism and Interdependence, which often reflected the interests of great powers and neglected the concerns of developing and small states. Critical theories, including Constructivism, Marxism, post-modernism, feminism, and ecological perspectives, became prominent for their problem-solving and emancipatory aims.

Economic globalization accelerated changes in IR, but also sparked critique, as it appeared to serve the interests of global corporate capitalism. This led to a search for more equitable forms of globalization. Mainstream IR theories have been criticized for their Eurocentric biases and their focus on power, interdependence, and war, often overlooking the perspectives of the Global South.As the world enters what is termed the 'Asian Century,' power dynamics are shifting towards the Indo-Pacific region, with rising powers like China and India playing increasingly influential roles. This shift has brought new trends and perspectives to IR scholarship, with Asia offering diverse and non-Western approaches to understanding world politics. Consequently, the theoretical debates and innovations in IR are becoming more global and inclusive, reflecting the continent's vast socio-cultural and political diversity.

1.3.2 Major Theories in International Relations

International Relations (IR) is a multifaceted field that examines the interactions between states, international organizations, non-state actors, and individuals on the global stage. Since it emerged as an academic discipline, IR has been characterized by a variety of theoretical perspectives, each offering different explanations for how and why international events occur. The major theoretical debates in IR, summarizing the key theories and their contributions to the understanding of global politics, are as follows:

1.3.2.1 Realism

Realism, one of the oldest and most influential theories in IR, focuses on the anarchic nature of the international system and states' pursuit of power. Realists argue that the lack of a central authority in the international system leads states to prioritize their own security and interests, often resulting in conflict and competition.

Classical Realism

Classical Realism is rooted in the writings of ancient and early modern political thinkers such as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes. Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War highlights how power struggles and security dilemmas between Athens and Sparta led to conflict. His observations underscore the Realist belief that states are driven by a fundamental desire for power and survival.Niccolò Machiavelli, in "The Prince," explores the nature of power and the political tactics necessary for rulers to maintain control and achieve their goals. Machiavelli's work illustrates the Realist emphasis on pragmatic and often ruthless strategies for political

success.In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes argues that without a higher authority, the international system is a state of nature characterized by a "war of all against all." Hobbes' depiction of human nature as inherently competitive and conflict-prone reinforces the Realist view that states must constantly seek power to ensure their survival.

Neo Realism (Structural Realism)

Neorealism, or Structural Realism, was developed by Kenneth Waltz in his seminal work "Theory of International Politics" (1979). Unlike Classical Realism, which emphasizes human nature, Neorealism focuses on the structure of the international system as the primary determinant of state behavior.Waltz argues that the anarchic structure of the international system compels states to act in ways that ensure their security. He introduces the concept of the "balance of power," where states seek to prevent any one state from becoming too dominant. Neorealism also differentiates between unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity, analyzing how these different distributions of power affect international stability and conflict.

❏ Neorealism and Structural Dynamics

1.3.2.2 Liberalism

Liberalism offers a counterpoint to Realism by emphasizing the potential for cooperation and the role of international institutions, norms, and economic interdependence in promoting peace and stability. Liberals argue that states can achieve mutual gains through collaboration and that international institutions play a crucial role in facilitating this cooperation.

Classical Liberalism

Classical Liberalism, influenced by thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and John Locke, focuses on the potential for peace through democratic governance, international law, and human rights. Immanuel Kant's essay "Perpetual Peace" proposes that the spread of democratic states and the establishment of international institutions can lead to lasting peace. Kant argues that democratic states are less likely to go to war with one another and that international cooperation can be achieved through legal and normative frameworks.John Locke's ideas on human rights and the rule of law support the notion that international norms and legal principles can mitigate conflict. Locke's emphasis on individual rights and the social contract influences Liberalism's focus on human rights and international law as a means to achieve global peace.

❏ Classical Liberalism and Peace Theory

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, a modern variant of Liberalism, builds on the idea that international institutions and economic interdependence

foster cooperation and reduce the likelihood of conflict. Scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argue that institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) provide mechanisms for dialogue, dispute resolution, and collaboration on global issues.Keohane's "After Hegemony" (1984) explores how international institutions can facilitate cooperation even in the absence of a hegemonic power. Nye's concept of "complex interdependence" highlights how economic, environmental, and social connections between states create incentives for cooperation and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

1.3.2.3 Constructivism

Constructivism introduces a sociological dimension to IR by emphasizing the role of ideas, beliefs, and identities in shaping state behavior and international outcomes. Constructivists argue that the international system is socially constructed and that state behavior is influenced by social interactions and shared understandings.Thomas Hopf, in his article "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" critically examines the role of constructivism in the study of International Relations (IR) and its potential to offer a deeper understanding of global politics. Hopf explores how constructivism challenges traditional theories by focusing on the importance of social structures, norms, and identities in shaping the behavior of states and other actors in the international system. He argues that constructivism has the potential to bridge the gap between ideational and material factors in international relations, offering a more comprehensive perspective on how global politics are shaped by shared ideas and beliefs.

Alexander Wendt's Constructivism challenges the materialistic focus of Realism and Liberalism by emphasizing the role of social structures in shaping international relations. Wendt's famous assertion that "anarchy is what states make of it" suggests that the international system is not inherently conflictual but is shaped by the interactions and identities of states.

Wendt argues that states' identities and interests are constructed through social interactions and shared beliefs. Therefore, the international system is not a fixed structure but a dynamic and evolving social construct influenced by states' collective identities and norms.Critical Constructivism extends Constructivism by examining how power and knowledge are intertwined in shaping international norms and practices. Scholars such as Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil explore how dominant discourses and practices create and

reinforce power relations in the international system.Critical Constructivism challenges the notion of fixed identities and highlights the fluidity and contestability of international norms. This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding how power and knowledge shape state behavior and international outcomes. It also advocates for a more inclusive and critical approach to analyzing global politics.

1.3.2.4 Marxism

Marxism applies the principles of Marxist economics and historical materialism to the study of international relations. Marxist theories focus on the role of economic structures and class relations in shaping global politics, emphasizing the impact of capitalism and imperialism on international interactions.

Classical Marxism

Classical Marxism, based on the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, views international relations through the lens of class struggle and economic exploitation. Marxists argue that the global capitalist system perpetuates inequality and conflict between the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class).Marx and Engels' analysis of capitalism highlights how economic interests drive imperialism and colonialism, leading to exploitation and conflict between powerful capitalist states and less developed regions. Marxist theories emphasize the need for revolutionary change to address the systemic inequalities and injustices perpetuated by the capitalist system.

Dependency Theory

Dependency Theory, developed by scholars like Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, extends Marxist analysis to the global level. It argues that the development of wealthy countries often relies on the exploitation and underdevelopment of poorer nations. This theory highlights how the global economic system is structured to benefit wealthy states at the expense of less developed countries.Dependency Theory critiques the notion of development as a linear and universal process, emphasizing the ways in which economic dependency perpetuates global power imbalances. It calls for a reevaluation of development policies and a focus on addressing the structural inequalities inherent in the global economy.

1.3.2.5 Critical Theory

In his seminal work "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory", Robert W. Cox challenges conventional International Relations theories

by arguing that theory is never neutral—it always reflects a particular perspective shaped by time and place. He distinguishes between "problem-solving theory," which takes existing power structures for granted and aims to maintain them, and "critical theory," which questions and seeks to transform those very structures. Cox emphasizes the role of social forces—such as class, production systems, and ideology—in shaping state behavior and world orders.

□ Critical Theory and Social Forces in IR

His approach moves beyond the narrow state-centric and ahistorical views common in mainstream IR, instead promoting a historically grounded, power-sensitive framework for understanding global politics. Cox's contribution is foundational in critical IR theory, pushing scholars to interrogate not just the world as it is, but how it came to be that way, and who benefits from its current structure.

1.3.2.6 Feminism

Feminist theories in IR challenge traditional perspectives by examining how gender dynamics influence international relations. Feminist scholars argue that mainstream theories often overlook the roles and experiences of women and marginalized groups, and they advocate for a more inclusive and equitable analysis of global politics.

Liberal Feminism

□ Liberal Feminism in International Relations

Liberal Feminism focuses on promoting gender equality and ensuring that women's perspectives are included in international institutions and policymaking. Liberal feminists argue that women's participation in peace processes, conflict resolution, and international organizations is essential for achieving more equitable and effective outcomes.Liberal Feminism advocates for policies that address gender-based discrimination and promote women's rights. It emphasises the importance of integrating gender perspectives into international relations and addressing the barriers that women face in global politics.

Critical Feminism

□ Critical Feminism in International Relations

Critical Feminism, including postcolonial and intersectional perspectives, examines how gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and ethnicity. This approach highlights the ways in which global power structures and inequalities are reinforced by gendered dynamics and seeks to address the diverse and complex experiences of women and marginalized groups in international relations.Critical Feminism critiques mainstream IR theories for their exclusion of women's experiences and perspectives, and it advocates for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of global politics.

It emphasizes the need to address the systemic inequalities and power imbalances that affect women and marginalized communities.

In her insightful piece "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists, J. Ann Tickner explores the ongoing disconnect between mainstream International Relations (IR) theory and feminist scholarship. She argues that the difficulties in engagement stem not just from differences in perspective, but from fundamentally distinct ways of thinking about knowledge, power, and the nature of global politics. While traditional IR often favors positivist, state-centered approaches focused on power and security, feminist perspectives emphasize lived experiences, gendered power relations, and the importance of voices usually excluded from global discourse. Tickner critiques the dominant assumptions of objectivity and universality in IR, showing how these frameworks obscure the gendered foundations of international systems. She calls for a more inclusive dialogue that recognizes alternative epistemologies and ways of knowing, ultimately urging the discipline to broaden its analytical scope to better reflect the diversity and pluralism in the international society.

☐ Feminist Critique of IR Theory

1.3.2.7 Post-Colonialism

Post-Colonialism explores the impact of colonialism and imperialism on contemporary international relations. This theoretical perspective critiques the dominance of Western perspectives and highlights the experiences of formerly colonized societies.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism examines how Western representations of the East have perpetuated colonial dominance and exoticization. Said argues that these representations have shaped Western policies and attitudes towards the Global South, reinforcing stereotypes and maintaining unequal power dynamics. Orientalism highlights the ways in which Western knowledge and discourse about the East have been used to justify colonialism and imperialism, and it calls for a re-evaluation of the narratives and power structures that continue to shape international relations.

☐ Orientalism and Power Dynamics

Post-Colonial Theory

Post-Colonial Theory, developed by scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, further explores the legacies of colonialism in shaping contemporary global relations. This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding how historical injustices and power imbalances continue to affect

international politics and seeks to amplify the voices of formerly colonized peoples.Post-colonial theory critiques the dominance of Western perspectives in IR and advocates for a more inclusive and equitable analysis of global politics. It highlights the need to address colonialism's historical and ongoing impacts on international relations and recognize the contributions and experiences of formerly colonized societies.

In the edited work "Thinking International Relations Differently," Blaney and Tickner challenge the conventional foundations of International Relations (IR) by advocating for a more pluralistic and inclusive approach to the discipline. They bring together scholars who question the Eurocentric, state-centric, and positivist traditions that have long dominated IR theory. The book emphasizes alternative epistemologies, particularly those grounded in non-Western, feminist, postcolonial, and critical traditions, urging the discipline to rethink its assumptions about power, identity, and global order. The contributors argue that understanding international politics requires more than abstract models—it demands attention to history, culture, inequality, and the lived experiences of people often marginalized in global affairs. By "thinking differently," the volume calls for a richer, more reflective IR scholarship that is better equipped to grasp the complexities of an interconnected and unequal world.

1.3.3 Conclusion

Theoretical debates in International Relations offer a diverse and evolving understanding of global politics. From Realism's focus on power and security to Liberalism's emphasis on cooperation and institutions, each theory provides valuable insights into the dynamics of international interactions. Constructivism introduces the role of ideas and identities, while Marxism critiques economic inequalities and exploitation. Feminism and Post-Colonialism challenge traditional narratives and highlight the experiences of marginalized groups. Together, these theories contribute to a richer understanding of international relations and provide a framework for addressing the complex challenges facing the global community. As the field of IR continues to evolve, ongoing theoretical debates and innovations will remain crucial for analyzing and addressing the complexities of the contemporary global landscape.

Summarised Overview

The unit examines the foundational and ongoing discussions that have shaped the field of International Relations (IR). It begins with the classic debate between realism and idealism, which highlights the contrasting views on the nature of international politics— whether it is governed by power and self-interest, as realists argue, or by the potential for cooperation and the influence of international institutions, as idealists contend.

As the discipline matured, the neorealist and neoliberal debate added new dimensions by focusing on the structural aspects of the international system and the role of regimes in fostering cooperation.

Neorealism, championed by scholars like Kenneth Waltz, argues that the anarchic nature of the international system dictates state behavior, while neoliberalism counters that international institutions and economic interdependence can mitigate conflict.

The rise of constructivism further expanded the theoretical landscape, emphasizing the importance of social structures, identities, and norms in shaping international outcomes. Feminist and postcolonial theories have since challenged traditional IR frameworks, bringing attention to issues of gender, race, and inequality in global politics.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the main arguments of realism and idealism in the context of International Relations?

2. How does the debate between neorealism and neoliberalism differ from the earlier realism-idealism debate?

3. What role do international institutions play in the neoliberal perspective of IR?

4. How does constructivism challenge the assumptions of neorealism and neoliberalism?

5. What are the key contributions of feminist theories to the study of International Relations?

6. How do postcolonial perspectives differ from traditional IR theories in their approach to global politics?

7. What are the implications of the realist-idealist debate for contemporary global issues?

8. How has the introduction of constructivism influenced the study of international relations?

9. In what ways do feminist and postcolonial theories address the limitations of traditional IR frameworks?

10. How do major theoretical debates in IR shape policy-making and international diplomacy?

Assignments

1. Analyze the foundational debate between realism and idealism and its impact on the development of International Relations as a discipline.

2. Evaluate the differences between neorealism and neoliberalism, focusing on their respective approaches to understanding the international system.

3. Discuss the significance of constructivist theory in challenging the traditional paradigms of IR.

4. Explore the contributions of feminist and postcolonial theories to the understanding of global politics and their critique of mainstream IR theories.

5. Assess the relevance of major theoretical debates in IR for addressing contemporary global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and global inequality.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

BLOCK 2
Structural Aspects

UNIT 1

Balance of Power

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the historical origins and theoretical foundations of the balance of power as a concept in International Relations

- analyze the application of balance of power politics in different historical periods, including the European state system and the Cold War

- evaluate the strengths and limitations of balance of power theory in maintaining international stability

- explore the modern relevance of the balance of power in a multipolar world and its implications for contemporary global politics

Background

How do countries stop one powerful nation from taking control of the world? The idea of the balance of power helps us understand this. It means that power is shared among different countries so that no single country becomes too strong and starts to control or threaten others. When one country becomes too powerful, other countries may form alliances or strengthen themselves to keep things balanced. This helps maintain peace and prevent wars.

The concept has been around for a long time, especially in Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, where nations started treating each other as equals. For example, during the 18th and 19th centuries, European countries often changed alliances to ensure no one became too dominant. This idea was also important during the Cold War, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union balanced each other's power to avoid direct conflict.

Theoretically, the balance of power is closely aligned with realist thought, which views international politics as a struggle for power among self-interested states. While it remains influential, the concept has evolved in the post-Cold War era, with new challenges such as rising multipolarity, non-state actors, and global economic interdependence complicating traditional balancing strategies.

Discussion

2.1.1 Introduction

The principle of Balance of Power refers to a state of equilibrium in the international system where power is distributed among nations in such a way that no single state or coalition can achieve dominance over others. This delicate balance serves as a mechanism for maintaining stability, deterring aggression, and preserving the sovereignty of individual states.

The balance of power theory posits that states, acting in their own self-interest, will naturally form alliances and counter-alliances to prevent any one nation from becoming too powerful. This concept has been both a descriptive tool for analysing international relations and a prescriptive guide for policymakers seeking to maintain global stability.

This unit focuses on tracing historical roots, examining theoretical underpinnings, analysing practical applications, and considering the relevance of Balance of Power in the contemporary global landscape.

2.1.2 Meaning

The term balance of power in International Relations refers to a system where power is distributed among countries in such a way that no single nation becomes so strong that it can dominate others. This concept helps maintain peace and stability by encouraging countries to prevent any one state from becoming too powerful. If one nation grows stronger, others may form alliances or increase their strength to restore the balance. The idea of balance of power began to take shape after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which established the modern state system in Europe. It became more developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, especially among European powers like Britain, France, Austria, and Prussia. These countries often shifted alliances to keep any one state from gaining too much influence. This is known as the Classical Balance of Power period.

❏ Classical Balance of Power

A key moment in this evolution was the Congress of Vienna in 1815, held after Napoleon's defeat. It aimed to restore balance in Europe and prevent future wars. Leaders such as

Prince Metternich of Austria, Lord Castlereagh of Britain, and Talleyrand of France played important roles. The Congress created the Concert of Europe, where major powers met regularly to manage conflicts and preserve balance, which helped maintain peace in Europe for much of the 19th century. In the 20th century, the two World Wars disturbed this balance. After World War II, the world saw a bipolar balance of power between the USA and USSR, known as the Cold War. Each formed their own military alliances (NATO and Warsaw Pact) to maintain power and influence. In the 1990s, the disintegration of the USSR resulted in the end of the Warsaw Pact. Today, the world is moving toward a multipolar system, with many powerful countries like China, Russia, India, and the EU playing key roles. The balance of power remains a vital idea in understanding global politics and avoiding major conflicts.

2.1.3 Historical Development

2.1.3.1 The Ancient Roots

The concept of balancing power is much older than modern international relations theory and has roots in ancient civilisations across the world. In Ancient Greece, city-states like Athens and Sparta formed shifting alliances to prevent any one polis from becoming too dominant. The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), fought between these rival coalitions, is a classic example of such a balance-of-power struggle. In Ancient China, during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), states engaged in strategic diplomacy and alliance-building to survive amidst continuous warfare. These practices were elaborated in Sun Tzu's The Art of War, a seminal 5th-century BCE military treatise that emphasised strategic balance and deception. Similarly, in Ancient India, Kautilya's Arthashastra (3rd century BCE) introduced the "mandala theory" of interstate relations, which suggested that immediate neighbours should be considered threats, while more distant states could be allies—essentially a form of regional balance of power. Even the Roman Empire, though expansionist in nature, applied a divide-and-rule policy, manipulating relations between surrounding tribes and kingdoms to maintain imperial dominance. These historical examples show that the logic of balancing power has deep and diverse civilisational roots.

2.1.3.2 Origin in Europe

The modern conception of balance of power emerged during the Renaissance in Italy. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Italian city-states like Venice, Florence, and Milan engaged in a complex system of shifting alliances to maintain their independence

❐ Evolution of Balance of Power

❐ Ancient Origins of Balance of Power

against larger powers like France and the Holy Roman Empire. This period saw the birth of modern diplomacy and the idea of Raison d'état (national interest). Niccolò Machiavelli, in his works "The Prince" and "Discourses on Livy," articulated ideas about statecraft and power that would influence later balance of power thinking. Cardinal Richelieu, as Chief Minister of France (1624-1642), practised a foreign policy based on raison d'état, intervening in the Thirty Years' War to prevent Habsburg dominance (one of the most powerful royal dynasties) in Europe, even allying with Protestant powers despite France's Catholic identity.

2.1.3.3 The Treaty of Westphalia (1648)

The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War, is widely considered the birth of the modern international system. The treaty established the principle of territorial sovereignty, marking the transition from the medieval concept of universal monarchy to a system of independent states. By ending the era of religious wars, Westphalia separated religion from state affairs in international relations, focusing instead on power and interest. The negotiations at Westphalia involved multiple parties and set a precedent for multilateral diplomacy. The treaty aimed to create a balance among European powers to prevent future conflicts, laying the groundwork for future balance of power politics.

Scholars like Stephen Krasner and Hedley Bull point out that the Treaty of Westphalia helped reduce the power of institutions like the Church and the Holy Roman Empire, which used to have control over many areas. Instead, it gave more importance to independent states, each with clear borders. These states were now seen as the main players in international politics, and each could make decisions for itself without outside interference. This idea is known today as Westphalian sovereignty. The treaties that ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe helped stop wars between countries based on religion. They introduced the idea of cuius regio, eius religio, which means that the ruler of a state could choose its religion. This agreement reduced the Church's control over political matters and is seen as an early step toward modern diplomacy, where countries deal with each other based on practical interests instead of religious beliefs. International Relations (IR) scholars believe that the Treaty of Westphalia also played an important role in shaping modern diplomacy. After Westphalia, it became more common for countries to send regular diplomatic representatives and set up permanent embassies in other states. This marked a shift toward more organised and continuous communication between countries, helping to create a more stable and structured way for states to negotiate and solve issues peacefully.

- ❒ Renaissance Roots of Modern Power Politics

- ❒ Westphalian Sovereignty and Modern State System

- ❒ Foundations of Sovereignty and Modern Diplomacy

2.1.3.4 The 18th Century Balance of Power

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) demonstrated the European powers' commitment to preventing any single state from dominating the continent. The war ended with the Treaty of Utrecht, which explicitly mentioned maintaining the balance of power. Philosophers and statesmen like David Hume, Emer de Vattel, and Frederick the Great wrote extensively on the balance of power, refining the concept. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher of the 18th century, viewed the balance of power as a natural principle that helped maintain peace among nations. In his essay "Of the Balance of Power," he argued that just as individuals form governments to prevent any one person from gaining too much control, nations must cooperate to prevent any one state from becoming too dominant.

Emer de Vattel, an 18th-century Swiss philosopher and diplomat, made significant contributions to the concept of the balance of power in his work "The Law of Nations" (1758). Vattel believed that the balance of power was crucial for maintaining peace and stability in international relations. According to him, when one state becomes too powerful, it threatens the peace of others, and it is the responsibility of all nations to prevent such dominance. Vattel argued that states should form alliances and engage in diplomacy to preserve this balance. He also believed that sovereign states had a moral obligation to respect each other's rights and maintain peaceful relations. Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia, supported the balance of power as a practical tool. He used it to strengthen his own country by making smart alliances and keeping rivals in check. He saw it as a way to protect his kingdom's interests.

Britain, to maintain stability in international relations without getting directly involved in conflicts, adopted the strategy of an Offshore Balancer. The term "offshore balancer" refers to a strategy where, instead of taking part in wars all the time, an offshore balancer helps prevent any one country from becoming too powerful by supporting other nations that can act as a counterbalance. For example, in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), Britain switched sides a few times to prevent any single power, like France or Prussia, from gaining control over Europe. They did not want any country to become too strong, which could have threatened Britain's security or global interests. Similarly, in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), Britain fought alongside some countries and against others to prevent France from dominating Europe. Britain used its navy and diplomatic efforts to weaken France and maintain the balance of power. In both cases, Britain's goal was to make sure no single country became so powerful that it could dominate

Philosophical Foundations and the Treaty of Utrecht

Vattel's Doctrine and Frederick's Realpolitik

Britain as an Offshore Balancer

Europe. By doing this, Britain could ensure that it maintained its own influence in global affairs without getting involved in every battle or war. This approach kept Britain's resources protected while ensuring stability in Europe.

2.1.3.5 The Congress of Vienna

The Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath marked the apex of balance of power politics. Following Napoleon's defeat, European powers gathered to redraw the map of Europe and establish a new order called the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), where the main European powers—Austria, Prussia, Russia, Britain, and France—came together to discuss how to reorganise Europe and prevent future conflicts. The meeting aimed to restore balance in Europe by making territorial changes that would strengthen second-tier powers, ensuring they could prevent future French aggression. It also sought to restore monarchies by using the principle of legitimacy, which held that political power should come from traditional, recognised institutions rather than revolutionary ideas. The overall goal was to create a stable political environment that would avoid further revolutions and wars, ensuring long-term peace in Europe.

2.1.3.6 The Concert of Europe (1815-1848)

The Concert of Europe was a diplomatic system established after the Congress of Vienna to preserve the decisions made during the Congress and maintain peace in Europe. It involved regular meetings between the major European powers, including Austria, Prussia, Russia, Britain, and later France, to address any threats to European stability. The system focused on collective security, with the nations agreeing to collaborate in preventing revolutionary movements and conflicts that could disrupt the balance of power. For instance, when uprisings occurred in Spain or Italy, the Concert of Europe powers united to prevent these revolutions from spreading. Additionally, the Concert allowed for intervention, where, if one country faced a revolution or threat, the other powers could step in, often through military action, to restore the monarchy or stability.

Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia formed an alliance to maintain the new order, later including France as the Quintuple Alliance. The major European powers organised a series of congresses (Aix-la-Chapelle 1818, Troppau 1820, Laibach 1821, Verona 1822) to address European issues collectively, known as the Congress System. One of the important features of the balance of power during this period was the Intervention Principle. It means that major powers had the right to intervene in other countries to prevent the spread of revolution or maintain the existing political order.

2.1.3.7 British Balance of Power Policy

We have discussed the role of Britain in consolidating the Balance of Power in the initial decades of the 19th century. Britain adopted a policy called "Splendid Isolation." The policy was based on the idea that Britain should avoid becoming entangled in permanent alliances with other European powers. Instead, Britain preferred to maintain its independence and stay out of the frequent conflicts on the continent. However, this policy did not mean that Britain completely avoided involvement in European affairs. While Britain sought to keep its distance from alliances, it reserved the right to intervene whenever its national interests were threatened. Essentially, "Splendid Isolation" allowed Britain to focus on its empire and naval power while being cautious about engaging in the complex political and military alliances that defined European diplomacy at the time. The policy was gradually abandoned by the end of the 19th century, as Britain faced new global challenges and recognised the need for strategic alliances, especially in response to rising powers like Germany.

2.1.4 Balance of Power in the World War Period

The principle of balance of power played a vital role in shaping the alliance systems during the First and Second World Wars. Before the First World War, European powers created formal alliances to deter aggression and balance rival powers. The Triple Alliance (1882), consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, was formed to counter the influence of France and Russia. In response, the Triple Entente (1907), made up of France, Russia, and Britain, was established to balance the growing strength of the Triple Alliance, especially Germany. These alliances, while initially meant to preserve peace through deterrence, eventually became mechanisms that escalated conflict. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria in 1914, triggered a chain reaction. Due to binding alliance obligations, a localised conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia quickly drew in all major powers, leading to a full-scale global war.

During the Second World War, the pattern of alliances evolved in a more flexible manner. The Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—sought to disrupt the global balance by aggressively expanding their territories. In response, a counter-balancing coalition emerged, known as the Allied Powers, initially including Britain, France, and later the Soviet Union and the United States. Unlike the pre-war alliances of WWI, the Allied coalition in WWII was more pragmatic and dynamic, formed in response to common threats rather than strict pre-

existing treaties. This adaptive use of the balance of power allowed for coordinated resistance against Axis aggression. In both wars, alliance formation reflected the logic of balance of power: to prevent domination by any one side. However, in WWI, the rigid nature of alliances contributed to the outbreak and escalation of war, while in WWII, flexible coalitions played a more constructive role in restoring global stability. These patterns continued to influence international relations during the Cold War era, which saw a bipolar balance between the USA and the USSR.

2.1.5 The Cold War Era

The Cold War era (1947-1991) was a unique example of the balance of power, mainly defined by a bipolar system. The US and the USSR became the two main superpowers, each leading a group of allied nations. This period was also marked by an ideological conflict, with capitalism and communism competing for influence. A unique feature of this period was the situation called the Balance of Terror. The term "balance of terror" describes the tense situation during the Cold War when the United States and the Soviet Union both had powerful nuclear weapons. Each side understood that starting a nuclear war would lead to mutual destruction, so they avoided direct military conflict. Their fear of total devastation maintained a kind of peace, as both sides hesitated to launch an attack.

□ Bipolar Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror

The United States and the Soviet Union feared total destruction, so they began serious discussions to limit their nuclear weapons. They launched the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), where both sides agreed to cap the number of nuclear missiles and launchers. They also signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which stopped them from building systems to shoot down incoming nuclear missiles. By doing this, they made sure neither side would feel safe enough to start a nuclear war. These agreements helped reduce the risk of full-scale nuclear conflict. Instead of going to war with each other directly, the United States and the Soviet Union fought indirectly by supporting opposite sides in other countries' conflicts. These were called proxy wars. For example, in Korea and Vietnam, the U.S. supported the former while the Soviet Union supported the latter. In Afghanistan, the Soviet Union sent troops to support the government, while the U.S. helped the rebels fight back.

□ Nuclear Arms Control and Proxy Wars

Meanwhile, many developing countries did not want to take sides in the Cold War. In 1961, leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt formed the Non-Aligned Movement to stay neutral

and focus on their own development. In Europe, the division between the Western and Eastern blocs became more formal. The United States and its allies formed NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), while the Soviet Union created the Warsaw Pact with its Eastern European allies. NATO adopted a "flexible response" strategy, which meant it would respond to Soviet threats with different levels of military force, not just nuclear weapons. This approach aimed to prevent war while still being ready to defend Europe if necessary.

During the 1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union began a period of détente, which means they tried to reduce tensions and improve their relationship. They signed several important agreements to limit nuclear weapons and increase cooperation, such as the SALT treaties and the Helsinki Accords. Both sides hoped this peaceful approach would prevent a dangerous conflict. However, this cooperation started to fall apart in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to support its communist government against rebels. The United States strongly opposed this and began to support the Afghan resistance. Then, in 1980, Ronald Reagan became President of the United States. He took a tougher stance against the Soviet Union, increased military spending, and called the USSR an "evil empire." In the mid-1980s, things began to change again. Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He introduced reforms like glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) to fix the country's problems. These reforms gave people more freedom and changed the way the Soviet economy and politics worked. As a result, communist governments in Eastern Europe started to fall, and by 1991, the Soviet Union itself broke apart. This brought the Cold War and the bipolar world order to an end.

2.1.7 The Post-Cold War Era

After the Cold War ended in 1991, the world moved from a bipolar system (with the US and USSR as two superpowers) to a unipolar system, where the United States stood as the only global superpower. This major shift changed how the balance of power worked. Since no other country matched the US in military, economic, and political strength, many believed the US had entered what Charles Krauthammer called a "unipolar moment." He argued that the US should take full advantage of its dominant position, which was clearly shown during the Gulf War (1990–1991), when the US led a powerful international coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

Kenneth Waltz, a key figure in international relations theory, believed that unipolarity could not last long. He said that other

countries would eventually try to balance against the US, either by building up their own power or by forming alliances. Instead of challenging the US directly through military force, many countries used "soft balancing." This included forming diplomatic alliances, delaying UN decisions, or criticising US actions, especially during the Iraq War in 2003. At the same time, new global threats—like terrorism, seen in the 9/11 attacks, and climate change—began to influence global politics. These issues showed that power was not only about military strength but also about the ability to solve cross-border problems. Thus, the idea of balance of power in the post-Cold War world expanded to include both traditional state rivalries and newer, non-traditional global challenges.

2.1.9 Criticisms

Critics of balance of power theory argue that it often prioritises stability over justice and human rights. For example, during the 19th-century Concert of Europe, powerful states like Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and France worked together to stop liberal and nationalist movements. Historian Paul Schroeder pointed out that such actions focused more on preserving their own power than following any real balance logic. Many scholars also question whether balance of power truly prevents war. In the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union built nuclear weapons but avoided direct conflict because of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). This created a "balance of terror." Thinkers like Kenneth Waltz believed unipolarity would not last, as other states would try to balance U.S. power. In contrast, William Wohlforth argued that U.S. hegemony was durable due to its strong economy and military.

Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, from the liberal school, said economic interdependence reduces military balancing by creating shared interests. But realists like John Mearsheimer warned that trade could also cause conflict. Scholars like Robert Jervis and Graham Allison noted that leaders often misjudge threats, which can lead to unnecessary balancing. Alexander Wendt, a constructivist, claimed that power balancing depends on identities and norms, not just material power. Robert Gilpin, through his Hegemonic Stability Theory, argued that a strong hegemon can bring peace and stability instead of causing balancing. Finally, J. Ann Tickner, a feminist scholar, criticised the theory for being too focused on military power and ignoring human needs. Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, postcolonial thinkers, argued that balance of power reflects a Western bias and fails to consider the perspectives of colonised and marginalised nations.

2.1.10 Contemporary Relevance

The concept of the Balance of Power remains important in understanding global politics today. Even though the world has changed significantly since the theory first developed, states still try to prevent any one country from dominating the international system. This core idea—that states will act to balance against a rising or threatening power—continues to shape foreign policy decisions, alliance formations, and global strategy. In modern times, scholars like Kenneth Waltz, a leading structural realist, argued that the international system forces states to act in ways that maintain balance. He believed that even if states do not want conflict, the structure of an anarchic international system—with no world government—compels them to build military strength and form alliances. His theory explains why countries react to rising powers like China by strengthening their own positions or cooperating with other powers.

The rise of China, for example, has led countries such as the United States, Japan, and Australia to create new partnerships like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) to maintain regional balance in the Indo-Pacific. These efforts show how the logic of balancing continues today, not only through military alliances but also through economic cooperation and technology-sharing. John Mearsheimer, another realist scholar, emphasises that great powers always try to check each other. He argues that the United States, as a global hegemon, will not allow any other power—like China or Russia—to dominate its region, especially when their interests clash. However, the way states balance power today has changed. After the Cold War, we saw fewer traditional military alliances and more forms of "soft balancing." Countries now use international institutions, economic sanctions, and diplomacy to limit the influence of stronger states. For example, many countries opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 not through war, but by forming coalitions, using the United Nations, and applying diplomatic pressure.

Critics like Alexander Wendt, a constructivist thinker, argue that balance of power is not a natural or fixed law of politics. He says that it depends on how states understand each other's actions and on the shared norms between them. This perspective helps us see why some states prefer cooperation over competition in today's interconnected world. The Balance of Power theory also faces new challenges from non-state actors, transnational threats, and global problems like climate change and pandemics. These issues do not follow the usual logic of state rivalry. As a result, many argue that states need to balance not just against other states, but also against global risks. This has led to new

□ Relevance of Balance of Power

□ Modern Strategies of Balancing Power

□ Critiques and New Challenges to Balance of Power

kinds of balancing behaviour, such as strengthening global health systems or forming climate coalitions.

Still, many realists believe that major powers will continue to balance each other, especially when one power becomes too dominant. Barry Buzan, for example, suggests that the global order is entering a new era of "geopolitical balancing," where regions like Asia, Europe, and the Middle East will each develop their own balance of power systems. Balance of Power theory continues to provide a useful tool for analysing world politics. While it no longer explains everything, it helps us understand how and why states respond to rising powers, form alliances, and protect their national interests. In a world where power still matters—but in many forms—this old theory remains a vital part of international relations thinking.

2.1.11 Conclusion

The Balance of Power theory continues to be a foundational idea in international relations. It explains how states act to prevent any one state from becoming too powerful, which could threaten the independence and security of others. This theory assumes that power is the main currency in international politics and that states constantly adjust their behaviour to maintain equilibrium. As a result, alliances shift, arms races begin, and strategic partnerships form when the balance is at risk. Thinkers like Henry Kissinger emphasised how balance of power helped maintain peace in multipolar systems, such as 19th-century Europe. Kenneth Waltz further explained the theory from a structural realist perspective, arguing that the international system itself compels states to balance. Hans Morgenthau, representing classical realism, viewed balance of power as rooted in human nature and the desire for power.

However, the theory is not without its critics. Scholars such as Paul Schroeder have argued that historical examples often cited as balance of power in action were more about collective security or managed diplomacy than true balancing. John Mearsheimer, a modern realist, has supported the idea but warns that balances do not always prevent war. Constructivists like Alexander Wendt have challenged the assumption that power politics are natural, claiming they are shaped by shared ideas and social structures. Moreover, the rise of nuclear weapons and economic interdependence has changed how states balance power. Soft balancing, economic pressure, and institutional strategies now play a bigger role. Critics also point out that traditional balance of power thinking often ignores ethics, justice, and non-state actors. In today's complex world, the Balance of Power remains relevant but needs to be understood alongside new realities. It is no longer just about military power—states now balance across diplomatic, economic, and ideological lines.

Summarised Overview

The Balance of Power theory has been a key framework for understanding the distribution of power in the international system. It is based on the premise that states or alliances work to prevent any one state from gaining hegemonic dominance, thereby ensuring stability.

Originating in the classical European state system, the balance of power was institutionalised in events like the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), which aimed to maintain peace after the Napoleonic Wars by ensuring no single power could dominate Europe.

The Cold War provided a distinct form of balance with a bipolar structure, where the U.S. and the Soviet Union maintained stability through nuclear deterrence and alliance systems. However, critics argue that balance of power politics often leads to security dilemmas, arms races, and conflicts.

In the contemporary world, the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia have sparked debates on the re-emergence of multipolarity. The balance of power remains relevant but increasingly complex due to economic interdependence, non-state actors, and global challenges like climate change, which require cooperation beyond traditional power politics.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is balance of power and how does it function in International Relations?
2. How did the Treaty of Westphalia contribute to the balance of power system?
3. Describe the role of the Concert of Europe in maintaining balance of power politics.
4. How does realism explain the balance of power in an anarchic international system?
5. What are the differences between bipolarity and multipolarity in balance of power theory?
6. How did the balance of power influence the Cold War alliances?
7. What are the main criticisms of the balance of power concept?
8. In what ways has the balance of power theory evolved in the 21st century?
9. How do arms races relate to balance of power dynamics?
10. What are the contemporary challenges to traditional balance of power theory?

Assignments

1. Critically evaluate the historical significance of the balance of power system in Europe from the 17th to 19th centuries.

2. Compare and contrast the application of balance of power during the Cold War and the post-Cold War multipolar world.

3. Discuss the role of the United States as an "offshore balancer" during the 19th and 20th centuries.

4. Analyse how balance of power theory is relevant to understanding contemporary geopolitics, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. Evaluate the criticisms of the balance of power concept from liberal and constructivist perspectives.

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UNIT 2

Collective Security

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the concept of collective security and its historical development in international relations
- analyse the strengths and weaknesses of collective security mechanisms in addressing global conflicts
- evaluate the effectiveness of collective security arrangements in the contemporary international system
- explore theoretical perspectives on collective security and their implications for future global governance

Background

Collective security is a key idea in international relations, where nations come together to maintain peace and stability worldwide. It emerged after the devastation of wars, with the first major attempt being the League of Nations after World War I. Although the League ultimately failed, it paved the way for a stronger system in the form of the United Nations after World War II. During the Cold War, the idea of collective security faced difficulties due to the rivalry between superpowers, which led to new strategies like peacekeeping. After the Cold War, there was hope that the UN could play a bigger role in global peace, but the world also saw new challenges, like internal conflicts, terrorism, and threats like cyber-attacks and climate change. Today, collective security continues to evolve, trying to address these new security challenges while balancing the need for international cooperation and respect for national sovereignty.

Keywords

Collective Security, United Nations, Peacekeeping, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), International Cooperation, Global Governance, Security Council

2.2.1 Introduction

☐ Concept of Collective Security

Collective security is a concept in international relations and global governance that aims to maintain peace and prevent conflict through the cooperation of states. The idea is based on the belief that an attack on one member of a security system is considered an attack on all, prompting collective defence measures. The concept is foundational in institutions like the United Nations (UN) and other international organisations. Several theories underlie the functioning of collective security, offering explanations on how states collaborate for peace and security. Meaning and definitions.

2.2.2 Definitions

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, "Collective security is the cooperation of several countries in an alliance to strengthen the security of each."

According to Inis L. Claude Jr, "Collective security is a system designed to prevent or respond to aggression by treating an attack on one member as an attack on all." Claude emphasised that all states should unite against any aggressor to maintain international peace.

To the United Nations Charter (Article 1 and 39), "The purpose of the UN is to maintain international peace and security, and to take collective measures to prevent and remove threats to peace." This defines collective security as the shared responsibility of member states to act against threats to global peace.

According to George Schwarzenberger, "Collective security is the machinery for joint action in order to prevent or counter any attack against an established international order." He focuses on how collective security aims to protect international order through combined action.

To Palmer and Perkins, "Collective security is a device through which a number of states pledge themselves to respond jointly to threats to peace." This stresses mutual commitment among states to act together when peace is threatened.

To Hans J. Morgenthau, "Collective security is based on the idea that peace is indivisible, and aggression against one is aggression against all."

Collective security is based on the belief that peace is shared by all. This means that the safety of each country is connected

to the safety of every other country. It suggests that an attack on one nation should be seen as an attack on all, and that the international community should stand together to prevent such aggression. The idea includes several important points:

1. **Universality:** Ideally, all countries should be part of the system.

2. **Shared peace:** Any threat to peace anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere.

3. **Joint action:** Member countries agree to act together against any aggressor.

4. **Formal commitment:** Countries make formal promises to participate.

5. **Peaceful solutions:** The focus is on resolving conflicts through diplomacy before using force.

Understanding collective security helps to know how the international order has evolved, the challenges of getting countries to cooperate, and how today's global security systems work. It also informs discussions about the future of global conflict management and the role of international cooperation in solving disputes.

2.2.3 Theoretical Underpinnings of Collective Security

Below are some of the primary theoretical perspectives on collective security:

1. Realism and Collective Security

Realism is a key theory in international relations that often criticises collective security. Realists believe that states mainly act based on their own interests and security needs. They see the international system as chaotic, with no central authority to enforce rules or protect countries from threats. In this view, states rely on "self-help," meaning each state must take care of its own security because there is no global government. Realists argue that cooperation between states is limited because states are naturally competitive and fear losing power. They believe that states will prioritise their own interests over working together in a collective security system. For example, when a powerful state acts aggressively, weaker states may avoid taking action to prevent conflict, which weakens collective security. However, some realists accept that collective security can work in certain situations, especially when strong states, like the US and its allies, back the system. They point to the success of NATO, which is a form of collective security where powerful states cooperate militarily to ensure mutual protection.

❏ Core Principles of Collective Security

❏ Realist Critique of Collective Security

2. Liberalism and Collective Security

Liberalism gives a more hopeful view of collective security than realism. Liberals believe that states can work together to maintain peace. They think international organisations like the United Nations (UN) help countries cooperate and solve problems without war. Liberal thinkers say that diplomacy, laws, and strong institutions reduce the chance of conflict. Collective security matches well with liberal ideas because it builds trust, encourages peace, and shares the responsibility for keeping the world safe. Bodies like the UN Security Council help prevent war by offering peaceful solutions, supporting joint action, and promoting cooperation between countries.

3. Constructivism and Collective Security

Constructivism focuses on the power of ideas, beliefs, and identities. Constructivists say states join collective security systems because of shared values and norms, not just military power or self-interest. They believe that ideas about peace, justice, and human rights push countries to cooperate. For example, the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) says that countries should stop genocide and other major crimes. This fits with the constructivist belief that shared values drive action. According to constructivists, collective security works best when states feel like part of one global community. When states believe they belong to the same group, they are more willing to help each other and stop threats to peace.

4. Marxism and Collective Security

Marxists look at collective security with suspicion. They believe powerful capitalist countries control the international system to protect their own interests. According to Marxists, collective security often serves rich and powerful countries instead of helping all nations equally. They argue that powerful countries may use collective security as an excuse to interfere in weaker countries. These actions may look like peacekeeping, but in reality, they protect business interests or political power. In this view, collective security becomes a tool for the strong to control the weak, not a way to achieve fair and lasting peace.

5. Critical Theory and Collective Security

Critical theory expands on Marxism and also looks at issues like racism, colonialism, and gender inequality. Critical theorists say collective security systems keep unfair power structures in place. They believe these systems don't solve the root causes of conflict, such as poverty or injustice, but only protect the interests of powerful states. They argue that we can't achieve real peace unless we fix the deep problems in the world system.

If collective security ignores these problems, it may do more harm than good. According to critical theorists, true peace requires fairness and justice for all people, not just safety for the powerful.

2.2.4 Evolution of Collective Security

The idea of collective security can be traced back to ancient civilisations, where early forms of alliances and defence agreements began to emerge. Though not exactly like the modern concept, these historical examples provide important context for how the idea evolved. In Ancient Greece, for example, the Delian League (478-404 BCE) was formed by Athens and its allies to defend against Persian threats. While it started as a cooperative defence, it eventually became dominated by Athens, showing how powerful members can take control of such alliances. In Medieval Europe, the Peace of God movement (starting in 989 CE) was an effort by the Catholic Church to reduce violence by declaring certain groups and places off-limits for attacks, representing an early attempt to set rules for conflict.

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, known for establishing the principle of state sovereignty, also included agreements for collective action against those who disturbed the peace, hinting at ideas of modern collective security. In the Enlightenment period, thinkers further developed these ideas. Immanuel Kant, in his 1795 work "Perpetual Peace," suggested a federation of free states that would work together to maintain peace, a concept that heavily influenced later thoughts on collective security. The Concert of Europe (1815-1914) emerged after the Napoleonic Wars, where major European powers met regularly to maintain peace through diplomacy. Although it wasn't a formal collective security system, it was a step toward more structured cooperation for peace.

2.2.5 The League of Nations and Collective Security

The devastation of World War I (1914-1918) sparked efforts to establish a formal global collective security system, leading to the creation of the League of Nations in 1920. Key features of the League's collective security system were outlined in several important articles. Notably, Article 10 obligated member states to uphold the territorial integrity and political independence of all other members against external aggression. Article 11 stated that any war or threat of war was a concern for the entire League, giving it the authority to act to preserve peace. Articles 12-15 set up processes for resolving disputes peacefully, through arbitration or judicial settlements. Article 16 provided that, if

☐ Historical Roots of Collective Security

☐ Evolution of Collective Security Ideas

☐ League of Nations and Collective Security

any member of the League resorts to war without first trying to settle the dispute peacefully (as required by Articles 12–15 of the Covenant), it is considered to have committed an act of war against all other members.

The League had some notable successes in resolving certain bilateral disputes. The Åland Islands dispute between Sweden and Finland (1920-1921) was resolved by ruling that the Islands would remain under Finnish sovereignty while ensuring autonomy and protection for the Swedish-speaking population. In the Upper Silesia conflict between Germany and Poland (1921-1922), the League of Nations helped by overseeing a plebiscite and then mediating the territorial division based on ethnic lines and economic considerations. The League's decision, which balanced competing claims, helped prevent further violence and demonstrated its role in managing post-war border disputes peacefully.

The League of Nations successfully resolved the Greco-Bulgarian conflict of 1925 by promptly intervening after Greece invaded Bulgaria following a border incident. The League condemned Greece's actions, demanded immediate withdrawal, and appointed a commission of inquiry, ultimately leading to Greece's compliance and the restoration of peace without further escalation. However, it also faced major challenges. Key powers like the United States never joined, and countries like Germany and the Soviet Union were initially excluded. The League lacked its own military force and relied on member states to contribute troops. Its decision-making process required unanimous agreement, often leading to inaction.

Realist scholars believe the League failed because it was based on an idealistic idea of collective security but didn't have real power to enforce its decisions. They point out that the League couldn't stop aggressive actions by countries like Japan, Italy, and Germany in the 1930s. Its failure to act in crises like Manchuria (1931) and Abyssinia (1935), and its inability to prevent World War II, shows serious weaknesses in how it was designed. On the other hand, liberal institutionalist scholars say that although the League had flaws, it helped start important ideas about international cooperation and setting global rules. They believe its smaller successes—like settling minor disputes and supporting humanitarian work—show that such institutions can work better with stronger structures and political support. The League's failure demonstrated both the potential and the difficulties of implementing collective security. These lessons played a crucial role in shaping its successor, the United Nations.

□ League's Early Successes

□ Strengths and Limitations of the League

□ Criticism and Legacy of the League

2.2.6 Interwar Period

The Interwar period (1919-1939) played a key role in shaping the concept of collective security, with the League of Nations as the first global attempt to create such a system. However, this period also saw several challenges that ultimately led to the League's failure. One of the major challenges was the Manchurian Crisis (1931-1933), when Japan invaded Manchuria. Although the League condemned Japan's actions, it failed to impose meaningful sanctions or take military action, exposing weaknesses in its system. Similarly, during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935-1936), the League's response was limited to weak economic sanctions, which did little to stop the aggression. Another blow came when Germany violated the Treaty of Versailles by rearming and remilitarising the Rhineland in 1936, and the major powers failed to challenge these actions. The League's non-intervention policy during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) further showed its inability to prevent external interference in internal conflicts. Even though the League wanted no foreign interference, Germany and Italy helped and sided with General Franco of Spain. This made the League look powerless and damaged its reputation in handling such crises.

❒ Challenges and Failures of the League

Several reasons caused the failure of collective security during the years between the two world wars. One major reason was the global economic crisis. The Great Depression of the 1930s badly affected the economies and political systems of many countries. Because of this, governments focused more on solving their own problems than working together internationally. As historian E.H. Carr explains in The Twenty Years' Crisis, countries became more concerned with protecting their own interests and avoided taking costly actions to help others. At the same time, dictatorships rose in Germany, Italy, and Spain, while Stalin ruled the Soviet Union with strict control. These governments did not support the democratic values that collective security was based on. Instead, they followed aggressive policies and broke international rules. According to historian A.J.P. Taylor, the lack of trust and common values among these major powers made it difficult for countries to cooperate. This allowed aggressive states to act without fear of punishment.

❒ Economic Crisis and Rising Authoritarianism

The policy of appeasement followed by Britain and France in the 1930s made collective security much weaker. Instead of standing up to Nazi Germany's early acts of aggression, these countries chose to avoid conflict in hopes of keeping peace. As historian Martin Gilbert points out, this encouraged Hitler to take bolder actions, knowing there would be little resistance. At the same time, the United States stayed out of European affairs

❒ Appeasement and Isolationism

and did not join the League of Nations. This isolationist policy meant the League lacked the support of one of the world's most powerful countries. Scholars like Paul Kennedy have argued that without American involvement, the League lacked both moral authority and military strength.

Another serious failure was the World Disarmament Conference (1932–1934). Countries could not agree on reducing their weapons, and Germany eventually left the conference and the League altogether. This showed how hard it was to achieve arms control, which was a key part of the idea of collective security. As historian David Reynolds notes, the failure of disarmament proved that nations were not ready to trust each other enough to limit their military power. Together, these factors show why collective security failed—not just because of weak institutions, but also because powerful countries were unwilling or unable to work together. So, the failure of collective security happened not just because the League of Nations was weak, but also because of the serious political and economic problems the world faced in the 1930s.

> ❏ Failure of Disarmament and Collective Security

2.2.7 World War II and the Failure of Collective Security

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 clearly showed that the collective security system of the interwar period had failed, as the League of Nations could not stop the war. However, the idea of collective security did not completely disappear. Instead, several important events during the war kept the concept alive and helped shape a stronger international system for the future. One major step was the Atlantic Charter (1941), a joint statement by the United States and the United Kingdom. It described their shared vision for a peaceful world after the war, based on cooperation, disarmament, and collective security. According to historian Charles Webster, this charter helped revive hopes for a new global order after the failure of the League. Again, the Declaration by the United Nations (1942) showed a new form of wartime unity. The Allied powers agreed to work together and not make separate peace deals, which reflected the principle of collective defence. As Paul Kennedy explains, this cooperation laid the foundation for a new, more effective international organisation.

> ❏ Revival of Collective Security during WWII

At the Moscow and Tehran Conferences (1943), leaders of the Allied countries—such as Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—began serious discussions about building a new organisation to maintain peace after the war. These talks marked a turning point in international planning, as noted by John Lewis Gaddis. The Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944) was a key moment

in shaping this new body. Delegates from major powers proposed the basic structure of what would become the United Nations, aiming to correct the weaknesses of the League by giving the new organisation real power to act. Finally, at the Yalta Conference (1945), the structure of the United Nations was finalised. The idea of veto power for the five permanent members of the Security Council was introduced to ensure that the new system would have the support of the major powers. As Stephen Schlesinger notes, this compromise was essential to getting the great powers to commit to a lasting system of collective security. These developments showed that, despite the collapse of the League, the idea of collective security remained important and was reshaped into a more practical form through the creation of the United Nations.

The experience of World War II was deeply influential in the way the new system of collective security was created after the war. Several important lessons were learned from the failure of the League of Nations, and these were used in shaping the United Nations. First, the importance of universal membership was recognised. The League had been weakened because major powers like the United States were not included, while others withdrew or were expelled. As noted by Inis Claude, success in a global organisation is unlikely if participation by all major powers is not ensured. Second, the need for strong enforcement mechanisms was understood. The League's inability to implement its decisions was seen as a major flaw. To address this, the Security Council of the United Nations was given the power to authorise collective military action, a design choice explained by Edward Luck as essential for giving the new system authority.

Third, the challenge of maintaining a balance between national sovereignty and international action was acknowledged. While states were not willing to fully surrender their sovereignty, it was accepted that international action might be needed in cases of serious threats to peace. This balance was emphasised by Hedley Bull as crucial for broader acceptance of the system. Lastly, cooperation among the great powers was deemed essential. The League had failed when such cooperation broke down. To prevent this, permanent membership and veto power were granted to the five major Allied powers in the U.N. Security Council. This design, as described by Stephen Schlesinger, was adopted to secure the involvement and support of these powers in the long term. Through these lessons, a more practical and enforceable system of collective security was developed, and the United Nations was shaped as the foundation for the post-war international order.

2.2.8 The United Nations and Collective Security

The end of World War II marked a new chapter in the evolution of collective security with the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. The UN was designed to address the shortcomings of the League of Nations while preserving the core principles of collective security. The United Nations was created on 24 October 1945, with 51 founding countries who aimed to prevent another global war and promote peace. The structure of the UN reflects both the ideal of collective security and the reality of power politics. The General Assembly allows all member states to speak and vote equally. It serves as a global forum for discussing international issues and passing non-binding resolutions.

The Security Council holds the main responsibility for peace and security. It includes five permanent members—the US, UK, Russia, France, and China—who have veto power, and ten non-permanent members elected for two years. Scholars like Edward Luck argue that giving veto power to major powers ensured their continued participation, unlike in the League of Nations. The Secretariat, led by the Secretary-General, runs the UN's daily operations and helps implement decisions. The Secretary-General also plays a diplomatic role in preventing conflicts. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) settles legal disputes between states and gives legal opinions. It helps develop international law, though its rulings depend on states' willingness to comply. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) coordinates global efforts on economic development, health, education, and human rights. It connects the UN with specialised agencies like the WHO and UNESCO. This design aimed to make the UN both inclusive and effective by balancing the sovereign equality of states with the need for leadership by powerful nations.

2.2.8.1 UN Charter and Collective Security Provisions

The UN Charter created a stronger system for collective security than the League of Nations by clearly outlining how the international community should respond to threats and conflicts. It includes key provisions that guide peaceful resolution and collective action: Chapter VI encourages countries to settle disputes through peaceful methods like negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or judicial settlement. Scholars like Ian Brownlie point out that this reflects the UN's commitment to diplomacy as the first step in maintaining peace. Chapter VII gives the Security Council the authority to identify threats to international peace and to take action, such as imposing sanctions or authorising military force. According to Thomas Franck, this

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☐ Birth of the United Nations

☐ UN Institutional Framework

☐ Charter Provisions of the UN

provision makes the UN's security framework more enforceable compared to the League, which lacked real power. Article 51 recognises the right of self-defence if a country faces an armed attack. It allows states to protect themselves individually or with allies until the Security Council takes steps to maintain peace. Legal scholars like Michael Glennon emphasise that this article ensures states can act immediately while still placing the ultimate responsibility on the Council.

2.2.8.2 Early UN Operations and the Korean War

The UN's collective security mechanism was first seriously tested during the Korean War in 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The Soviet Union was boycotting the Security Council at the time, which allowed the Council to pass resolutions authorising military intervention. A US-led UN force responded quickly, showing that the UN could organise collective military action under the right conditions. Scholars such as Inis Claude have argued that this moment revealed the UN's potential to act decisively, although it happened under unusual circumstances. Later, in 1990, the UN faced another major challenge during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. This time, the Security Council, with full participation of the permanent members, authorised the use of force under Resolution 678 to expel Iraqi forces. The resulting Gulf War (1991) marked a rare moment of unity among major powers in enforcing collective security. Scholar Adam Roberts noted that this event reaffirmed the UN's relevance in a post-Cold War world.

2.2.9 Collective Security in the Cold War Era

The Cold War's ideological divide greatly affected the UN's ability to enforce collective security. The United States and the Soviet Union often used their veto power in the Security Council to block each other's actions. As a result, the UN could not respond effectively to many international crises. Political scientist Thomas G. Weiss explains that this frequent deadlock showed how power politics limited the UN's original goals. Many conflicts during the Cold War became proxy wars, where the superpowers supported different sides. This made it difficult for the UN to act neutrally or gain consensus for intervention. At the same time, military alliances like NATO (1949) and the Warsaw Pact (1955) created separate systems of security, which weakened the UN's central role.

Decolonization also changed the UN's membership. Many newly independent states joined the UN, increasing the number of voices and creating new tensions, especially between the Global North and Global South. Scholar Edward Luck noted that

these shifts complicated the UN's decision-making process but also made it more representative of global diversity. To manage conflicts despite these challenges, the UN began developing peacekeeping operations. In 1956, during the Suez Crisis, the UN launched its first peacekeeping mission—UN Emergency Force (UNEF I). These missions were based on key principles: the consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence.

Over time, peacekeeping grew in complexity. It began to include civilian components, such as election monitoring and humanitarian aid. Important missions during the Cold War included the UN Operation in the Congo (1960–1964), the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (1964), and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (1978). Because of the UN's limitations, countries also formed regional security organisations. NATO and the Warsaw Pact played dominant roles in Europe. In other regions, organisations like the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) addressed local peace and security issues.

The Cold War era also brought key legal developments. The Nuremberg Principles (1950) set the foundation for prosecuting war crimes. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 strengthened the legal protections for civilians and combatants in armed conflict. In 1974, the UN General Assembly adopted a Definition of Aggression, although political interests often influenced its use. Despite Cold War tensions, the UN remained a vital space for diplomacy. It adapted to challenges and introduced important ideas and practices in collective security. These experiences shaped the way the world would approach peace and security after the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the Cold War, bringing a new phase in international relations and collective security. This period was filled with optimism about the role of the United Nations in maintaining global peace.

2.2.10. The "New World Order" and Collective Security

After the Cold War ended, the world saw new hope for a more cooperative international system. The United States emerged as the only global superpower, which reduced direct rivalry among major powers in the UN Security Council. Scholar Francis Fukuyama described this period as a moment of "liberal internationalism," where the U.S. took a leading role in promoting peace and democracy.

The permanent members of the Security Council began to cooperate more actively, which revitalised the UN's influence in international decision-making. This was evident during the Gulf War in 1991, when the Security Council authorised a U.S.-led coalition to push Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. The UN greatly expanded its peacekeeping and peace-building missions, both in size and responsibilities. It launched new operations not just to monitor ceasefires, but also to support elections, rebuild institutions, and protect civilians. For example, the UN Mission in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992–93) helped organise democratic elections, and the UN operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ, 1992–94) supported the transition from civil war to peace. Scholars like Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his 1992 report Agenda for Peace, emphasised the growing importance of preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction. These developments showed that the UN was adapting to new global realities with broader goals and tools for collective security.

2.2.11 Key Post-Cold War Interventions

Several interventions after the Cold War showed both the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations (UN) in maintaining collective security. In the Gulf War (1990–1991), Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678, which allowed member states to use "all necessary means" to remove Iraqi forces. A United States (US)-led coalition pushed Iraq out of Kuwait. This mission became a key example of how the UN could lead effective collective action after the Cold War. In Somalia (1992–1995), the UN tried to stop famine and civil war. The UN launched two missions: the United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM I) and UNOSOM II. The US also led a separate mission called the Unified Task Force (UNITAF). These missions faced many challenges, including changing goals and unclear leadership. This situation showed how difficult it is to carry out humanitarian interventions.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–2002), the UN created the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to help stop violence during the civil war. However, the force failed to stop serious events like the Srebrenica massacre. In 1995, after the Dayton Peace Agreement, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) took over with the Implementation Force (IFOR) and later the Stabilisation Force (SFOR). These missions showed the need for strong support from regional organisations during complex ethnic conflicts. In Kosovo (1999), NATO used military force without the direct approval of the UN Security Council. NATO claimed it was acting to stop human rights violations. Later, the UN took over the administration of the region through

Post-Cold War UN Working

UN Interventions: Gulf War and Somalia

Interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor

the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This case raised important questions about the roles of the UN and regional groups in such actions. In East Timor (1999–2002), after a vote for independence from Indonesia, violence broke out. Australia led a peacekeeping force called the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET). Then, the UN set up the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to help build the new nation. Many experts see this as a successful example of the UN leading a full peacebuilding mission. These events showed that the UN could lead and support important international actions.

2.2.12 Expansion of the Collective Security

After the Cold War, the idea of collective security changed in important ways. Countries and the United Nations (UN) started to focus more on people than just on protecting borders. This new focus is called human security. It means keeping individuals safe from violence, poverty, and human rights violations. In 2001, the international community introduced the idea of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This means that every government must protect its people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. If a country fails to do this, the international community can step in to help protect the people. The UN also worked on peacebuilding. This means helping countries rebuild after a war by setting up good governments, rebuilding schools and hospitals, and solving the problems that caused the war. Peacebuilding helps prevent future violence and supports long-term peace. At the same time, the UN and other groups started focusing more on conflict prevention. They tried to stop fights before they turned into wars. They used tools like early warning systems, talks between leaders, and mediation to calm tensions. These changes helped make collective security more people-focused, more active, and more helpful in keeping the world peaceful.

❒ Evolving Focuses of the UN

2.2.13 Challenges to Post-Cold War Collective Security

Despite early hopes that collective security would lead to greater global stability and cooperation, several challenges emerged, showing the limitations of the system and the need for changes in managing global security.

1. Complex Emergencies

❒ Challenges of Intra-State Conflicts

Many post-Cold War conflicts were not traditional wars between countries. Instead, they involved non-state actors, ethnic tensions, and the collapse of state structures. For example, in Africa and the Balkans, civil wars often involved multiple

factions, warlords, and insurgents, rather than clear national armies. Traditional peacekeeping, which was designed for conflicts between countries, was not effective in these situations. In places like Somalia, where there was no central government and armed militias controlled parts of the country, peacekeeping efforts struggled and failed to bring lasting peace.

2. Sovereignty vs. Intervention

A major issue in collective security was balancing state sovereignty with the need for humanitarian intervention. Sovereignty means a country has the right to govern itself without outside interference. However, as awareness of human rights violations grew, the world debated when it was acceptable to intervene in a country to prevent atrocities like genocide or war crimes. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, introduced in 2001, argued that if a country fails to protect its citizens, the international community has the right to intervene. However, R2P has not always been applied consistently, with political interests influencing decisions, as seen in Libya and Syria.

3. Selective Intervention

Critics of collective security argue that it is applied inconsistently, often based on the interests of powerful countries in the UN Security Council. The five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have veto power, which can lead to delays or inaction during crises. For example, the international community did not intervene during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, despite clear signs of mass killings. On the other hand, interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2011) were driven by the political and strategic interests of powerful countries, leading to accusations of double standards.

4. Peacekeeping Failures

The 1990s saw several failures of UN peacekeeping missions, showing the limits of collective security. In Rwanda (1994), UN peacekeepers could not prevent the genocide that killed about 800,000 people, mainly from the Tutsi ethnic group. The peacekeeping force, which was small and under-equipped, couldn't act because of restrictions and lack of resources. Similarly, in Srebrenica (1995), over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed, despite the presence of UN peacekeepers. These incidents showed that peacekeeping missions, without proper mandates and resources, were often unable to stop mass violence.

❐ Challenges of Implementing Collective Security

❐ Power Politics and Double Standards

❐ Limitations of UN Peacekeeping

5. Resource Constraints

The UN struggled to provide enough resources for its growing number of peacekeeping missions. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) faced serious challenges in funding, staffing, and providing equipment. As more missions were required, especially in post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone and East Timor, the UN could not secure enough support. Many member states failed to contribute enough resources, leaving the UN unable to fully support its missions. Also, the complexity of modern peacekeeping, which involves both military and civilian efforts, required specialised knowledge and long-term commitment, which many countries were unwilling to provide. These problems exposed the weaknesses in the collective security system.

2.2.1.4 Reform Efforts and Institutional Developments

Recognising the need for changes in global security, several reform efforts were introduced to improve the effectiveness of collective security and UN operations. Brahimi Report (2000): The Brahimi Report proposed significant reforms to enhance UN peacekeeping operations. It called for improving the planning, training, and resources of peacekeeping missions, aiming to make them more efficient and responsive to modern conflicts. International Criminal Court (2002): The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) marked a significant step in addressing international crimes. The ICC was created as a permanent institution to prosecute individuals responsible for crimes like genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, helping to strengthen the principles of collective security by holding perpetrators accountable.

UN Peacebuilding Commission (2005): The UN Peacebuilding Commission was created to better coordinate international efforts in rebuilding countries after conflicts. Its goal is to support long-term peacebuilding by helping nations recover and prevent the relapse into conflict, ensuring stability and sustainable peace. World Summit Outcome Document (2005): The World Summit Outcome Document reaffirmed the importance of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. It also called for reforms in UN management to improve the organisation's ability to respond to global challenges and strengthen its role in maintaining peace and security. These efforts represented a collective recognition of the shortcomings of the existing system and a commitment to making necessary reforms to strengthen global peace and security.

❒ Resource Constraints in Peacekeeping

❒ Reforming Collective Security

❒ Commitment to Peacebuilding and Reform

2.2.14 Contemporary Challenges and Debates

As the 21st century progressed, collective security faced both persistent and emerging challenges that complicated its traditional methods. These challenges highlighted the evolving nature of global security and the need for new strategies to address them.

One of the major challenges has been transnational terrorism, especially from groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. These organisations operate across borders and use unconventional tactics, making it harder for traditional security measures to address the threat effectively. Their ability to carry out attacks globally has forced countries to rethink security strategies and adopt more collaborative, intelligence-sharing approaches.

❐ Transnational Terrorism

In addition, cyber warfare has emerged as a significant threat. State-sponsored cyber-attacks can cripple economies, steal sensitive information, or disrupt critical infrastructure. These attacks are difficult to defend against with traditional military strategies. The rise of cyber warfare requires nations to develop new forms of collective defence, including cyber capabilities, alliances, and international norms for cybersecurity.

❐ Cyber Warfare

Another growing threat is hybrid warfare, which combines conventional, irregular, and cyber tactics. This approach blurs the lines between war and peace. For example, in the Ukraine conflict, the world witnessed military operations, cyber-attacks, and disinformation campaigns. Such hybrid strategies complicate the ability of international institutions like the United Nations to respond effectively, as they are not easily classified as traditional warfare.

❐ Hybrid Warfare

Climate change is increasingly recognised as a major security threat. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise are creating resource shortages and displacing populations. These effects can lead to conflicts over water, food, and land. As a result, climate change is beginning to be seen as a core issue in collective security, requiring countries to work together to prevent or mitigate its impacts.

❐ Climate Change and Security

The COVID-19 pandemic further emphasised the need for global cooperation in addressing health crises. The pandemic showed that health threats are global in nature and require coordinated responses. In this sense, collective security must expand to include global health as a key area of concern, with nations collaborating to prevent and manage pandemics.

❐ Global Health Crises

The re-emergence of great power competition has also affected collective security. China's growing influence, particularly in

the South China Sea, has raised tensions with the United States and regional powers. Meanwhile, Russia's actions in places like Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria challenge the stability of the post-Cold War international order. The growing rivalry between major powers makes it more difficult to build consensus in international forums like the UN Security Council, hindering collective efforts to maintain global peace.

Regional conflicts continue to test the limits of collective security. The Syrian Civil War is a prime example, exposing divisions within the UN Security Council and revealing the difficulty of intervening in complex proxy wars. The ongoing Yemen conflict also raises questions about the effectiveness of UN-led peacekeeping and the influence of regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran. In South Sudan, the struggles of a newly independent state highlight the challenges of peacebuilding in fragile nations.

Technological advancements are reshaping security concerns. Artificial intelligence (AI), for example, presents ethical and strategic questions about the use of autonomous weapons. Additionally, space security has become a growing concern, with nations developing military capabilities in space. The potential for space-based conflicts requires international cooperation to establish norms and prevent an arms race in space. Similarly, biotechnology offers great potential for medicine but also raises concerns about the development of bioweapons.

Institutional challenges within the United Nations remain persistent. One major issue is the ongoing debate over UN Security Council reform, especially regarding membership expansion and the veto power of the five permanent members. Many argue that the Council does not reflect current global realities and that reform is necessary to improve its effectiveness. Moreover, funding and resources for peacekeeping continue to be a constant concern. The UN often struggles to gather sufficient resources and personnel for its peacekeeping missions, making it difficult to meet the growing demand for these operations.

2.2.15 Conclusion

Collective security is a key idea in international relations, aiming for a world where countries work together to stop aggression and keep global peace. Its concept has evolved over time, adapting to new global challenges and realities. The history of collective security shows both its promise and its difficulties. The League of Nations, despite its early efforts, failed to maintain global peace, and the United Nations has had mixed success in implementing collective security. The Cold War period highlighted how great power politics could limit

collective action, while the post-Cold War era demonstrated the potential for stronger international responses to conflicts.

Today, collective security faces new challenges such as transnational terrorism, cyber threats, climate change, and renewed great power rivalries. These issues highlight the need for ongoing adjustments and innovations in international security systems. Despite its challenges, collective security remains a vital concept in international relations. It continues to guide how countries and international organisations work toward global peace and security. As the world faces more complex issues, the principles of collective security – cooperation, shared responsibility, and the idea that peace is indivisible – remain important and relevant for shaping the future of global governance.

❐ Modern Challenges to Collective Security

Summarised Overview

The principle of collective security aims to maintain international peace by uniting states in a cooperative effort to prevent aggression. Developed in the aftermath of World War I, the concept was initially institutionalised through the League of Nations, but its failure to prevent World War II exposed its limitations. Following the war, the United Nations (UN) adopted collective security through its Charter, with the UN Security Council playing a central role in responding to threats to global peace. However, Cold War divisions and the veto power of permanent Security Council members often stymied collective action.

Despite these challenges, collective security remains a foundational concept in global governance. The UN's peacekeeping missions, though limited by political interests, exemplify efforts to operationalise this framework. Modern-day threats, including terrorism, regional instability, and cyber-attacks, have expanded the scope of collective security, but have also exposed its limitations. As the international system becomes more complex, the future of collective security will depend on greater international cooperation, reforming institutions, and addressing the non-traditional security threats that define the 21st century.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is the fundamental concept of collective security in International Relations?

2. How did the League of Nations attempt to implement a collective security system?

3. Explain the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) and its relationship to collective security.

4. What are the key roles of the UN Security Council in maintaining collective security?

5. In what ways did the Cold War challenge the effectiveness of collective security?

6. What are the primary differences between collective security and balance of power?

7. How do non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, challenge traditional collective security frameworks?

8. What role do regional organisations like NATO play in collective security?

9. What are the challenges of achieving collective security in a multipolar world?

10. How do peacekeeping missions reflect the principles of collective security?

Assignments

1. Critically analyse the effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council in maintaining international peace and security since the end of the Cold War.

2. Compare and contrast the collective security approaches of the League of Nations and the United Nations.

3. Evaluate the success of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in addressing mass atrocities. Use specific case studies to support your argument.

4. Examine the challenges posed by transnational terrorism to traditional collective security mechanisms.

5. Discuss the potential for reforming the current collective security system to better address 21st-century security challenges.

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Armament and Disarmament

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the historical evolution and theoretical foundations of armament and disarmament in international relations

- analyse the key factors influencing states' decisions to pursue armament or disarmament, including political, economic, and security considerations

- evaluate the impact of global arms control treaties and agreements on international peace and security

- explore contemporary challenges and debates surrounding disarmament, arms races, and the role of non-state actors in modern warfare

Background

The concepts of armament and disarmament have played central roles in shaping international relations, especially in the context of war and peace. Armament refers to the process of building up military capabilities, which includes acquiring weapons, technology, and military infrastructure. Historically, states have pursued armament to defend themselves against perceived threats, deter adversaries, or project power.

Conversely, disarmament aims to reduce or eliminate military forces and weapons, often seen as a pathway to global peace and stability. The push for disarmament gained traction after the devastation of the two World Wars, leading to the creation of treaties like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Disarmament has been fraught with challenges, including distrust between nations, strategic insecurities, and the complexity of verifying compliance. The Cold War era saw extensive arms races, particularly between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but also marked significant efforts in arms control through treaties like the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Today, discussions on armament and disarmament also include concerns about nuclear proliferation, the militarisation of space, and the role of cyber weapons, reflecting the evolving nature of modern conflict.

Armament, Disarmament, Arms Control, Non-Proliferation, Nuclear Weapons, Arms Race

Discussion

2.3.1 Introduction

The concepts of armament and disarmament are central to understanding the dynamics of international relations. They refer to the processes of building up military capabilities and reducing or eliminating them, respectively. The balance between the two has shaped global politics, driven technological innovations, and influenced peace and conflict for centuries. Armament and disarmament are deeply intertwined with questions of security, power, and diplomacy, and their trajectories reflect broader trends in global order.

2.3.2 Meaning

Armament refers to the process by which countries build up their military power. Nations produce or acquire weapons, expand their armed forces, and develop new military technologies to protect themselves from potential threats. Some countries arm themselves to deter attacks, while others aim to increase their influence or prepare for possible conflicts. Arms races, where countries compete to outdo each other in military strength, are a common outcome of armament policies. For example, during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a massive arms race, especially involving nuclear weapons.

☐ Dynamics of Armament

☐ The Importance of Disarmament

On the other hand, disarmament means reducing or eliminating weapons to promote peace and reduce the risk of war. Countries can do this individually, in pairs, or through international agreements. Disarmament helps lower tensions between nations and prevents the spread of dangerous weapons like nuclear, chemical, or biological arms. For instance, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) encourages countries to stop making nuclear weapons and to work towards nuclear disarmament. Similarly, the Chemical Weapons Convention bans the use and production of chemical weapons. Disarmament efforts aim to create a safer and more stable world by limiting the tools of war and encouraging cooperation between nations.

2.3.3 Origin of Armament and Disarmament

Historically, the accumulation of weapons has been associated with a state's ability to project power and ensure its survival. The earliest civilisations recognised the importance of military strength in defending against external threats or expanding territorial control. Over time, as states grew in complexity and formed alliances, so too did their military strategies and technologies. On the other hand, disarmament, as an organised global effort, is relatively modern. It began gaining attention as a formalised concept in the early 20th century, although some ancient empires experimented with limited forms of disarmament after wars or in periods of peace. The motivations for disarmament have always revolved around reducing the risks of conflict, preventing arms races, and promoting peace.

2.3.4 Historical Development of Armament

The development of armament has evolved with human society. In ancient times, weapons were relatively simple—made from stone, bronze, or iron. However, technological innovations in metallurgy, mechanics, and chemistry led to more advanced weaponry, from swords and arrows to cannons and muskets. In the pre-modern era, states sought to increase their military capabilities through the development of larger and better-equipped armies. The introduction of gunpowder revolutionised warfare in the late medieval and early modern periods. The 19th century saw significant advancements in military technology, spurred by the Industrial Revolution. Mass production allowed for the creation of modern firearms, artillery, and later, the machine gun. By the end of the 19th century, naval power was also growing, with the introduction of ironclad ships and battleships. The 20th century saw unprecedented developments in armament during the two World Wars. From tanks and aircraft to the introduction of chemical and nuclear weapons, military capabilities reached new heights. World War I demonstrated the destructive power of modern industrial warfare, while World War II culminated in the development and use of atomic bombs, fundamentally altering the nature of armament.

2.3.5 Historical Development of Disarmament

The concept of limiting weapons has deep historical roots, with early examples found in both ancient and medieval societies. For example, in 1139, a church meeting called the Second Lateran Council banned the use of crossbows in wars between Christians. Church leaders believed crossbows were too deadly and made it too easy to kill knights in armour. However, they still allowed the use of crossbows against non-

Christians, showing that the rule was based more on religion than on general peacekeeping. In another case, in feudal Japan, the Tokugawa shogunate (the ruling military government from the 1600s to 1800s) strictly controlled who could own and use firearms. They limited weapons mainly to the samurai class and banned common people from having them. The goal was to maintain law and order and prevent uprisings, as too many weapons in the hands of ordinary people could threaten the shogunate's power. In both cases, the rulers used weapon control to protect their authority and reduce violence.

❏ Foundations of Modern Arms Control

The development of international law in the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly through the writings of Hugo Grotius, laid the groundwork for thinking about war and weapons control in a more structured way. This was further influenced by the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), which, while focused on restoring the European balance of power after the Napoleonic Wars, set a precedent for multilateral diplomacy, a key element in future arms control efforts. The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 were some of the first global attempts to formalise laws of war and consider disarmament. The 1899 conference introduced declarations banning asphyxiating gases and expanding bullets, while the 1907 conference expanded on the laws of war by restricting the use of naval mines and aerial bombardment.

❏ Naval Arms Race and the Need for Arms Control

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the world saw a significant build-up of weapons, especially at sea. This was known as the naval arms race, with the most intense competition between Great Britain and Germany. A major turning point came in 1906 when Britain launched the HMS Dreadnought—a powerful new type of battleship. It was faster, better armed, and more advanced than any previous warship. Its arrival made older ships outdated and forced other countries, especially Germany, to build similar battleships to keep up. This competition made relations between countries more tense. It also showed that when countries try to outdo each other by building more and better weapons, it can lead to mistrust and increase the risk of war. In fact, this arms race was one of the factors that contributed to the outbreak of World War I. Many scholars and historians believe this period clearly shows why the world needs arms control to keep peace.

2.3.5.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

❏ Theoretical Perspectives

Several scholars from different schools of thought have offered important insights into the evolution of armament and disarmament. Marxist thinkers like Hobson and Lenin argued that arms races are deeply connected to capitalism and imperialism.

They believed that powerful countries build weapons not just for defence, but to protect their economic interests and maintain control over their colonies. In contrast, Kenneth Waltz, a leading figure in the Realist school, explained that in a world without a central authority or world government, states are forced to protect themselves, which naturally leads to armament. However, Waltz also warned that excessive militarisation could create fear and tension, increasing the risk of conflict, especially among powerful nations.

Military historian Michael Howard studied the naval arms race before World War I and saw it as a clear example of how military build-up without diplomacy can lead to major wars. He supported disarmament but emphasised that it should be balanced and based on trust and communication. From a liberal perspective, Richard Cobden believed that the need for weapons could be reduced through free trade, diplomacy, and international law. He criticised military expansion as something that mainly served the interests of elites rather than ordinary people. Lastly, Hedley Bull from the English School suggested that states can form an international society based on rules and norms, where arms control agreements play a key role in maintaining peace and order. Together, these scholars highlight the different reasons why states build arms and how disarmament can be pursued through various paths like diplomacy, trust-building, and changing international norms.

2.3.7 World War I Disarmament Initiatives

The immense destruction and loss of life caused by World War I sparked stronger efforts toward disarmament. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) imposed heavy disarmament measures on Germany, limiting its army to 100,000 men and banning the use of tanks, military aircraft, and submarines. Although the treaty also called for disarmament among all nations, this was never fully enforced. The strict limitations placed on Germany, however, backfired, fostering resentment that eventually contributed to the rise of Nazi Germany.

The Washington Naval Treaty (1922), or the Five-Power Treaty, was one of the first successful arms limitation agreements. It restricted the naval power of the US, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy by setting limits on capital ship tonnage, effectively preventing a naval arms race in the 1920s. The Geneva Protocol (1925) banned the use of chemical and biological weapons; although it didn't prevent their development or stockpiling, it set a precedent against their use in warfare. The Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) sought to outlaw war as a means of resolving conflicts but failed to prevent World War II. The London Naval Treaty

(1930) extended restrictions on battleships and submarines, and the Geneva Disarmament Conference (1932-1934) tried to reach a comprehensive disarmament agreement. However, rising international tensions and Germany's withdrawal from negotiations doomed these efforts. The failure of interwar disarmament and the rearmament of Nazi Germany led directly to World War II, which introduced a game-changing weapon: the atomic bomb.

2.3.8 The Nuclear Age and Cold War

☐ Birth of the Nuclear Age

The creation and use of nuclear weapons in 1945 drastically changed the landscape of armament and disarmament. The immense destructive power of these weapons introduced new pressures for arms control while simultaneously fueling a nuclear arms race that dominated much of the Cold War. In the early nuclear era, the U.S.-led Manhattan Project resulted in the first successful nuclear test on July 16, 1945, followed by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. These events showcased the unparalleled devastation nuclear weapons could unleash, marking the beginning of a new era of global threat.

☐ Early Nuclear Proliferation and Control Efforts

Initially, the United States had a monopoly on nuclear weapons, sparking discussions about preventive war and controlling atomic energy. However, the Soviet Union, feeling threatened, rapidly developed its own nuclear weapons, successfully testing an atomic bomb in 1949. Soon, the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), and China (1964) joined the "nuclear club," raising global concerns about the spread of these weapons and the growing risk of nuclear conflict. Early efforts to manage nuclear weapons included the Baruch Plan (1946), which proposed international control over atomic energy, but it was rejected by the Soviet Union. In 1953, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower introduced the "Atoms for Peace" programme to promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology and curb proliferation, eventually leading to the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957.

☐ Nuclear Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory, especially the idea of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD), became a key part of military strategy during the Cold War and strongly influenced arms control policies. Realist scholars like Kenneth Waltz argued that nuclear weapons could actually promote global peace. In his view, when two opposing states both have nuclear capabilities, they are unlikely to go to war because the risk of complete destruction on both sides is too high. This logic of deterrence suggests that the presence of nuclear arms can prevent conflict by making the cost of war unbearably high. On the other hand, liberal scholars take

a more cautious view. They believe that nuclear weapons are extremely risky and should be controlled or eliminated through international cooperation and treaties. Thinkers like Joseph Nye emphasise the role of institutions and agreements—such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting global security through diplomacy and transparency.

Constructivist scholars offer a different approach by focusing on ideas, norms, and identities. Nina Tannenwald, for example, introduced the concept of the "nuclear taboo"—the belief that using nuclear weapons is morally unacceptable. This suggests that international behaviour is not only shaped by power but also by shared values and ethical concerns, which can influence a state's willingness to disarm or refrain from nuclear use. Critical theorists and postcolonial thinkers take a more critical stance, arguing that the global nuclear order is deeply unequal. They point out that powerful countries often retain their nuclear arsenals while pressuring weaker nations to disarm. This double standard, they argue, reinforces global inequality and power imbalances. For these scholars, true disarmament must involve questioning who holds power and why, and pushing for a fairer and more inclusive global system. In short, nuclearisation has sparked important debates among scholars. Realists focus on deterrence and security, liberals stress cooperation and treaties, constructivists highlight moral norms and identity, while critical theorists call attention to inequality and the misuse of power in the global nuclear regime.

2.3.9 Key Cold War Developments

During the Cold War, several major events and agreements shaped the course of nuclear arms control. One of the most dangerous moments was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles in Cuba, bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war. This crisis underscored the risks of nuclear brinksmanship and spurred efforts to prevent future confrontations. In 1963, the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed by the U.S., USSR, and UK, banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater—an important step toward limiting nuclear testing. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 further solidified arms control efforts by preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Non-nuclear states agreed not to pursue nuclear weapons, while nuclear states pledged to work toward disarmament under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I and II) aimed to cap the number of nuclear missiles between the U.S. and USSR,

though tensions prevented SALT II from being fully implemented. Other important treaties included the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972, which limited missile defence systems, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987, which eliminated an entire class of nuclear missiles. The arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union continued, with both sides developing increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons and delivery systems. This included the development of Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs), Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), and Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). The Cold War era was characterised by a paradoxical combination of rapidly expanding nuclear arsenals and increasingly complex arms control agreements. This tension between armament and disarmament reflected the broader struggle between competition and cooperation that defined superpower relations during this period.

2.3.10 Post-Cold War Era

The end of the Cold War in 1991 brought about major changes in the landscape of armament and disarmament. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the United States becoming the sole superpower, new opportunities for disarmament arose, alongside fresh challenges in arms control. In the realm of nuclear disarmament, significant progress was made. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START) played a crucial role. START I, signed in 1991, reduced the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 6,000 for both the U.S. and Russia. While START II, signed in 1993, aimed to eliminate certain types of nuclear missiles, it never fully came into effect. The New START treaty, signed in 2010, further limited nuclear warheads to 1,550 on each side, with strong verification measures. Additionally, the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992 saw both the U.S. and Soviet Union (later Russia) take reciprocal steps to reduce their tactical nuclear arsenals.

Efforts to ban nuclear testing gained momentum with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, although it has yet to be enforced due to a lack of ratification by key states. Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones also expanded, with regions like Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia prohibiting nuclear weapons. Conventional arms control also saw advancements. The 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty set limits on military equipment to prevent surprise attacks. The Chemical Weapons Convention (1993) and the Ottawa Treaty (1997) banned chemical weapons and landmines, respectively. Other significant treaties included the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and the 2013 Arms

☐ Cold War Arms Control and Tensions

☐ Post-Cold War Nuclear Disarmament

☐ Post-Cold War Arms Control and Treaties

Trade Treaty, both aimed at regulating and limiting the use and trade of dangerous conventional weapons.

2.3.11 New Challenges

New challenges have emerged in the realm of armament and disarmament. One of the key concerns is nuclear proliferation. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003 raised alarm. Similarly, Iran's nuclear programme led to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but ongoing tensions continue to raise concerns. There are also fears of nuclear terrorism, especially regarding the security of nuclear materials in former Soviet states. The rise of non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, has increased the focus on preventing these groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Traditional arms control measures often struggle to address the challenges posed by non-state actors.

New technologies are making arms control even more difficult. Cyberattacks, AI-powered weapons, and hypersonic missiles bring fresh challenges and risks. The increasing use of space for military purposes also shows the urgent need for new global rules. At the same time, important arms control agreements are falling apart. For example, the United States pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002 and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019. The future of the New START treaty is also uncertain. On top of this, rising tensions between powerful countries like the U.S., Russia, and China have slowed down efforts to reduce weapons. Instead of disarming, these countries are upgrading their nuclear weapons.

2.3.12 Contemporary Issues

In the current global landscape, armament and disarmament remain critical issues in international relations. One of the most pressing concerns is the proliferation of nuclear weapons, with countries like North Korea continuing to develop their nuclear capabilities despite international sanctions. The collapse of key arms control agreements, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the United States and Russia, has further destabilised the global security environment. Additionally, the emergence of new technologies, including hypersonic weapons and autonomous systems, has complicated traditional notions of deterrence and arms control. The increasing militarisation of space and cyberspace presents new challenges for disarmament efforts, as these domains lack comprehensive international regulations. Moreover, the rise of non-state actors

and their potential access to weapons of mass destruction continues to pose significant threats to global security.

Looking ahead, the future of armament and disarmament in international relations appears complex and uncertain. The ongoing modernisation of nuclear arsenals by major powers like the United States, Russia, and China may trigger a new arms race, potentially undermining decades of disarmament progress. However, there is also potential for positive developments. The extension of the New START Treaty between the U.S. and Russia provides a foundation for future arms control negotiations. Emerging technologies may offer new verification methods for disarmament agreements, enhancing trust and compliance. The growing global awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons could lead to increased public pressure for disarmament. Climate change and other global challenges may also encourage nations to redirect resources from military spending to address these shared threats. The role of international organisations, particularly the United Nations, will likely remain crucial in facilitating dialogue and promoting disarmament initiatives.

2.3.13 Conclusion

Armament and disarmament continue to play a pivotal role in shaping international relations and global security. While significant progress has been made since the end of the Cold War, the world faces new and evolving challenges in this domain. The relationship between technological advancements, geopolitical tensions, and emerging security threats underscores the complexity of achieving and maintaining global disarmament. It is essential for the international community to renew its commitment to arms control and disarmament efforts. This will require innovative approaches to address new technologies, strengthen existing agreements, and create new frameworks for cooperation. Ultimately, the pursuit of disarmament remains fundamental to achieving a more stable and secure world, necessitating ongoing dialogue, diplomacy, and collective action from all nations. As global citizens, we must remain vigilant and engaged in these critical issues that have profound implications for the future of humanity.

❐ The Future of Armament and Disarmament

❐ Renewing Commitment to Disarmament

Summarised Overview

The unit on "Armament and Disarmament" focuses on aspects of military build-up and reduction, exploring how these concepts influence global politics. Armament, defined as the accumulation of weapons and military resources, is often pursued by states for reasons of national security, deterrence, or to exert international influence. Disarmament represents efforts to decrease or eliminate a nation's military capabilities, often framed as a means to reduce the risk of conflict and promote long-term global peace.

The historical context of armament and disarmament is rich with examples, from the arms race preceding World War I to modern debates over nuclear non-proliferation. The Cold War period saw a paradox of unprecedented arms accumulation alongside significant disarmament initiatives, including treaties like SALT, START, and INF, which aimed at reducing nuclear arsenals. Contemporary discussions also examine new technologies, including autonomous weapons and cyber capabilities, which complicate traditional arms control measures.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is the difference between armament and disarmament in the context of international relations?

2. Explain how the Cold War influenced global armament and disarmament efforts.

3. What are the main goals of arms control treaties like the NPT and START?

4. Why do states pursue armament, and what factors influence these decisions?

5. How has technological advancement changed the nature of armament in the 21st century?

6. Discuss the challenges associated with verifying compliance in disarmament agreements.

7. What role do non-state actors play in modern conflicts, and how do they impact disarmament efforts?

8. How does the concept of nuclear deterrence relate to global disarmament initiatives?

9. What is the impact of disarmament efforts on international peace and security?

10. Evaluate the effectiveness of contemporary disarmament efforts in addressing the proliferation of cyber weapons.

Assignments

1. Analyse the factors that led to the failure of early 20th-century disarmament efforts and how they shaped modern arms control initiatives.

2. Evaluate the role of the United Nations in facilitating global disarmament, with reference to specific treaties.

3. Compare and contrast the disarmament strategies of nuclear-armed states in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras.

4. Discuss the significance of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and cyber weapons, in the modern context of armament and disarmament.

5. Critically assess the effectiveness of non-proliferation treaties in preventing nuclear arms races in the 21st century.

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BLOCK 3
Classical Theories

Realism and Neo Realism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the foundational principles of Realism and Neo-Realism in international relations, and how these theories explain state behaviour and power dynamics

- analyse the key differences and similarities between classical Realism and Neo-Realism, focusing on their approaches to power, conflict, and cooperation

- evaluate the relevance and limitations of Realism and Neo-Realism in explaining contemporary global issues and state interactions in the 21st century

- explore the evolution of Realist thought and the impact of Neo-Realism on modern international relations theory

Background

The concepts of Realism and Neo-Realism form the backbone of international relations theory. Realism, rooted in classical political philosophy, views the international system as anarchic and believes that states act primarily in their own interest to ensure survival, often leading to power struggles and conflicts.

Pioneered by thinkers like Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, Realism focuses on the inherent self-interest and rationality of states. Neo-Realism, an evolution of Realist thought introduced by Kenneth Waltz in the 20th century, refines this idea by emphasising the structure of the international system as the primary force shaping state behaviour.

Neo-Realism posits that it is not human nature, but the anarchic structure of the international system that compels states to act in pursuit of power. Together, these theories offer a lens to interpret global politics, foreign policies, and conflicts, making them indispensable to any comprehensive study of international relations.

Discussion

3.1.1 Introduction

Realism has proven to be the most influential approach in explaining world politics, particularly due to its ability to offer a strong explanation for the constant state of war in the international system. Known as "Political Realism" or "Realpolitik," its origins date back to Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War and Sun Tzu's The Art of War, but it became dominant in the 20th century. This rise was in response to idealism, which believed nations shared a common "harmony of interests"— an idea discredited by the outbreak of World War II. Realists argue that international politics should be studied as it is, not as it should be, earning them their name. Unlike idealists, who focused on the causes of war and solutions to prevent it, Realists see war as inevitable due to humanity's natural desire for power. While idealism emphasises morality in international relations, Realism is centred on power and national interests.

☐ Foundations and Core Assumptions of Realism

In the Realist view, states are the most important players in world politics. This belief is supported by the concept of sovereignty, which allows states to act independently within and outside their borders. Nationalism and the development of modern nation-states have strengthened this belief, turning states into unified political communities where all other loyalties are secondary. As a result, non-state actors like multinational corporations and organisations such as the United Nations are considered less important. Although these non-state actors do influence international relations, Realists maintain that nation-states remain dominant, arguing that non-state actors only operate with the permission of national governments. For Realists, nothing is above the state.

☐ Primacy of the State

3.1.2 Classical Realism

Classical Realism offers a broad worldview of international politics, encompassing several generations of thinkers, from Thucydides and Machiavelli to E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, one of the most prominent figures in post-war Realism. The key idea of Classical Realism is that international politics is driven by an unending struggle for power, rooted in human nature. In

☐ Classical Realism

this view, concepts like justice, law, and society play a limited or secondary role. Classical Realists believe that principles are always subordinate to policies, and a state's leader must adapt to the constantly shifting power dynamics in world politics. This school of thought gained popularity during the interwar period when scholars began explaining new developments in international relations. The term "Classical Realists" was later used to describe those who wrote on international relations around the time of the Second World War. What sets these thinkers apart is their shared belief in a pessimistic view of human nature.

□ Human Nature and Power Politics

Key figures like Reinhold Niebuhr, Nicholas Spykman, and Hans Morgenthau argued that the drive for power and dominance is a fundamental part of human nature. As a result, states, seen as self-interested and egoistic, behave in ways that reflect the nature of the people who make them up. This inherent aspect of human nature is why international politics is dominated by power struggles. Classical Realists are sceptical about the possibility of a major transformation in world politics, believing that human nature is unchanging. Therefore, they focus more on traditional tools like diplomacy, balance of power, international morality, public opinion, and international law to manage and limit conflicts between states, rather than relying on the hope of changing human nature.

3.1.2.1 Main Exponents and Theorists of Classical Realism

1. Thucydides

□ Thucydides and the Origins of Realism

Thucydides, a 5th-century BC Athenian historian and general, is often regarded as the founding figure of the realist school in international relations. His experiences during the war between the Delian League, led by Athens, and the Peloponnesian League, led by Sparta, were documented in his work, History of the Peloponnesian War. This collection of eight books reflects several key realist ideas, leading many to label Thucydides as a realist thinker. One central concept he presents is that the strong have the right to rule over the weak because they possess the power to do so. Thucydides famously stated, "The strong do what they can; the weak suffer what they must." In Book 5, he illustrates this through the Melian Dialogue, a dramatized exchange between the Athenians and the representatives of Melos, a small island that sought neutrality.

The Melians embody idealistic beliefs, advocating for morality and justice, while the Athenians take a more pragmatic approach. They argue that powerful states have the right to

dominate weaker ones, asserting that true justice can only exist between equals, not between the strong and the weak. The dialogue's main takeaway is that in situations of power imbalance, the stronger party will pursue its own interests, reflecting a fundamental aspect of human nature. Thrasymachus, a Sophist and influential teacher of rhetoric, echoed a similar perspective in Plato's Republic. He defined justice as the interest of the stronger, aligning with Thucydides' views. Realist scholar Robert Gilpin further supports the classification of Thucydides as a realist by noting that he believed human motivations are driven by honour, greed, and fear. In this power struggle among social groups, higher values like beauty, goodness, and truth may be disregarded unless there are safeguards for one's security.

2. Kautilya

Kautilya's Arthashastra, despite its significant theoretical contributions to international politics, has been largely overlooked both in India and abroad, reflecting the dominance of a Eurocentric perspective in international relations. Kautilya can be seen as a pre-modern founder of Political Realism. In his book The First Great Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra, Roger Boesche argues that Kautilya embodies the essence of political realism. Max Weber emphasised Kautilya's ability to focus on the harsh realities of life, dismissing ideology in favour of practical governance. The Arthashastra highlights key ideas like the importance of national interest, the anarchic nature of international relations, and the central role of power, which can be understood from renowned statements in Arthashastra like "The king shall protect the state and the people" and "A ruler's main duty is to ensure the safety and well-being of the country and its citizens." Henry Kissinger even viewed Kautilya as a blend of Machiavelli and Clausewitz. While Arthashastra is often seen purely as a realist text, it frequently mentions dharma, or morality, indicating that it does have normative and moral underpinnings. Kautilya's approach ultimately presents a blend of idealism and realism in governance and daily life.

3. Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes

Niccolò Machiavelli, an Italian diplomat and philosopher from the 15th century, and Thomas Hobbes, a 16th-century English philosopher, both emphasised realism and pragmatism in their writings. Machiavelli lived during a time when virtues and ethics were considered essential to politics and international relations. He revolutionised this view by separating politics from ethics, arguing that any means—whether moral or immoral—are justified to achieve political goals, asserting that the ends justify the means. This marked a significant shift, as

□ Power, Justice, and Realist Ethics

□ Kautilya's Strategic Realism

□ Machiavellian Realism

such a rejection of morality had not been seen in Europe since the Greek Sophists. In the 15th chapter of his book The Prince, he discusses the concept of "effective truth," which refers to the realities that people experience, contrasting them with the idealised, utopian views of Christians and Greeks. Machiavelli's experiences with instability and war led him to advise rulers on maintaining power and stability, emphasising that the survival of the state is paramount.

Similarly, while Thomas Hobbes did not specifically focus on international relations, his work Leviathan significantly influenced classical realists like Hans Morgenthau and neo-realist Kenneth Waltz. Hobbes aimed to break away from classical political philosophy, which often included idealistic views about human nature—that individuals are rational and moral. He rejected this notion, describing humans as selfish, egoistic, and brutish, constantly seeking power. Hobbes introduced the idea of a "state of nature," a hypothetical condition where no government exists to protect individuals, leading to a situation where everyone fights for their own gain in a "war of all against all." He argued that this chaotic state also applies to independent nations, creating anarchy in the absence of a global government. Hobbes's insights into human nature, international anarchy, and power dynamics became foundational to the realist tradition. However, a closer look at his ideas reveals a more pacifist side; he believed that cooperation and peace could be achievable in international relations.

4. E.H. Carr

The realist approach in international relations can be divided into four main generations. The first is the interwar and wartime generation, represented by figures like E. H. Carr and Reinhold Niebuhr. The second is the post-war and early Cold War generation, including Hans Morgenthau and Raymond Aron. The third is the détente generation, led by Kenneth Waltz and Robert Gilpin. The final, post-Cold War generation, features thinkers like John Mearsheimer, Steven Walt, and Charles Glaser. Realism, spearheaded by British historian and diplomat E. H. Carr, emerged in response to the liberal idealist approach that was dominant in international relations after World War I. The debate between realists and idealists is often referred to as the first major debate in the field, though some scholars like Peter Wilson dispute this characterisation, arguing that this framing is a retrospective construction rather than a historically accurate account of early international relations theory.

Idealists, or Liberal Internationalists, believed that international conflicts could be prevented through institutions and respect for international law. Prominent idealists included

British politician and Nobel laureate Philip Noel Baker, former U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, and British academic Alfred Zimmern. In India, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru also embraced idealism in their views on international politics. Idealism is often seen as unrealistic because it aims for a perfect world. In international relations, idealists focused on the growing interdependence among nations and the need for multilateral organisations like the League of Nations. They argued that war was not due to flawed human nature, but rather poor political and social conditions, which could be improved. However, with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, idealism lost favour.

In his book The Twenty Years' Crisis (1939), E. H. Carr strongly criticised idealists, calling them misguided and dangerous. He argued that morality is not universal but relative, emphasising the importance of power. Carr believed that order in international politics is achieved through power, not morality, stating that morality is a product of power. He was critical of British and American intellectuals and policymakers for underestimating the role of power. While he acknowledged the presence of idealism in international relations, Carr maintained that when power and ideals come into conflict, states prioritise power in their decision-making.

5. Hans J. Morgenthau

E. H. Carr did not set out to develop a full theory of realism but instead focused on critiquing idealism and reducing its influence. The task of expanding realism into a comprehensive theoretical perspective is credited to Hans J. Morgenthau, an influential realist during the early Cold War period. Morgenthau, who fled fascist Germany as a Jewish refugee, was deeply opposed to totalitarianism and the weak foreign policies promoted by idealism in international relations. Influenced by thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Thomas Hobbes, Morgenthau argued that the human desire for dominance is the root cause of conflict. In his 1948 book Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Morgenthau emphasised that international politics is fundamentally a struggle for power. Before World War II, American scholars largely overlooked the importance of national power in international politics.

Morgenthau's ideas on realism are best understood through his six principles of political realism:

1. Politics is governed by objective laws which have their roots in unchanging human nature.

2. Realism perceives the world through the concept of 'interest defined in terms of power'.

3. Universally, interest is to be defined in terms of power; however, its meaning and interest may change.

4. Realism is a perspective which is aware of the moral importance of political action.

5. Moral aspirations of a community or state may not find universal acceptance.

6. As a tradition of thought, realism was distinct in its focus on the autonomy of the political realm and the decisions made within it.

Despite his significant contributions to realism, Morgenthau's ethical views have often been overlooked. He believed the ethical dimension of realism was just as important as its focus on power. By the mid-1960s, Morgenthau felt that realism had been overemphasised in the U.S., leading to flawed foreign policies, such as American intervention in Vietnam, which he opposed. He argued that realism without ethical considerations was dangerous.

3.1.3 Neo-realism

Contemporary Realism, also known as Neo-realism or Structural Realism, emerged in the 1980s, particularly through the work of Kenneth Waltz. While Neo-realists still acknowledge the importance of power, they explain events based on the structure of the international system rather than focusing on individual states' goals or characteristics. For Neo-realists, the structure of the international system, which includes factors like the distribution of power and the lack of a central authority, shapes state behaviour. This approach contrasts with Classical Realism, which attributes war to human nature. Neo-realists argue that the anarchic nature of the international system, where no overarching authority exists to enforce rules or maintain peace, fosters fear, jealousy, and insecurity, leading to conflict. Even states with peaceful intentions may end up in conflict due to the pressures of this anarchic system.

Waltz's book Theory of International Politics (1979) laid the foundation for Structural Realism, asserting that the structure of the international system significantly influences state behaviour. According to Waltz, anarchy prevents states from cooperating to avoid war, as no higher authority exists to ensure peace among sovereign states. Thus, the international system makes the state maximise their power or seek security. While large-scale wars do not happen every day, the constant potential for conflict makes war a persistent possibility in this anarchic environment. Structural Realists believe that the form of government or the leader's personality matters less than the fact that states operate in an anarchic system, which can lead to war.

In addition to Waltz's version of Neo-realism, other scholars like Joseph Grieco have combined Waltz's ideas with those of traditional Realists, such as Hans Morgenthau and Raymond Aron. Grieco and his group argue that states are concerned with both absolute gains (overall benefits) and relative gains (how much they benefit compared to others), which complicates international cooperation. They also point to two barriers to cooperation: fear of rule-breakers and the unequal distribution of gains. In the former, states may hesitate to cooperate because they worry that other countries will not follow the rules. If one country cheats, by secretly building weapons or violating trade terms, it can gain an advantage while others who followed the agreement suffer. This distrust undermines cooperation. In the latter, even when countries follow the rules, the benefits of cooperation might not be shared equally. Some states may gain more economically or strategically, while others gain little or even lose out. This perceived unfairness can discourage less-benefiting countries from agreeing to or continuing cooperation.

3.1.3.1 Defensive Realism

Defensive realism explains how states behave in an international system without a central authority. It suggests that states mainly want to protect themselves and ensure their security, not to gain as much power as possible. This idea was strongly supported by Kenneth Waltz, especially in his book Theory of International Politics (1979). Waltz argued that the structure of the global system pushes states to act carefully because being too aggressive can make others unite against them, creating more danger. Other thinkers like Jack Snyder and Stephen Van Evera added to this view. They pointed out that trying to conquer other countries usually causes more problems than benefits. For example, Snyder talked about how some leaders wrongly believe attacking first gives them an advantage, but this often leads to failure.

Van Evera also showed that when it's hard to take and keep new territory, states are less likely to go to war. Defensive realists believe that states don't try to dominate the world because becoming too powerful can scare others and make them form alliances to bring down the strong state. Also, wars cost a lot and often don't bring enough benefit to make them worthwhile. Nationalism in the conquered areas makes it even harder to control them, which adds more problems. Defensive realism says that countries are mostly careful in their foreign policies. They want just enough power to stay safe and avoid taking actions that would make them a threat to others. This helps explain why many countries prefer peaceful strategies like forming alliances or keeping power balanced instead of going to war.

□ Grieco's Expansion of Neo-Realism

□ Defensive Realism and Security

□ Defensive Realism and Risk Aversion

3.1.3.2 Offensive Realism

Offensive realism is a theory in international relations that suggests states are always seeking to increase their power to ensure their survival in an uncertain world. This idea is mainly associated with John Mearsheimer, who explained it in his book The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (2001). According to offensive realism, the world is anarchic, meaning there is no higher authority to enforce rules, so states must rely on their own strength. Because of this, states constantly strive to become more powerful, often seeking regional dominance to eliminate potential threats from others. Mearsheimer argues that, unlike defensive realists, who believe states only need enough power to be secure, offensive realists believe states will always try to gain more power because more power equals more security. They are not content with just balancing power; they want to maximize it. Offensive realism also suggests that conflict is inevitable because all states are competing for power, and this competition can lead to wars.

Offensive realism holds that states are driven by the need to survive in a dangerous and unpredictable international system, and the best way to do that is to seek dominance over others. This constant struggle for power makes global peace difficult to achieve.

❏ Offensive Realism and Power Maximization

3.1.4 Differences between Classical Realism and Neo-Realism

The differences between Classical Realism and Neo-Realism are explained as follows:

First, the two approaches differ on why states seek power. Classical realists argue that it stems from human nature, as leaders of great powers desire to accumulate power and dominate rivals. Neo-realism, on the other hand, attributes this to the structure of the international system. In an anarchic system where states cannot trust each other's intentions, it makes sense for states to seek power to protect themselves from potential attacks. Neo-realism is also known as structural realism because it emphasizes the importance of the anarchic structure of international politics. Second, for classical realists, power is an end in itself. For neo-realists, however, power is a means to an end, with survival being the ultimate goal of the state. Third, neo-realism adopts a different methodology by using tools from microeconomics, aiming to be more systematic and scientific compared to classical realism. Neo-realism was influenced by the behavioural revolution of the 1960s, while classical realism is based more on philosophical, interpretive, and historical analysis of international politics.

❏ Classical vs. Neo-Realism

3.1.5 Neo-classical realism

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□ Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy

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Neoclassical realism is the latest addition within the realist tradition of international relations theory that combines ideas from both classical realism and structural realism to explain a country's foreign policy. It argues that while the international system creates pressures and sets limits, a state's actual behaviour also depends on internal factors like leadership, national interests, political institutions, and public opinion. The theory became well known through the work of Gideon Rose, who introduced the term in 1998. He and other scholars like Fareed Zakaria, Randall Schweller, and Steven Lobell emphasised that leaders interpret external threats and opportunities through a domestic lens before making foreign policy decisions.

□ Domestic Factors in Neoclassical Realism

For example, even if a country is powerful enough to take strong action internationally, its leaders may hold back due to internal problems such as weak institutions or political opposition. Zakaria highlighted this in his book From Wealth to Power, where he explained that leaders can only act boldly abroad if they can effectively mobilise resources at home. Schweller further noted that states may behave differently depending on whether they want to maintain the current international order or change it. Neoclassical realism explains that both outside pressures and domestic situations shape a country's foreign policy. This approach helps to understand why similar states may respond differently to the same international challenges.

3.1.6 Key Concepts in Realism

3.1.6.1 National Interest

□ National Interest in Realist Theory

In the Realist framework, the concept of national interest is central to understanding and predicting international behaviour, though it remains somewhat ambiguous. Realists agree that pursuing national interest and the pursuit of power are the primary justifications for a state's foreign policy actions. However, defining national interest raises several questions: Can there be a universally accepted definition of national interest? Does it change over time and across different situations? Who decides what constitutes national interest, and how is it prioritised? Does it always reflect the genuine interests of a country's citizens, or is it shaped by the values of the political elite? History shows that statesmen often justify their foreign policies in the name of national interest. For example, Napoleon claimed he was acting in France's interest during his Russian campaign and at Waterloo. Similarly, Hitler justified his aggressive expansion in the name of Germany's national interest. In these and many other cases, leaders used the idea of national interest to validate their diplomatic strategies.

Hans Morgenthau, a prominent Realist thinker, argued that foreign policy should be driven by national interest rather than ideology. He grounded the concept of national interest in the pursuit of power. This control, Morgenthau explained, could be achieved through both coercion and cooperation. Scholars such as Hedley Bull and others criticised Morgenthau for using vague and ambiguous concepts like "power" and "interest." In response, Morgenthau defended his position by stating that the nature of political reality is complex, and concepts like power cannot always be precisely defined or measured. Morgenthau also linked national interest to national survival. He believed that the minimum requirement for any nation-state is to protect its physical, political, and cultural identity from threats by other states. This focus on survival justifies a wide range of policies, from arms races and balance of power strategies to foreign aid, alliances, and even propaganda.

Despite its importance, the Realist understanding of national interest has faced substantial criticism from scholars. For instance, Andrew Linklater and Robert Cox, associated with critical theory, argue that national interest is often a vague and flexible concept that can be manipulated to justify aggressive or unjust actions, particularly against weaker states. Richard Ashley, another critic of traditional realism, suggests that the term "national interest" is often assumed rather than rigorously defined, allowing policymakers to advance elite or class-based agendas under the guise of acting for the whole nation. This ambiguity enables those in power to claim legitimacy while potentially pursuing self-serving goals.

3.1.6.2 National Power

The concept of power is central to the Realist understanding of international politics. It has always been a difficult one to define clearly, with no consensus among scholars. However, from ancient times, including Thucydides, to the present, power has been closely linked to political action. Hans Morgenthau, for instance, defines politics as a struggle for power, which he sees as a relationship between two political actors—where one actor (A) has the ability to control the mind and actions of another actor (B). Morgenthau describes power as "man's control over the minds and actions of other men." Realists make two key points about power: First, it is relational, meaning power is always exercised in relation to another entity, not in isolation. Second, power is relative, meaning that in the international system, it's important not only to assess one's own power but also the power of other states.

However, accurately calculating the power of states can be very challenging, especially when it is measured purely in terms of military resources like troops, tanks, and aircraft. This physical measure of power often leads to arms races as countries try to outdo their perceived enemies, believing that more power will allow them to control others. This one-dimensional view of power has been criticized. Contemporary structural Realists, like Kenneth Waltz, have tried to clarify the concept by shifting the focus from power to capabilities. Waltz suggests that a country's capabilities can be ranked based on factors like population size, territory, resource availability, economic strength, military power, and political stability.

However, critics point out that having more resources doesn't always guarantee success. For example, in the 1967 Six-Day War, the Arab coalition (Egypt, Jordan, and Syria) had more resources, yet Israel, the weaker side, won and took territory. Similarly, Waltz's definition of power as capabilities struggles to explain Japan's economic success compared to China. Another criticism of the Realist view of power is its focus on state power, ignoring the influence of non-state actors like transnational corporations, international organisations, and religious groups. Realists generally see states as the only significant actors, and they often overlook the role of these non-state entities.

3.1.6.3 National Security

From a Realist perspective, national security or survival is considered a fundamental priority in the foreign policy of all states. Classical Realists like Machiavelli and Weber emphasise that ensuring national security or survival is the supreme national interest, and it is the primary responsibility of political leaders to uphold this. In other words, without security, achieving other goals, whether conquest or independence, becomes impossible. Henry Kissinger expressed this by stating that "a nation's survival is its first and ultimate responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put at risk." Similarly, Kenneth Waltz pointed out that beyond the goal of survival, states may pursue a variety of aims, but security remains the most important. Other objectives, like economic prosperity, are seen as part of "low politics" and are considered secondary. Realists are most concerned with "high politics"—the security of the state. Because of this, they advocate that leaders should make decisions based on the outcomes, rather than whether the individual actions are morally right or wrong.

However, while most Realists agree on the importance of national security, there is ongoing debate among them about whether states are primarily focused on security or on

Measuring Power and Capabilities

Critiques of Realist Power Assumptions

Primacy of National Security

maximising power. This debate, which takes place between defensive and offensive Realists, has important implications for international peace and cooperation. Defensive Realists like Waltz and Grieco argue that states prioritise security and seek only enough power to ensure their survival. According to this view, states are mainly defensive and do not pursue additional power if it risks their security. On the other hand, Offensive Realists like Mearsheimer believe that states ultimately aim to dominate the international system. They argue that states always seek more power and, if the opportunity arises, will try to change the balance of power, even if it threatens their own security.

3.1.6.4 Conflict

Conflict is central to the Realist approach in international relations. Realists believe that the international system is defined by constant conflict among states, stemming from the inherently conflicting nature of humans. This view leads to the belief that there is a perpetual struggle for power among nations. Realists see the international system as anarchic, meaning there is no central authority to enforce rules and hence conflict is obvious. Each state must rely on itself for security. In this self-help system, it would be naïve for a state to trust others to secure its own survival. Realists critique the idealist view, which believes in international cooperation and harmony rather than conflict, arguing that in the absence of a higher authority above sovereign states, international politics operates in a "state of nature," marked by anarchy rather than harmony. Unlike domestic politics, where laws are enforced by a governing authority, international politics has no such structure, and all states are formally equal. As a result, each state prioritises its own national interest, primarily defined as survival and territorial defence.

The focus on national interest and survival leads to a constant struggle for power among states, which further escalates into conflict among nations. As Hans Morgenthau famously said in Politics Among Nations, "statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power." Power in the Realist view is understood broadly, including both material and psychological aspects, as well as military and economic capabilities. This focus on power explains how Realists emphasise the concept of conflict in world politics. However, the pursuit of power does not mean that the international system is in a state of conflict or constant war. Realists argue that while the system lacks a supreme authority, it does not descend into chaos. Instead, a limited form of order is maintained through the balance of power, where states work to prevent any one state from becoming too dominant.

3.1.6.5 Concept of Balance of Power

A detailed explanation of this concept can be found in Block 1. In the anarchic international system, where no higher authority exists to prevent the use of force, Realists argue that states must rely on self-help to ensure their security. As Waltz states, "in an anarchic structure, self-help is necessarily the principle of action." However, when one state seeks to enhance its security by building up weapons or other defences, it often increases the insecurity of other states. This concept has been explained in detail in Block 1. This situation is known as the security dilemma. Wheeler and Booth describe the security dilemma as occurring when one state's military preparations create uncertainty for another, leaving them unsure if the preparations are for defensive or offensive purposes. As a result, one state's quest for security can cause insecurity for others, leading to distrust and military competition. States feel compelled to match each other's military actions. Hence, to prevent conflicts and maintain peace, Realists propose the Balance of Power.

□ Security Dilemma and Balance of Power

The balance of power aims to curb aggression and expansionism by creating alliances that balance each other and promote periods of peace and stability. However, given the dynamic and unpredictable nature of international relations, it's difficult to say how long such peace will last, and when the balance breaks down, it often leads to war. According to Neo-realists, the balance of power can emerge naturally, even without a deliberate policy to maintain it. Waltz suggests that in a self-help system, alliances will inevitably form to check and balance the power of threatening states. Despite this, all Realists agree that the balance of power is never stable. Whether it was the balance of power during the Concert of Europe in the 19th century or the Cold War, these balances eventually broke down, either through war or peaceful transformation. Nonetheless, a new balance of power usually replaces the old one. The continual collapse of these balances highlights that while states can mitigate the effects of the security dilemma, they cannot escape it entirely. Realists attribute this to the lack of trust in the international system.

□ Instability of Balance of Power

3.1.6.6 Concept of Deterrence

Deterrence became a major idea during the Cold War, especially with the rise of nuclear weapons. While it is sometimes compared to the old idea of the balance of power, the two are not the same. The balance of power means keeping peace by making sure no one country becomes too strong. In contrast, deterrence is about stopping an enemy from attacking by threatening to strike back with serious force, especially using

□ Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy

nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union built large nuclear arsenals. The idea was that if one attacked, the other would respond with equal or greater force. This fear of total destruction, known as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), helped prevent direct war between them. Against this background, nuclear diplomacy became important. It means using nuclear threats or promises as part of international talks. Instead of going to war, countries used careful communication to manage tensions and avoid conflict. A good example is the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, where the U.S. and the Soviet Union avoided war through careful negotiation. Deterrence is about stopping attacks by threatening serious punishment. Nuclear diplomacy uses this idea of deterrence to guide talks and prevent war between nuclear-armed countries.

3.1.6.7 Security Dilemma

□ The Security Dilemma and Escalation

The security dilemma is a key idea in realism that explains how countries trying to protect themselves can unintentionally make others feel threatened. In the international system, where there is no world government to ensure safety, each country must rely on its own strength to survive. When one country builds up its military or forms alliances to feel more secure, other countries may see this as a possible threat and respond by doing the same. This creates a cycle where each side keeps increasing its military power, even if no one actually wants to start a war. Over time, this mutual suspicion can lead to conflict, even when both sides only wanted to stay safe. Scholars like Herbert Butterfield and John Herz first explained this concept in the 1950s. Butterfield described it as a tragic situation, while Herz called it the "security dilemma." Later, Robert Jervis expanded on this idea, showing how misunderstandings and the inability to tell whether a country's actions are defensive or aggressive make the problem worse. The security dilemma helps us understand why arms races and military tension happen, such as during the Cold War or between rival countries today. It also shows the importance of diplomacy and clear communication to avoid unnecessary conflicts and build trust.

3.1.7 Conclusion

□ Realism vs. Neo-Realism

Realism and Neo-Realism are two major theories in international relations that explain how states behave in the global system. Both theories assume that the international system is anarchic, meaning no central authority governs state actions. As a result, each state must rely on itself to ensure its survival and protect its interests. Classical Realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, argue that human nature drives states to seek power. In contrast, Neo-Realists, like Kenneth Waltz, focus on

the structure of the international system. They believe that the distribution of power among states shapes their behaviour more than human nature does.

Although both theories emphasize power and national interest, Neo-Realism provides a more systematic and theoretical framework for understanding state behaviour. However, scholars have criticised both approaches for overlooking important elements such as domestic politics, economic factors, and the influence of non-state actors and international institutions. Despite these criticisms, Realism and Neo-Realism continue to influence academic debates and policy decisions in international relations. Their emphasis on power dynamics, national interest, and security helps scholars and policymakers understand conflicts and strategic choices in a competitive world.

❐ Criticisms and Impact of Realism

Summarised Overview

Realism and Neo-Realism are central theories in international relations, explaining state behaviour through the lens of power and survival. Realism, which traces its roots to classical thinkers, views the international system as anarchic, with states acting in their own self-interest.

States, according to Realism, are rational actors, and their primary goal is survival in a world characterised by constant power struggles. Power politics and conflict are natural outcomes of this environment.

Neo-Realism, developed by Kenneth Waltz, adds a structural dimension to Realism. Rather than attributing state behaviour solely to human nature or individual leadership, Neo-Realism argues that the structure of the international system dictates state actions. This system is anarchic, but the distribution of power, particularly in terms of polarity (unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar), shapes how states interact.

Both theories share a skepticism of international institutions and alliances, arguing that self-help remains the guiding principle for states. While Realism emphasizes the role of individual state leaders, Neo-Realism shifts focus to the broader systemic constraints imposed by the international structure. These theories remain influential in explaining global conflicts, power shifts, and international relations dynamics.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is the core principle of Realism in international relations?
2. Who are the key historical figures associated with classical Realism?
3. What does the term "anarchy" refer to in the context of international relations?
4. How does Neo-Realism differ from classical Realism?
5. Who introduced the theory of Neo-Realism?
6. How does Neo-Realism explain the behaviour of states in the international system?
7. What is meant by "balance of power" in Realist theory?
8. How do Realists view international organisations and alliances?
9. What is the significance of power politics in Realist thought?
10. How has Neo-Realism contributed to the understanding of global politics?

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the main principles of Realism and Neo-Realism.
2. Discuss the relevance of Neo-Realism in analysing current global power dynamics.
3. How does the concept of anarchy shape state behaviour according to Realist and Neo-Realist theories?
4. Evaluate the significance of "balance of power" in Realist thought and its implications in contemporary international relations.
5. Examine the contributions of Kenneth Waltz to the development of Neo-Realism and its impact on modern international relations theory.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Liberalism and Neo Liberalism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the core principles, tenets, and offshoot theories of Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism in the context of International Relations

- analyse the differences and similarities between Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism, including their implications for global governance

- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Liberal and Neo-Liberal theories in explaining contemporary international events

- explore the influence of Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism on international policies, institutions, and the global economy

Background

The study of Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism represents a significant strand within the broader framework of International Relations theories. Emerging in the aftermath of World War I, Liberalism emphasises the potential for cooperation among states, advocating for the importance of international institutions, democracy, and economic interdependence. It posits that human progress is achievable through collective efforts and that peace can be maintained through cooperation rather than conflict.

As global dynamics evolved, Neo-Liberalism emerged in the late 20th century, focusing on the role of economic factors in shaping international relations. Neo-Liberalism underscores the significance of free markets and deregulation, promoting the idea that economic interdependence can lead to peace and stability. By examining the relationship between Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism, students will gain insight into the ongoing debates surrounding state behaviour, international cooperation, and the future of global governance.

Discussion

3.2.1 Introduction

Liberalism, also known as pluralism, presents a different view of world politics compared to Realism. Like Realism, it has a long history, but its approach is more optimistic. Liberalism focuses on the potential for human progress and cooperation. It holds that individuals are capable of improvement and that democratic governance plays a key role in advancing this development. It also emphasises the importance of ideas. Unlike Realists, who view war as a natural state of affairs, liberals believe in human progress and the power of reason. They do not see the state as the only important actor in global politics. Instead, they recognise the role of multinational corporations, transnational actors like terrorist groups, and international organisations in shaping world events. In international relations, liberals focus on the potential for cooperation and seek ways to create settings where this can happen. As a result, the liberal perspective portrays a complex system of negotiation involving many different actors. While military power is still relevant, liberals have a broader understanding of national interests, giving weight to economic, environmental, and technological issues, unlike Realism, which focuses more narrowly on military concerns.

❐ Liberalism in International Relations

3.2.2 Liberalism in International Relations

The liberal approach to international politics has its origins in liberal political theory from the 17th century, closely linked to the rise of modern liberal states. Liberals generally have a positive view of human nature. Many of the early contributors to liberal thought were not specifically focused on international relations but were political philosophers, economists, and others with an interest in global affairs. For example, John Locke, a key liberal thinker of the 17th century, believed that human progress could thrive in modern civil societies and capitalist economies, particularly in states that protected individual freedoms. Liberals see the late 17th century as a turning point in history when modernization began to significantly improve both the moral and material conditions of humanity. They argue that the scientific revolution brought new technologies, which led to more efficient production and better control over nature.

❐ Origins of Liberalism in International Relations

This modernization was supported by a strong belief in human reason and rationality, which underpins the liberal idea of progress. Liberals believe that the modern liberal state, with its political and economic systems, can achieve what Jeremy Bentham called "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Liberalism in International Relations (IR) emerged as a prominent theory during the Age of Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries. It developed as a response to absolutism, mercantilism, and religious orthodoxy, drawing inspiration from the ideals of individual liberty, reason, and progress. The American and French Revolutions significantly influenced liberal thought, embodying many of its core principles in practice.

Key thinkers who shaped liberal theory include John Locke, who emphasised natural rights and social contract theory; Immanuel Kant, who proposed the concept of perpetual peace and the importance of republican governments; Adam Smith, who advocated for free market economics; and John Stuart Mill, who further developed ideas of utilitarianism and individual liberty. In the realm of international relations, liberalism gained prominence after World War I, particularly through Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which outlined a liberal vision for post-war international order. The theory experienced a resurgence after World War II with the establishment of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, which embodied many liberal principles in their structure and goals.

3.2.2.1 Assumptions of Liberal Approach

The liberal approach to studying international politics is based on several key assumptions:

1. Liberals place individuals at the centre of their analysis, viewing individual progress as essential for overall progress. For example, John Locke emphasised the need for a constitutional state created through a social contract to protect individual liberties. Although liberals recognise states as important actors, they see states as pluralistic entities whose interests are shaped by groups and elections.

2. Liberals believe that state interests are dynamic and not fixed. As individuals' values and power relations change, so do state interests. Moreover, liberals argue that states have both self-interests and a responsibility to others. They believe that the spread of liberal democracy fosters concern for the well-being of people beyond national

borders. While state survival is important, liberals prioritise the interests of individuals.

3. Liberals contend that both individual and state interests are shaped by a variety of domestic and international factors. Domestically, factors like the political and economic system, economic interactions, and personal values influence interests. Internationally, factors such as technological capabilities, patterns of interaction, transnational connections, and institutions play a role. Unlike Realists, who view the international system as anarchic, liberals argue that international institutions significantly influence state behaviour and must be considered in any analysis of the international system.

4. Liberals believe that mutual interests can sustain cooperation in the international system. They argue that cooperation between states is possible without coercion, unlike Realists, who think a dominant power is needed to maintain cooperation. Liberals are optimistic about the potential for cooperation due to increasing interdependence, shared democratic values, and improved communication, which they believe help states better understand their common interests.

3.2.2.2 Core Principles of Liberalism

At its core, liberalism in IR is built upon several fundamental principles.

First and foremost is the emphasis on individual liberty and rights. Liberals argue that fundamental human rights are inalienable and that governments have a primary duty to protect individual freedoms, including civil liberties and political rights. This focus on individual rights extends to the international sphere, where liberals advocate for universal human rights and their protection through international law and institutions. The second core principle is the concept of Pluralism. This translates to support for international institutions and laws that can limit the power of individual states and promote cooperation. Economic Interdependence forms the third pillar of liberal thought. Liberals view capitalism as the most efficient economic system and advocate for minimal state intervention in the economy. They believe in the "invisible hand" of the market as described by Adam Smith, arguing that free trade and economic interdependence can lead to mutual prosperity and reduce the likelihood of conflict between nations.

❐ Fundamental Pillars of Liberal Thought

Democracy constitutes the fourth principle. Liberals champion representative government as the best political system, emphasizing universal suffrage and political participation. The democratic peace theory proposed by Michael Doyle posits that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other due to shared values, institutional constraints, and economic ties. This theory has been influential in shaping Western foreign policy, particularly that of the United States, often driving efforts to promote democracy abroad. The fifth core principle is the belief in international cooperation and institutions. Liberals argue that progress in international relations is possible through diplomacy, negotiation, and the establishment of international organisations. They see these institutions as crucial in maintaining peace, facilitating cooperation, and addressing global challenges that transcend national borders.

3.2.3 Neo-Liberalism

Neo-liberals differ from traditional liberal scholars mainly in their declining confidence in human progress. Unlike traditional liberals, who were more optimistic about cooperation and the potential for human advancement, neo-liberals are more cautious and less hopeful. However, they are not as pessimistic as Realists or Neo-realists. The term "neo-liberal" refers to post-World War II scholars who kept many of the core beliefs of traditional liberals but lacked their optimism. Before the Second World War, liberals were confident in the slow but steady realisation of human freedom. After the war, a new generation of scholars became hesitant to fully embrace the liberal idea of progress due to the impact of major events like the world wars and the Cold War. Neo-liberals preferred explaining current events rather than predicting future outcomes, wary of being labelled as idealists.

Neoliberalism and *Neoliberal Institutionalism* are often used interchangeably. But Neoliberalism refers to the broader post-classical liberal response to realism. Neoliberal Institutionalism is the most prominent strand of neoliberal international relations theory. It specifically argues that international institutions help states overcome various problems of cooperation. This ideology has led Western democracies, particularly the United States, to support the expansion of democratic and capitalist nations. Neoliberalism draws its strength from the belief that the international financial and political institutions created after World War II have proven successful and form the basis for today's political and economic systems. This belief is reinforced by the idea that these institutions have been sustained by policymakers who accept neoliberal or Realist-Neo-realist assumptions.

However, critics argue that, in practice, neoliberal foreign policies often prioritise national interests over ideals like democratic peace, free trade, and open borders. As Steven L. Lanly notes, economic interests are frequently prioritised over geopolitical concerns, much to the frustration of traditional Realists. Neoliberalism in the post-war period can be divided into four main strands: institutional liberalism, sociological liberalism, republican liberalism, and interdependence liberalism.

Core Assumptions of Neoliberalism

Here are the core assumptions of neoliberalism in points:

1. **States as Key Actors:** Neoliberal institutionalists acknowledge that states are important actors in international relations. States act rationally, always seeking to maximise their interests in various issue areas.

2. **Cooperation for Absolute Gains:** In a competitive environment, states aim to maximise absolute gains through cooperation. Cooperation is easier in areas where states share mutual interests. The primary obstacle to successful cooperation is the fear of cheating stemming from their sovereign status and the lack of trust in the international system.

3. **Role of International Institutions:** International institutions can help reduce the fear of non-compliance by creating frameworks that foster trust and cooperation among states. States are likely to support international institutions when they perceive them as beneficial.

3.2.4 The concept of World Order in Liberal View

Scholars do not agree on a single definition of order in world politics. Instead, various theories present different explanations of how global order is created and maintained. A common comparison is made between liberal and Realist perspectives to show their key differences. Liberals use the term "*world order*" to express their belief in global cooperation, international institutions, and shared values. Realists, on the other hand, prefer "*international order*," which highlights their focus on state power, national interest, and the anarchic nature of the global system. This difference in terminology points to a deeper contrast in their views of global affairs. Realists focus on a state-centred international order, emphasising stability and peace among states. This order is based on traditional concepts such as the balance of power, state sovereignty, diplomacy,

international law, the role of great powers, collective security, and the regulation of military force. Realists define order primarily in terms of security and political-military structures within the international system, especially in the context of the post-Cold War era.

In contrast, the liberal view of world order is broader in both nature and scope. Liberals prioritise individuals as the fundamental units of order and emphasise rights, justice, and prosperity. Unlike Realists, who believe order arises from a balance of power between states, liberals argue that it comes from multiple layers of governing structures, including laws, norms, international regimes, and institutional rules. The liberal conception also incorporates a wider range of issues, such as the relationship between politics and economics, new approaches to security, the impacts of globalisation, the role of human rights, and strategies for human progress. Liberals believe that the deep interdependence and integration formed during the Cold War era have created a lasting peace and stability that prevents a return to war and isolationism.

3.2.5 Neoliberal Institutionalism

Neoliberal institutionalism became a prominent school of thought by offering a strong challenge to Realist and Neo-realist views. While neoliberal institutionalism shares some assumptions with Neo-realism, there are significant differences, especially regarding international cooperation. Liberal institutionalists criticise Neo-realists for focusing too much on conflict and competition, which they argue reduces the potential for cooperation in an anarchic international system. The search for liberal-institutional ways to establish peace and ensure prosperity through cooperation dates back to the formation of the League of Nations. Woodrow Wilson, a key figure behind the League, is considered the first liberal institutionalist. He emphasised the role of institutions in transforming international relations from chaotic power struggles into more orderly and peaceful interactions. Although the League of Nations ultimately failed, later developments, such as the creation of the United Nations and the European Union, reignited belief in liberal institutionalism.

The key argument of liberal institutionalists is that international institutions and regimes promote cooperation between states. But what are institutions and regimes? Scholars like Haas, Keohane, and Levy describe institutions as ongoing, interconnected systems of rules and practices that define roles, limit actions, and shape the expectations of states and actors. These institutions can include organisations, treaties, agreements, and informal

☐ Liberal Perspective on World Order

☐ Neoliberal Institutionalism and Its Evolution

☐ Institutions and Regimes in Liberal Institutionalism

norms accepted by states. Meanwhile, Young defines regimes as social structures based on agreed rules, principles, norms, and decision-making processes that guide interactions between states and non-state actors in areas like the environment or human rights. For example, the global coffee market is governed by various trade agreements, scientific protocols, and the interests of producers, consumers, and distributors. According to liberal institutionalists, these institutions and regimes help manage the competitive international system, encouraging cooperation and multilateralism as a way to achieve national interests.

3.2.6 Influence of Neoliberal Institutionalism

In the theoretical domains of International Relations, neoliberal institutionalism has been seen in the roots of functional integration theories of the 1940s and 1950s (Functionalism), regional integration studies of the 1960s (Neo-Functionalism), Communication Theory, Complex Interdependence Theory, and Republican Liberal Theory.

3.2.6.1 Functionalism

David Mitrany, a key figure in the Functionalist school of thought, proposed an alternative view of international politics. Mitrany argued that increased interdependence, through transnational connections between countries, could lead to lasting peace. He believed that cooperation should be organised by technical experts rather than politicians. Other significant Functionalists, such as Joseph Nye, Ernst Haas, and others, have also contributed greatly to this tradition in international relations theory by promoting the idea that cooperation among states can emerge through shared goals in technical and economic areas. Ernst Haas developed the theory of neo-functionalism, which built on earlier functionalist ideas and explained regional integration, particularly in post-war Europe. Joseph Nye, on the other hand, contributed by focusing on the role of transnational actors, interdependence, and international institutions. Along with Robert Keohane, he introduced the concept of complex interdependence in their influential work Power and Interdependence.

Functionalism is viewed as an operational philosophy aimed at creating a peaceful, unified, and cooperative world. It stands as a strong critique of the Realist framework, which emphasises conflict. The primary focus of Functionalists is to develop non-political cooperative organisations that would promote peace and prosperity while gradually making war obsolete. However, this cannot happen as long as the international system remains rooted in suspicion and anarchy, where war is seen as a legitimate way

to resolve disputes. Nation-states are seen as the main obstacle to achieving global peace, and since governments have vested interests, Functionalists acknowledge that dismantling nation-states voluntarily is unlikely.

They advocate a gradual approach toward regional or global unity, which they believe would eventually make rigid state structures irrelevant. Functionalists focus on creating cooperative organisations in non-political areas such as economic, technical, scientific, social, and cultural sectors. These areas, known as "*functional sectors*," are more practical for cooperation because they are less likely to face opposition. Establishing organisations in sectors like energy production, transportation, health, and labour standards can be mutually beneficial to states and are less likely to challenge national sovereignty. Functionalists believe in the "*spillover*" effect, where successful cooperation in one area, like coal and steel production, would lead to further cooperation in related areas, such as transportation or pollution control. This process, they argue, could eventually result in political unification in a region.

The strength of Functionalism lies in its emphasis on cooperation rather than conflict. Unlike Realists, who view international relations through the lens of conflict and irrationality, Functionalists focus on reason and cooperation, a neo-realist viewpoint. They believe that by creating functional organisations that link people and interests across borders, nation-states will eventually become obsolete, relegated to the "museum of institutional curiosities," meaning that they will eventually become outdated or irrelevant.

3.2.6.2 Neo-Functionalism

Neo-Functionalism, also known as integration theory, aims to create new states through the integration of existing ones. This process begins at the regional level, with the long-term goal of eventually forming a single world state. The theory is based on the idea that state integration can occur if the political process of "*spillover*" supports it, which means that integration in one area, such as the economy, can lead to cooperation in other areas like politics and security. This process has been seen in the development of the European Union. Neo-Functionalists believe that elites—such as politicians, bureaucrats, and experts—play a key role in guiding and advancing this process. They support joint decision-making across borders to solve shared problems. As cooperation deepens, states become more interconnected, making conflict less likely and integration more likely.

❏ Gradual Integration through Functional Cooperation

❏ Cooperation over Conflict in Functionalism

❏ Neo-Functionalism and State Integration

Ernst Haas is the key figure of this school of thought. While building on David Mitrany's ideas, Haas rejects the notion that technical matters can be separated from politics. He defines integration as the voluntary creation of larger political units where the use of force is avoided between participating groups and states. According to Haas, integration involves getting political elites, who are often self-interested, to cooperate more closely. In other words, integration is a process where states voluntarily give up certain powers and adopt new methods to address shared problems and resolve conflicts. Joseph Nye extends this idea, arguing that regional political organisations contribute to creating "*islands of peace*" within the international system. These studies suggest that pooling resources and even giving up some sovereignty can help states respond to regional challenges and promote economic growth.

3.2.6.3 Communication Theory

The communications theory in international relations is a key part of what is known as the sociological liberalism approach, a perspective that emphasises the role of individuals, societies, and non-state actors in shaping global politics. This theory suggests that the flow of communication between people across national borders—through travel, trade, media, and education—builds networks of relationships that promote understanding, trust, and cooperation. Unlike Realists, who focus solely on relations between governments of sovereign states, sociological liberals argue that international relations also involve transnational connections—relationships between individuals, groups, and organisations across different countries.

James Rosenau defines transnationalism as the process where international relations traditionally handled by governments are now also shaped by interactions among private individuals, groups, and societies, which can significantly influence global events. The communications theory builds on this idea of transnationalism. It suggests that as cross-border activities increase, people in different countries become more connected, and governments become more interdependent. This growing interdependence makes it harder and more costly for states to act alone or avoid cooperation with other nations. As a result, states become more cautious about the costs of war and work toward creating a peaceful international community.

Karl Deutsch is the leading figure behind the communications theory, which focuses on measuring the extent of communication and interactions between societies by tracking international activities like trade, tourism, letters, and immigration. Deutsch's main argument is that a high level of transnational connections

between societies leads to peaceful relations, going beyond the mere absence of war. These interactions can eventually result in the creation of what Deutsch calls "*security communities*" or integrated socio-political systems. In such communities, people agree that their conflicts and problems can be solved without the use of large-scale physical force. Deutsch identifies two types of security communities: amalgamated and pluralist. Amalgamated security communities, like the United States, have a unified political structure with central control over a large area.

Pluralist security communities, on the other hand, lack a central political authority but are composed of national units that refrain from fighting each other, making it unnecessary to fortify their borders. Examples of pluralist security communities include North America and Western Europe. From the communications theory perspective, integration is both the process leading to political unification and the final outcome, resulting in either amalgamated or pluralist security communities.

3.2.6.4 Theory of Complex Interdependence and Republican Liberalism

Interdependence liberalism and republican liberalism are the two strands of liberalism. Interdependence Liberalism, mainly developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the 1970s, challenged the Realist view of international relations. They argued that states are not the only important actors and that issues like trade, environment, and communication also shape global politics. In their book "*Power and Interdependence*" (1977), they introduced the idea of complex interdependence. This concept explains how states and non-state actors are connected through multiple channels, making military power less useful in many situations. Later, Keohane's "*After Hegemony*" (1984) showed how international institutions help states work together, even without a single dominant power.

Interdependence liberals believe that a high level of economic division of labour between countries increases mutual dependence, which in turn discourages violent conflicts. The rise of "*trading states*" like Japan and Germany after World War II supports this idea. These states focus less on military spending and more on international trade, which fosters interdependence. This approach gained even more momentum after the Cold War, as countries increasingly favoured trade over traditional military strategies. In this complex interdependence, transnational actors, such as multinational corporations and non-governmental organisations, are becoming more significant, making military force a less effective tool in international relations.

Consequently, international relations are starting to resemble domestic politics more closely. As Keohane notes, various issues create different coalitions both within and between governments, leading to varying levels of conflict. Interdependence liberals suggest that in many of these conflicts, military force is becoming less relevant, while non-military power, such as negotiation skills, is gaining importance. Keohane and Nye assert that in an environment of complex interdependence, states are focusing more on the "*low politics*" of welfare rather than the "*high politics*" of national security, ultimately paving the way for a world without conflict.

Republican liberalism focuses on how a country's internal political system influences its behaviour in global politics. Thinkers like Immanuel Kant, Michael Doyle, and Bruce Russett played important roles in shaping this approach. Kant, in his 1795 essay "*Perpetual Peace,*" argued that democratic governments are less likely to go to war with each other because they follow laws and allow public debate. Building on Kant's ideas, Michael Doyle introduced the *Democratic Peace Theory in 1983*, suggesting that liberal democracies rarely fight one another. Later, Bruce Russett supported this idea with evidence in his book "*Grasping the Democratic Peace*" (1993), using data and case studies to show that democracies tend to cooperate more and avoid war. Republican liberalism highlights the importance of democracy and shared values in promoting peace and stability in the international system. It sees democratic institutions and public accountability as key reasons why democracies maintain peaceful relations. Republican liberals are generally optimistic about the potential of democracies to promote lasting world peace. This optimism is supported by scholars like Sorensen, who note that as the number of democracies has increased in recent years, the chances of a more peaceful world have also improved. He suggests that international relations in such a world would be characterised by cooperation rather than conflict.

Michael Doyle provides a systematic explanation for why democracies tend to be at peace with one another. He identifies three main reasons: First, democracies adhere to democratic norms that favour peaceful conflict resolution. Since democratic governments are accountable to their citizens—who generally oppose wars with other democracies—these governments are inclined to promote peaceful relations. Second, democracies share common moral values that foster what Immanuel Kant referred to as a "*pacific union*." This union is not a formal treaty but rather a zone of peace based on shared values among democracies, which encourages peaceful conflict resolution at both domestic and international levels. Third, increasing economic cooperation and interdependence among democracies

contribute to international peace and reduce the likelihood of conflict. In this pacific union, Kant's concept of the "*spirit of commerce*" suggests that mutual benefits from economic cooperation and exchange will ultimately make war obsolete.

3.2.7 Conclusion

It is clear from the discussion that liberals do not all share the same views; there are various strands within liberalism, each offering a unique perspective on international relations. Despite these differences, several common themes unify them and give liberalism a distinct identity as a school of thought. One key theme is the emphasis on human reason and rationality as essential for achieving international cooperation. This shared belief sets liberals apart from realists, who view conflict as an ongoing aspect of world politics. While realists think that war is often necessary to resolve conflicts, liberals argue that conflicts can be managed through international cooperation without resorting to force. Additionally, unlike realists, who believe that a dominant power is required for cooperation, liberals contend that cooperation can be fostered through non-coercive negotiations based on mutual interests.

❏ Unified Themes in Liberalism

Summarised Overview

Liberal theories in international relations focus on cooperation, peace, and progress. Unlike Realism, which emphasises conflict and power, Liberalism believes that human reason, democracy, and international institutions can reduce war and promote peace. Neoliberalism, especially through Neo-Liberal Institutionalism by Robert Keohane, argues that international institutions help states cooperate even in an anarchic world. Functionalism, led by David Mitrany, suggests that cooperation in practical areas can lead to broader unity. Neo-Functionalism, developed by Ernst Haas, introduced the idea of "*spillover*," where integration in one area leads to integration in others. Communication Theory, under Sociological Liberalism, highlights how people-to-people contact builds peace. The Theory of Complex Interdependence by Keohane and Joseph Nye emphasises economic and social ties over military force. Republican Liberalism, supported by Michael Doyle, promotes the idea that democracies rarely fight each other, known as *Democratic Peace Theory*. Together, these ideas show how cooperation shapes global politics.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the primary principles of Liberalism in International Relations?

2. How does Neo-liberalism differ from traditional Liberalism?

3. In what ways do Liberal and Neo-liberal theories contribute to our understanding of global governance?

4. Which are the prominent theories in International Relations that have roots in Liberal and Neo-Liberal Principles?

5. What criticisms have been levelled against Neo-liberalism in contemporary international affairs?

6. How do economic interdependence and cooperation relate to the Liberal perspective?

7. Discuss the role of international institutions in Liberal theory.

8. How has the rise of globalisation impacted Liberal and Neo-liberal thought?

9. What is the relationship between Liberalism and human rights advocacy?

10. Can Liberalism and Neo-liberalism effectively address contemporary global challenges such as climate change?

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the key tenets of Liberalism and Neo-liberalism.

2. Analyse the role of international institutions in promoting Liberal and Neo-liberal values. Use specific examples to support your argument.

3. Evaluate the impact of economic interdependence on international conflict, drawing from both Liberal and Neo-liberal perspectives.

4. Discuss the limitations of Liberalism and Neo-liberalism in addressing global issues such as inequality and environmental degradation.

5. Examine the relevance of Liberalism and Neo-liberalism in the context of contemporary geopolitical tensions.

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World System Theory and Dependency Theory

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the key concepts and principles of World System Theory and Dependency Theory, including their historical contexts and theoretical frameworks

- analyse the relationships between core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral countries in the context of global capitalism, drawing on examples from various regions

- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Dependency Theory and World System Theory as frameworks for explaining international relations and economic development

- explore the relevance of these theories in contemporary global issues, such as globalisation, inequality, and the economic challenges faced by developing countries

Background

World System Theory and Dependency Theory explain two significant frameworks that seek to explain the complex relationships between nations within the global economy. Emerging primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, Dependency Theory was a response to the economic disparities observed in the Third World, particularly in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia.

Scholars like Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein critiqued the prevailing modernisation theories and emphasised the structural inequalities fostered by colonialism and neocolonialism, positing that underdevelopment in peripheral nations is a direct consequence of their dependence on more developed core countries.

World System Theory expanded upon these ideas, focusing on a global capitalist system where nations occupy different roles—core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral. This unit will examine how these theories provide insights into the dynamics of power, wealth, and development on a global scale. The unit aims to foster a deeper understanding of the international system and its implications for global politics.

Discussion

3.3.1 Introduction

□ Emergence of Radical Development Theories

The growing dissatisfaction with traditional development theories, which failed to address problems like poverty, hunger, and poor health in many Third World countries, led to a search for alternative ways of understanding development. After World War II, it became clear to some in the developing world that the promised transfer of capital from rich to poor nations was not happening as expected. This intellectual discontent gave rise to new radical perspectives in the developing theories of International Relations that explain reasons for underdevelopment mainly in the Third World. Two prominent theories that emerged were the World System Theory and Dependency Theory.

The neo-radical approaches in international relations, including "*development of underdevelopment*," "*center-periphery*," and "*dependency*" theories, offer valuable insights into how capitalism has affected Third World countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While these approaches all focus on explaining the impact of capitalism on poorer developing nations, they are not a single unified theory. Instead, each approach offers a unique explanation for why some countries develop while others remain underdeveloped. These theories are often grouped together under the umbrella term "*dependency framework*." What makes them neo-radical is that they try to maintain a balance between the dominant modernization theory and classical Marxist ideas when explaining development or underdevelopment. Despite their differences, all these approaches share a common goal of understanding how capitalism has shaped the economic and social conditions in Third World countries. They challenge both the mainstream modernization theory and traditional Marxist explanations, offering alternative perspectives on why some nations struggle to develop while others prosper.

□ Neo-Radical Theories of Development and Underdevelopment

3.3.2 Under-development Theory

To have a broader understanding of the evolution of Dependency Theory, it is necessary to re-examine the evolution

of various theories of Dependencia before delving directly into the Dependency Theory. The Theory of Underdevelopment emerged from two main sources: debates within Marxism and the actual development experiences of Latin American countries. For a long time, Marxist thinkers had been discussing whether non-European countries could follow the Western model of capitalist development. This debate, which involved figures from Marx to Lenin, continued until the late 1950s when new writings began to challenge the traditional Marxist view. These new ideas rejected the belief that capitalist development was possible and beneficial for underdeveloped countries. Paul Baran's book, "*Political Economy of Growth*," was particularly influential in this shift. Baran argued that economic development in poorer countries actually went against the interests of advanced capitalist nations. He believed that the wealthy Western countries relied on these underdeveloped regions for raw materials and profits, and therefore opposed their industrialisation.

The second source of underdevelopment theory came from Latin American scholars who studied their region's development experiences. Thinkers like Raúl Prebisch, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Osvaldo Sunkel, and Theotonio Dos Santos challenged the idea that capitalism promotes development. Instead, they proposed a new theory of underdevelopment, which became known as dependency theory. These Latin American scholars emphasised how the global capitalist economy was structured unfairly, with Western economies dominating and Latin American economies reduced to a subordinate role. Their work, initially focused on international trade through the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA), eventually developed into a comprehensive theory about the relationship between developed "*centre*" countries and underdeveloped "*periphery*" countries. This centre-periphery model provided new insights into understanding underdevelopment in Third World nations.

3.3.3 The Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is a concept widely used in international relations to explain the unequal relationships between nations. As a school of thought, it aims to explain the causes of economic development and underdevelopment. This theory emerged in Latin America during the 1960s and later gained traction in some African and Asian studies. Latin America played a crucial role in developing dependency theory, with scholars like Prebisch, Furtado, Sunkel, Paz, Cardoso, Faletto, Dos Santos, and Marini making significant contributions. Their work was so influential that dependency theory is often considered Latin America's major contribution to the social sciences and has significantly impacted government policies in the region.

The influence of dependency theory has varied in other parts of the world. In India, while it hasn't been as influential, it has maintained a noticeable presence. Indian Marxist scholars like Dadabhai Naoroji and M. N. Roy contributed to the development of dependency perspectives, though its impact on Indian policy circles has been limited compared to Latin American countries. Dadabhai Naoroji, through his Drain Theory, argued that British rule led to the continuous transfer of wealth from India to Britain, which weakened India's economy. His ideas highlighted how colonial powers created unequal economic relationships that benefited them and harmed the colonies. M. N. Roy criticised both capitalism and colonialism. He believed that global economic systems exploited poorer countries and that true development required breaking away from these systems. He supported international revolution and solidarity to fight global inequality. While these ideas were important, they did not shape Indian economic policies as much as they did in Latin America. In India, leaders followed a path of state-led development influenced by socialism and planning, rather than dependency-focused approaches.

In Africa, dependency theory gained more traction, particularly through the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research (CODESRIA). This organisation became a key centre for leaders of radical nationalist and liberation movements from countries like Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. These leaders developed their own theories of underdevelopment based on their experiences with exploitative imperialism. The popularity of dependency theory in Africa is evident from its adoption as part of the official ideology in independent Mozambique and Angola, largely due to its promotion by Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania. This widespread acceptance demonstrates how dependency theory resonated with the experiences and aspirations of many developing nations seeking to understand and overcome their economic challenges.

3.3.3.1 Key Arguments of the Theory of Dependencia

Dependency theory is not a unified body of thought, but rather a diverse collection of ideas with varying perspectives. Scholars disagree on many aspects of dependency theory, with critics and advocates presenting a wide range of positions. Some criticise its nationalist tendencies, while others argue it focuses too much on external factors and neglects internal class struggles. Some even suggest that dependency theory obscures the analysis of imperialism. Despite these differences, all dependency theorists share a common view: they believe that the social and economic development of underdeveloped countries is heavily influenced

□ Dependency Theory in India

□ Dependency Theory in Africa

□ Diverse Perspectives in Dependency Theory

by external forces. Specifically, they argue that powerful, advanced capitalist countries dominate underdeveloped nations within the international capitalist system. During the 1960s and 1970s, proponents of dependency theory (known as dependentistas) emphasised that development in the Third World should be seen as a unique historical issue. They divided the world economy into two groups: the core (developed capitalist countries in Western Europe and North America) and the periphery (Third World countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America).

□ Core-Periphery Dynamics in Dependency Theory

Dependentistas argued that Third World countries were being increasingly integrated into the global capitalist system. They believed that the economies of these peripheral countries were being transformed through the continuous influx of capital from core countries. This process, they claimed, had been ongoing for three to four centuries, creating strong links between peripheral and core economies. This situation, according to dependency theorists, resulted in a coexistence of dependent capitalism and pre-capitalist structures in peripheral countries, preventing the full realisation of capitalist development potential. They viewed underdevelopment, like development, as a historical process that allowed core economies to establish and maintain dominance over peripheral economies. Consequently, they argued that core economies developed at the expense of peripheral ones. This perspective offered a new way of understanding global economic disparities and the challenges faced by developing nations, emphasising the historical and structural nature of underdevelopment.

□ Exploitation in Core-Periphery Relations

The dependence of peripheral countries on the core for capital, investments, credit, markets, technology, and finished products gave core nations significant leverage in the global capitalist system. This dependency increased the vulnerability of peripheral nations, allowing core countries to exploit them further. The weak bargaining position of peripheral economies in trade led to core countries controlling the prices of primary commodities and raw materials, resulting in constant price fluctuations and unfavourable trade terms for the periphery. This allowed core countries to accumulate wealth at the expense of peripheral economies. The exploitative relationship between the core and the periphery was not only structural but also enabled core nations to extract surplus from peripheral economies on a global scale. The loss of this surplus contributed to the ongoing impoverishment and marginalisation of peripheral countries within the world capitalist system.

As noted by Brazilian social scientist Dos Santos, dependency refers to a situation where the economy of one country is

shaped by the growth and expansion of another, more dominant economy. Chilean economist Osvaldo Sunkel further elaborated on how foreign influence penetrates the political and economic systems of Third World countries, reinforcing the power of ruling classes while marginalising others. According to Sunkel, foreign factors are not external but integral to the system, with political, economic, and cultural impacts that favour certain privileged groups while keeping marginalised classes in a state of poverty. Dependency theorists argue that the surplus extracted from peripheral economies is invested in developed core countries, accelerating their economic growth and deepening global inequality. They trace this exploitation back to colonial times, where colonial powers plundered resources from their colonies.

In modern times, this process continues through mechanisms like the repatriation of profits. A key distinction of dependency theory, compared to orthodox Marxism, is its focus on the relationship between nations, rather than classes, as the basis for the extraction and appropriation of surplus. This framework explains how the economic dominance of core nations perpetuates the underdevelopment of peripheral countries. The Dependency Theory can be construed as an umbrella term which covers some prominent theories that explain the relationship of Third World countries with Western countries and the consequent underdevelopment in Third World countries. Such theories are commonly known as the Dependentia. Let us see some dependency-based theories.

3.3.4 Theory of Centre-Periphery

The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) School, led by Raúl Prebisch, challenged the classical international trade theories developed by Adam Smith, Ricardo, Heckscher-Ohlin, and Samuelson. They argued that the global economy had become polarised into a centre and a periphery. They believed this division led to wealth concentration in the centre and increased poverty in the periphery. According to their view, the centre had a diverse and uniform production structure, while the periphery was specialised and uneven. In the periphery, production focused on a few primary goods and isolated economic areas with little connection to the rest of the economy. This region also showed a mix of capitalist and pre-capitalist features. Because of these characteristics, the ECLA School concluded that the periphery gained little from international trade and the global division of labour.

Due to this uneven structure, the ECLA concluded that peripheral economies could not fully benefit from international trade and the global division of labour. Using evidence from

Latin American economies, they demonstrated how low productivity levels and unfavourable trade terms led to persistent unequal development. The ECLA School's key insight was that development and underdevelopment were interconnected, two sides of the same coin. To escape the exploitative system, they proposed solutions such as "*spontaneous industrialisation*," "*planned industrialisation*," and the need for a "*dynamic leadership*" to guide Latin American economies away from imperialist or neocolonial control.

However, the ECLA School faced criticism for being too reformist. The ECLA School, led by Raúl Prebisch, suggested that underdeveloped countries could grow by reforming their economies and reducing dependence on wealthy nations. ECLA believed that local industrialists and intellectuals in these countries would support national interests and help resist foreign influence. However, several scholars criticised this view. André Gunder Frank argued that ECLA was too hopeful and ignored the fact that local elites often worked closely with foreign powers. He believed these elites were more interested in protecting their own wealth than helping their countries grow independently. Other critics, like Theotonio Dos Santos and Ruy Mauro Marini, also found ECLA's explanation lacking. They said ECLA focused too much on trade issues and did not properly explain how powerful countries exploited weaker ones through global capitalism. These scholars believed ECLA's approach was too mild and failed to challenge the real sources of inequality and underdevelopment in the world economy. Despite these criticisms, the ECLA School's work was significant in highlighting the relationship between centre and periphery economies and proposing ways for peripheral countries to improve their economic situations.

3.3.4.1 André Gunder Frank on Centre-Periphery

Building on the work of Paul Baran and the ECLA School, André Gunder Frank became a leading figure in the full development of dependency theory, offering a strong left-wing critique of classical Marxism's progressive outlook. In his notable work, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967), along with other writings, Frank argued that both underdevelopment and development are the simultaneous and interconnected outcomes of a single, global capitalist system that has been in place for over four centuries. He emphasised that capitalism at the centre (developed nations) and the periphery (underdeveloped nations) are inherently linked. However, unlike the centre, which enjoys the benefits of development, the periphery experiences what he called the "*development of underdevelopment*." This means that the prosperity of the centre depends on the continuous underdevelopment of the periphery.

According to Frank, capitalism systematically generates underdevelopment in peripheral countries through the extraction of surplus by advanced metropolitan nations. He described this relationship as a chain of metropolises and satellites, where each level—from global metropolitan centres down to local rural merchants—has its own satellites, such as peasants at the bottom of the hierarchy. Frank, heavily influenced by Baran, believed that economic development in satellite countries is always undermined by the dominant interests of advanced capitalist nations. He argued that a satellite country experiences the highest growth only when its ties to metropolitan countries are weakest. Therefore, the position of a country within the global capitalist hierarchy and its internal economic structure are crucial for understanding its underdevelopment. Ultimately, Frank suggested that the only way to eliminate underdevelopment at the periphery is to break away entirely from the capitalist system.

However, Frank's theory faced criticism on two main fronts. Historically, some questioned whether Latin America truly had a market-oriented capitalist economy from the beginning, and whether the conditions for capitalism existed in 16th-century Europe when, according to Frank, capitalist domination of Latin America began. Despite these criticisms, Frank's work significantly contributed to understanding the relationship between development and underdevelopment in the global capitalist system.

3.3.4.2 Samir Amin on Centre-Periphery

Another significant contribution to underdevelopment theory came from African scholar Samir Amin. In his key work *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (1974), Amin argued that the relationship between industrialised and less developed countries is structured in a way that prevents capitalism from fulfilling its historical role of advancing productive forces in underdeveloped nations. He claimed that since the beginning of the imperialist era, less developed countries have lost the ability to achieve autonomous, self-sustaining growth, regardless of their per capita output. Amin highlighted that these countries, in their attempt to compete with the developed nations, are dominated by the centre, which distorts their economic structures, making them unfit for independent development. This competition leads peripheral nations to focus on export-oriented activities, low-tech industries, and tertiary sectors, all of which shift the economic benefits, or "*multiplier*" effects, from the periphery to the centre, further obstructing their economic growth. Amin's work highlights how the global economic system's structure

❏ Metropolis-Satellite Relationship and Structural Disconnection

❏ Critiques of Frank's Historical Assumptions

❏ Contributions of Samir Amin

creates barriers to genuine, self-sustained development in peripheral countries, perpetuating their dependence on and subordination to the industrialised centre.

Samir Amin stands out from other dependency theorists because he provided a broader and more radical critique of global capitalism, going beyond Latin American perspectives. While many early dependency theorists, like Raúl Prebisch or Fernando Henrique Cardoso, focused mainly on unequal trade relations between developed and developing countries, Amin introduced a more structural and global analysis. Amin argued that the world economy operates through a "*centre-periphery*" structure, where the centre (developed countries) extracts surplus from the periphery (developing countries). However, unlike some dependency theorists who believed that reform within capitalism (such as industrial policies or import-substitution) could help peripheral countries develop, Amin was more sceptical. He believed capitalism would always work against the interests of the periphery, and real development could only come through delinking from the global capitalist system and building self-reliant economies. He also introduced the idea of "*accumulation on a world scale*", explaining how capitalism creates and maintains inequality globally, not just through trade, but also through finance, technology, and labour exploitation.

<aside>❏ Samir Amin's Radical Critique of Global Capitalism</aside>

3.3.5 World System Theory: Immanuel Wallerstein

World System Theory (WST), developed by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, offers a critical perspective on the inequalities within the global capitalist system. Drawing on Marxist and dependency theory, particularly the works of scholars from Latin America and Europe, Wallerstein's theory analyses global capitalism as a unified, hierarchical structure that has evolved over time. According to this theory, the world is divided into three zones: *the core, semi-periphery, and periphery*. Wealth and resources flow from the peripheral regions to the core, reinforcing global inequality. Wallerstein's framework presents a novel way to understand the historical and contemporary relationships between nations and regions, focusing on their economic and political power dynamics. By highlighting the exploitation inherent in the capitalist system, Wallerstein challenges traditional notions of development and underdevelopment, offering a deeper insight into global inequalities.

<aside>❏ Overview of World System Theory</aside>

3.3.5.1 Historical Development of World System Theory

World System Theory (WST) emerged as a response to the political and economic challenges of the 20th century,

particularly during the Cold War, the rise of global capitalism, and the decolonisation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. During this period, many countries in the global South struggled with persistent poverty and underdevelopment, despite adopting modernisation strategies. This disparity between the developed and underdeveloped regions prompted scholars to seek a deeper understanding of global inequality. Wallerstein developed World System Theory to address the limitations of traditional development theories. Early modernisation theories, which suggested that all nations could follow the same path to development as Western countries, were increasingly questioned due to the ongoing poverty and inequality in the global South. At the same time, dependency theory emerged, arguing that peripheral nations remained underdeveloped because they were economically dependent on core nations. Wallerstein built on these ideas, offering a historical analysis of global capitalism. He proposed that the capitalist world-economy had evolved over five centuries, with the global division of labour being shaped by historical processes that began in the 16th century.

3.3.5.2 The Genesis of World System Theory

The genesis of World System Theory is rooted in the historical rise of global capitalism, particularly during European expansion and colonialism. This period marked the establishment of a global economic system in which core nations, primarily in Western Europe, extracted wealth from peripheral nations through colonisation, trade, and resource exploitation. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, the capitalist world-economy expanded, with core nations continually shaping the global system to maintain their advantage. Wallerstein, drawing on Marxist ideas of historical materialism, argued that the world economy functions as a unified capitalist system, even though it consists of individual nation-states. A central aspect of his theory is the exploitative nature of capitalism, which integrates regions into a global system where core nations extract surplus value from the periphery. This exploitation prevents peripheral nations from achieving the industrialisation and development seen in core nations.

Wallerstein first introduced World System Theory in his influential work, *The Modern World-System,* published in 1974. The first volume of this work, which examined the origins and evolution of the capitalist system, has been particularly influential. Wallerstein's approach marked a shift away from classical Marxism and dependency theory, focusing on the role of global economic structures rather than individual national development. His ideas were influenced by earlier theorists, including Karl Marx, who focused on class struggle and

□ Origin and Development of World System Theory

□ Historical Roots of World System Theory

□ Introduction and Influence of World System Theory

exploitation, and dependency theorists like André Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, who emphasised the exploitative relationships between core and peripheral nations.

World System Theory became highly influential during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly among scholars and political economists who were interested in exploring the roots of global inequality and underdevelopment. The theory's broad, global perspective on economic and social structures provided a critical alternative to the prevailing modernisation theories that had dominated earlier discussions of development. Wallerstein's work quickly became a key reference point for later research in political economy, sociology, and international relations. The theory offered a new way to understand the persistence of poverty and inequality in the developing world, asserting that the global capitalist system itself was largely responsible for underdevelopment. As neoliberal economic policies gained traction in the 1980s and markets became more integrated globally, World System Theory provided an alternative view of global economics. It highlighted the exploitative nature of capitalism, arguing that the world economy's structure entrenched global inequalities by benefiting core nations at the expense of the periphery. This critical perspective challenged the mainstream economic policies of the time and reshaped discussions on global development.

3.3.5.3 Key Concepts of World System Theory

A key component of Wallerstein's World System Theory is the division of countries into three structural zones: *the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery*. These zones are interconnected and dynamic, with each zone playing a distinct role in the global economic system. *Core*: Core nations are the economic and political powerhouses of the world system. These countries are highly industrialised, technologically advanced, and possess significant political and military influence. Core nations dominate global trade, set economic policies, and control the flow of capital and resources. Examples of core nations include the United States, Japan, and Western European countries. These nations maintain control over the global economic order and exert substantial influence over other regions.

Semi-Periphery: The semi-periphery includes countries that fall between the core and the periphery in terms of economic development. These nations are more advanced than peripheral countries but less industrialised than core nations. Semi-peripheral countries, such as Brazil, China, and South Africa, often serve as emerging economies that have achieved a degree of industrialisation. However, they still depend on core nations

for capital, technology, and expertise. The semi-periphery plays an important role in stabilising the global system by acting as an intermediary between the core and the periphery.

Periphery:Peripheral nations are economically underdeveloped and rely heavily on agriculture, raw materials, and low-wage labour. These countries are often economically subordinated to core nations, which extract raw materials and resources from the periphery while exporting finished goods at higher prices. Countries in Africa, parts of Latin America, and Southeast Asia are often classified as peripheral nations. These countries experience chronic poverty, political instability, and economic dependency, relying on external aid or foreign investment to sustain their economies.

3.3.5.4 Criticism

Despite its significant influence, World System Theory has faced several criticisms. One major critique is that Wallerstein places too much emphasis on economic factors when explaining global inequalities, while neglecting the roles of culture, politics, and local historical contexts in shaping development. Critics argue that Wallerstein's structural categories—core, semi-periphery, and periphery—are too rigid and fail to reflect the dynamic and changing nature of global economic relationships. Another criticism centres on the agency of peripheral nations. While Wallerstein contends that peripheral nations cannot truly develop within the global capitalist system, some scholars argue that these countries can achieve development through strategies such as state intervention, industrialisation, or reforming global trade rules. These critics believe that peripheral nations are not entirely powerless and that they can challenge or reshape their position within the global system.

Despite these criticisms, Wallerstein's World System Theory remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding the global economy. The theory challenges traditional ideas about development, offering a critical perspective on the inequalities embedded within the capitalist system. By examining the historical and structural integration of nations into a global economic system, Wallerstein has deepened our understanding of global inequality, underdevelopment, and dependency. His work continues to inspire scholars, policymakers, and activists who aim to address the persistent challenges faced by the global South today.

3.3.3.6 Conclusion

Dependency Theory and World System Theory offer critical insights into the causes of global inequality and

underdevelopment. Both theories challenge traditional views that assume all countries can achieve development by following the same path as Western nations. Dependency Theory focuses on how the economic dependence of poorer countries on richer ones keeps them underdeveloped. It shows how colonial history, unequal trade relations, and foreign control over resources limit the growth of developing countries. Although the theory has lost some popularity, especially after the economic rise of countries like South Korea and Singapore, it still helps explain persistent poverty and inequality in many parts of the world.

World System Theory builds on the ideas of dependency by presenting a global structure divided into the *core, semi-periphery, and periphery*. It emphasises that the global capitalist system is not made up of isolated nations but functions as a single unit. Core countries benefit by exploiting the periphery, keeping them dependent and underdeveloped. Even though critics argue that Wallerstein's approach overlooks local factors and change over time, the theory remains useful in analysing global power relations. Together, these theories continue to shape scholarly debates and offer valuable tools to understand the complex realities of development and inequality in the world today.

Summarised Overview

World System Theory and Dependency Theory are essential frameworks for understanding the dynamics of international relations and global economics. Dependency Theory, developed in the 1960s, critiques the notion of modernisation, arguing that the economic challenges faced by developing nations arise from their dependence on advanced capitalist countries.

It suggests that this dependence perpetuates underdevelopment and inequality, as resources flow from peripheral to core nations. Scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank emphasised that historical exploitation during colonial times laid the groundwork for contemporary economic structures, where core countries maintain dominance over the periphery.

World System Theory, proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein, builds upon this foundation, categorising nations into *core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral* roles within a global capitalist framework. It highlights the interdependence of these countries and their varying degrees of power and wealth.

Both theories emphasise the importance of historical context and structural inequalities in understanding global economic relations. Despite facing critiques and a decline in popularity due to the emergence of successful economies in Asia, these theories remain relevant in analysing contemporary global challenges, such as economic crises, globalisation, and the persistent inequality between nations.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the fundamental differences between Dependency Theory and World System Theory?

2. How do Dependency Theory and World System Theory explain the underdevelopment of certain nations?

3. Discuss the role of core countries in the global capitalist system according to World System Theory.

4. Evaluate the critiques that have been directed at Dependency Theory.

5. How can Dependency Theory be applied to contemporary global economic issues?

6. What historical events contributed to the development of Dependency Theory and World System Theory?

7. Analyse how the concept of neo-colonialism is related to Dependency Theory.

8. Explain the significance of semi-peripheral countries in World System Theory.

9. In what ways do Dependency Theory and World System Theory differ in their approach to economic development?

10. Discuss the relevance of these theories in understanding global inequalities today.

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the main tenets of Dependency Theory and World System Theory, providing examples.

2. Assess the impact of Dependency Theory on policy-making in Latin America during the 1970s.

3. Critically evaluate how World System Theory can be used to understand the rise of the so-called "Asian Tigers."

4. Discuss the implications of these theories for understanding contemporary global trade relations.

5. Analyse a specific case study of a country that exemplifies the principles of Dependency Theory.

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BLOCK 4
Contemporary Theories

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the foundational principles of the English School in International Relations

- analyse the debates within the English School, particularly the pluralist and solidarist perspectives

- evaluate the impact of historical developments, such as the formation of the EU and decolonisation, on the evolution of the English School's theoretical framework

- explore the contemporary relevance of the English School theory, particularly its contributions to ongoing debates about global governance, sovereignty, and human rights in a modern, interconnected world

Background

The English School theory in International Relations (hereinafter called the IR) offers a distinctive approach by situating itself between realism and liberalism. Emerging in the mid-20th century, the English School highlights the concept of an international society, wherein states, despite being sovereign, share common interests and values that bind them to certain norms and conduct. This theory draws from earlier European diplomatic traditions, tracing back to the 17th and 18th centuries, where European powers engaged with each other under a shared understanding of international law, diplomacy, and the balance of power.

The School gained prominence after World War II, when scholars like Hedley Bull emphasised the idea that international relations should not only be seen through the lens of power politics but also through a sense of justice and order shared by states. The English School also contemplates the tensions between sovereignty and universal human rights, leading to important debates between pluralist and solidarist views. Pluralism focuses on state sovereignty and minimal shared values, while solidarism pushes for more collective action and intervention in global issues, such as human rights. These debates continue to shape how scholars and policymakers think about the balance between state-centric and human-centric international systems.

Discussion

4.1.1 Introduction

☐ Overview of the English School

The English School, also known as the International Society Approach, is a distinctive theoretical approach to understanding international relations. It offers a middle ground between realism and liberalism, focusing on the concept of an international society of states. The English School emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily at the London School of Economics and the University of Cambridge. Key figures in its early development included Martin Wight, Hedley Bull, and Adam Watson. The school's genesis can be traced to a series of discussions in the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, established in 1959. These discussions aimed to explore the historical and philosophical dimensions of international relations beyond the dominant realist paradigm of the time.

The English School is built around three key concepts:

☐ Core Concepts of the English School

a. *International System*: The mechanical interaction of states based on power politics.

b. *International Society*: A group of states that share common rules and institutions.

c. *World Society*: A focus on individuals, non-state actors, and the global population as the basis of global societal identities.

4.1.2 Historical Perspective

☐ Framework of English School

The English School offers a framework for studying international and world history by focusing on the social structures within international orders. Unlike many theories that focus on specific aspects of International Relations (IR), the English School takes a holistic approach, attempting to view the global landscape in its entirety. This theory is built around three core concepts: the international system, international society, and world society. By distinguishing between these, the English School creates a space for new theoretical perspectives and offers a middle ground between the opposing views of realism and liberalism.

Origins and Development

The English School traces its roots back to the early 20th century, influenced by various philosophical and historical developments in British thought. The key figures in the formation of this school include Hedley Bull, Martin Wight, and Gilbert Ryle, among others. The school gained traction in the aftermath of the Second World War, responding to the failures of traditional theories like realism and liberalism to address the complexities of global politics.

The English School was primarily shaped by the works of Hedley Bull, particularly his book *The Anarchical Society* (1977), which articulated the concept of an international society. Bull argued that states, while sovereign, are part of a larger community bound by shared norms and values that govern their interactions.

Intellectual Contributions and Expansion

Martin Wight contributed significantly to the school's development, emphasising the historical and philosophical dimensions of IR. In his most influential work "*International Theory: The Three Traditions*", which is a collection of his lectures delivered at the London School of Economics, he systematically developed his argument about the distinction between three traditions—realism, rationalism, and revolutionism, which highlighted the diverse perspectives within international relations. During the period between 1960-1980, the English School gained prominence as a formal theoretical framework. Scholars began to articulate a coherent set of principles, emphasising the importance of international law, diplomacy, and institutions in shaping state behaviour. The school also began to engage with contemporary global issues, such as decolonisation, human rights, and the rise of non-state actors, further expanding its relevance.

Post-Cold War Reorientation

The end of the Cold War (1990) marked a turning point for the English School, prompting scholars to re-evaluate the nature of international society in a unipolar world. The rise of globalisation, transnationalism, and the increasing importance of non-state actors compelled the English School to adapt its theoretical framework. Contemporary scholars like Andrew Hurrell and Barry Buzan have furthered the discourse by addressing issues of global governance, security, and the role of identity in international relations, enriching the English School's analytical depth. The English School reached its zenith in the late 20th century, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, as scholars sought to address the limitations of realism and liberalism in explaining the complexities of post-Cold War international relations. The focus on international society and the normative dimensions of global politics resonated with a growing audience interested in understanding the ethical implications of state behaviour and the role of international institutions.

4.1.3 Key Concepts

International Society: At the core of the English School is the idea of an international society, which posits that states are part of a larger community governed by shared norms, values, and institutions. This concept contrasts with the notion of an anarchic international system, emphasising the importance of cooperation and diplomacy.

Pluralism vs. Solidarism: The English School debates the nature of international society, distinguishing between pluralism, which focuses on state sovereignty and order, and solidarism, which emphasises the responsibility of states to uphold human rights and justice. This debate reflects the tension between the imperatives of state behaviour and the needs of global society.

The Anarchical Society: Bull's idea of an anarchical society suggests that while states operate in a decentralised system, they are bound by shared norms that facilitate order and stability. This framework allows for an understanding of how states can coexist and cooperate despite their inherent sovereignty.

4.1.4 Key Concepts: International System, International Society and World Society

Hedley Bull (1977) defines the international system as existing when two or more states have enough interaction and influence on each other's decisions to function as parts of a whole. This concept primarily revolves around power politics and the state of international anarchy. An international society forms when a group of states recognises shared rules and norms and operates through common institutions. This focuses on the development and maintenance of shared agreements between states. The concept of world society goes beyond the state system, taking individuals, non-state actors, and the global population as the central units, emphasising global identities and societal arrangements. It's important to note that in this theory, *institutions* refer to practices and norms, which differ from formal "organisations."

In the English School of thought, the term "institutions" refers to enduring practices among states, such as diplomacy, law, and warfare, rather than formal international bureaucratic structures, which are known as *organisations*. To describe these organisations, the English School uses terms like *pseudo-institutions* or *secondary institutions*, emphasising that their effectiveness depends on the functioning of primary institutions within an international society. The distinction between an international system and an international society helps clarify the nature of relationships among states or groups of states.

Core Concepts and Debates

Three Pillars of the English School

Institutions vs. Organisations in the English School

Historically, for instance, the relations between European states reflected the existence of a European international society, while their relations with the Ottoman Empire represented interactions within an international system.

Similarly, within the European Union (EU), interactions among its member states reflect an international society, whereas the EU's interactions with Turkey, a non-member, fall under the broader international system. Though useful, this distinction faced criticism. Barry Buzan, a prominent figure in the English School, challenged Bull's dichotomy by suggesting that even within what Bull described as an international system—where states merely interact without shared norms—there still exists some degree of order, rules, and institutions. Buzan argued that no system of states operates entirely without social elements and that the supposed absence of norms in an international system is more a matter of degree than of kind. He introduced the idea of a *spectrum*, where an international system could be understood as a *thin* or minimal form of international society, characterised by basic rules such as recognition of sovereignty and diplomatic interaction, even in the absence of deeper shared values. This refinement allowed for a more nuanced understanding of global politics, acknowledging that relationships between states, including those between the European Union and non-members like Turkey, often contain elements of both system and society.

Relations between entities from different regional societies could not follow the same moral and legal principles as those within the same society due to cultural differences. Contact between these regional societies was limited, and a truly universal international society could only emerge if one regional society expanded and integrated others under a common set of rules and values. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, international society was seen as an exclusive group of European and so-called *civilised* states. This society expressed itself through institutions like international law, diplomacy, and the balance of power. European powers followed a shared code of conduct in their interactions with one another, but this code was not applied to their dealings with other societies. In the nineteenth century, international lawyers continued to promote this cultural divide between Europeans and non-Europeans, labelling peoples as either *civilised* or *non-civilised*. This distinction affected the legal recognition of states, with *civilised* states enjoying higher status.

As European international society expanded globally, many non-European states sought to join it. European states then had to set criteria for admitting these non-European entities. This led to the creation of a *standard of civilisation*, which was

❐ Buzan's Refinement: Spectrum of International Society

❐ Buzan's Refinement: Spectrum of International Society

based on the norms of liberal European values. This standard included elements such as the protection of basic human rights and the establishment of a legal system that ensured justice for all. Countries that failed to meet these criteria were considered *uncivilised*. Non-European states were thus judged not only by their foreign relations but also by how they governed internally. This process created a hierarchical relationship between the *civilisers* (Europeans) and the *civilised* (non-Europeans), often described as a dynamic between *teachers* and *pupils*.

A new international society emerged after the First World War (1914–1918), marked by the creation of the League of Nations in 1920. This new international order incorporated many of the rules and practices from the European international society, including principles of international law, diplomacy, sovereignty, and the judicial equality of recognised states. Interestingly, the initiative for the League came from U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, highlighting a shift in global leadership away from Europe. However, the League's effectiveness was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, which eventually led to its collapse. In 1945, the United Nations (UN) was established, signalling the birth of yet another international society. The UN adopted many structures and principles from the League of Nations. Meanwhile, the concept of the *standard of civilisation* faced growing opposition from non-European countries, as it perpetuated a hierarchical division between *civilised* and *non-civilised* states. With the onset of decolonisation, this discriminatory standard was abolished, marking the decline of imperialism and empire.

The Cold War (1947–1991) saw the world divided into two major spheres, one led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union. This created two *thicker* regional international societies within a *thinner* global society. These blocs had shared rules, values, and institutions, creating *thicker* societies within a weaker global framework. At the global level, states followed only basic norms like sovereignty and diplomacy, forming a *thin* international society. After the Cold War ended in 1991, this division disappeared, and a broader international society began to emerge, based on liberal values, economic cooperation, and international institutions. However, this global society still centres around states, and the English School argues that it does not yet qualify as a full *world society*, where individuals and global moral values would take priority over state interests. In the English School's view, the current world order reflects a hierarchy: the international system at the basic level, international society at a higher level of shared norms among states, and world society as an aspirational level focused on common humanity. The post-Cold War period shows progress

toward a thicker global international society, but world society remains limited and uneven.

4.1.5 Pluralism and Solidarism Debate

A central debate within the English School focuses on the concepts of pluralism and solidarism. Pluralism refers to international societies with fewer shared norms, rules, and institutions, while solidarism represents societies where there is a higher degree of common norms and values.

This debate centres on how international society interacts with world society, essentially addressing the relationship between the needs of states and the needs of humanity. These interests often conflict in both real-world situations and theoretical discussions. English School scholars engage with this tension, focusing on how to balance the competing imperatives of order (state sovereignty) and justice (human rights).

The pluralist view tends to prioritise state sovereignty, while the solidarist view emphasises the protection of universal human rights. For example, in the case of Syria's civil war, a pluralist approach would argue that Syria, as a sovereign nation, is responsible for its own internal affairs, while a solidarist approach would advocate for international intervention to protect human lives. This debate between pluralism and solidarism reflects broader questions about the role and limitations of international society, and the English School helps navigate the balance between power, interests, justice, and responsibility in global politics.

4.1.6 The English School and the European Union

After the end of World War II in 1945, six European states such as France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg established a regional international system, characterised by frequent interactions and mutual influence on each other's decisions, making them function as a collective unit. These countries initially came together to form the *European Coal and Steel Community* (ECSC) in 1951 (Treaty of Paris), which later evolved into the *European Economic Community* (EEC) in 1957 (Treaty of Rome), and ultimately into the *European Union*. These states developed an international society by forming a shared set of rules and institutions to manage their relationships. Over time, this process of integration grew stronger and more comprehensive, leading to the establishment of supranational institutions, laws, and policies that went beyond the powers of individual states. The laws and policies of the EU govern relations not only between the Union and its member states but also between the Union and its citizens. In doing so,

- ❏ Pluralism vs. Solidarism in International Society

- ❏ Natural Law vs. Positive Law in Pluralism and Solidarism

- ❏ Evolution of European International Society and the EU

the EU addresses the tensions between the interests of states and the needs of people, as well as the balance between order (state sovereignty) and justice (human rights), which lie at the heart of the pluralist and solidarist debate. The enlargement of the European Union (EU), which grew from six members in 1951 to 27 by 2013, mirrors the historical expansion of European international society. Just as in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the EU member states needed to establish specific criteria for admitting new countries.

Aspiring member states must meet particular political and economic standards to join the EU. Similar to the historical *standard of civilisation*, these membership criteria reflect the values that separate those eligible to join the Union from those that are not. Countries that meet these requirements are accepted, while those that do not are excluded. Like non-European states in the past, candidate countries must adapt to new expectations, often at a considerable cost to their societies. The EU's membership criteria include both political and economic conditions. As the EU began as an economic organisation, economic requirements for membership were established early on. However, political criteria have evolved over time. At the Copenhagen Summit in June 1993, these criteria were clarified as follows:

❐ EU Membership Criteria and Standards

1. A candidate country must have stable institutions that uphold democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and minority protections;

2. The country must have a functioning market economy capable of handling competitive pressures within the Union;

3. The candidate must be able to meet the obligations of membership, including alignment with political, economic, and monetary union goals.

The EU's influence on candidate states occurs in two main stages. First, during pre-negotiations, countries must meet the Copenhagen criteria before discussions can begin. Second, throughout the negotiation phase, political conditions are closely monitored. Failure to meet these conditions can delay or halt the process. For instance, Turkey's bid for EU membership, which began in 1987, has stalled due to its shifts toward authoritarianism and human rights concerns. The EU's enlargement process, which has expanded to cover much of Europe, illustrates how a robust regional international society can extend outward, gradually transforming the broader international system into an international society. However, the international system itself still represents a *thin* form of international society. The expansion process doesn't stop once candidate countries join

❐ EU Enlargement and Influence

the EU. Elements of order linked to both international and world society are spread beyond the Union's borders in three key ways: First, neighbouring states are encouraged to adopt norms and practices in line with the EU's standards. Second, to receive development assistance or aid, countries must meet political and economic conditions that align with EU values. Third, the EU shapes its trade policy by requiring its trading partners to follow certain norms, rules, and practices.

Studying the expansion of the EU is crucial for understanding how regional international societies grow and gradually transform the wider international system into an international society. Equally important, however, is examining what happens when such societies contract. For instance, with Brexit (the UK's departure from the EU) and the possibility of other countries leaving, there are two possible outcomes: *First*, if key members of the regional international society exit, this society may gradually shrink and become a *thinner* international society, similar to an international system; *Second*, the regional international society could remain intact, but the departing states would shift into the broader international system in which the regional society is embedded.

4.1.6.1 Brexit and European Union

In the case of Brexit, the EU regional international society will still function, but the UK will now operate within the broader international system. However, if more EU countries leave, the EU could progressively weaken and become a *thinner* international society, more like an international system. Brexit prompted English School scholars to revisit debates on sovereignty, identity, and the stability of international societies. Pluralists interpreted Brexit as a reaffirmation of state sovereignty and national distinctiveness, reflecting Robert Jackson's emphasis on the legalist, pluralist framework of international society. Conversely, solidarist scholars such as Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler viewed Brexit as a rupture within European international society, undermining efforts to deepen solidarist norms and exposing the fragility of shared European identity. Brexit also revived discussions on the layered nature of international politics, where international system, society, and world society overlap and sometimes clash, reinforcing the English School's analytical strengths in capturing these dynamics.

4.1.7 Criticism

The English School has faced criticism for its conceptual ambiguity, with scholars like Steve Smith arguing that its

key terms lack precision and that it fails to offer a systematic methodology. Critics from critical and Marxist traditions, including Robert Cox, fault the School for neglecting structural power, capitalism, and global inequalities, accusing it of reinforcing the status quo by prioritising order over justice. Additionally, postcolonial scholars such as Amitav Acharya and Robbie Shilliam have challenged the School's Eurocentric focus, arguing that it overlooks non-Western experiences and ideas, and fails to theorise a truly Global International Society. Even from within, Barry Buzan and Richard Little have acknowledged the underdeveloped nature of the world society concept, calling for greater attention to transnational actors and human rights norms. In response, some scholars like Tim Dunne and Barry Buzan advocate for the renewal and pluralisation of the English School, urging it to incorporate insights from critical, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives to remain relevant in explaining diverse and evolving global orders.

4.1.8 Contemporary Relevance

The English School continues to hold significant relevance in IR theory, offering a middle ground between realism and liberalism through its focus on order, justice, and morality in global politics. Barry Buzan has led efforts to reconceptualise the School, refining its concepts to better analyse global governance, regional societies, and emerging powers such as China. Tim Dunne has emphasised the School's contributions to understanding global humanitarianism and normative change, particularly through the solidarist lens. However, critics like Amitav Acharya and Robbie Shilliam have challenged the School's Eurocentric biases and neglect of non-Western contributions, while others highlight the underdeveloped theorisation of world society. Despite these critiques, the English School remains vital for explaining the layered, dynamic, and often contradictory nature of global order, especially in periods of transition and contestation.

4.1.9 Conclusion

Within the English school, two significant debates have emerged: The first debate concerns the validity of distinguishing between an international system and an international society. If such a distinction is valid, the debate also explores where the boundary between these two forms of international order lies. The consensus is that an international system is viewed as a weaker or *thinner* version of an international society. The second debate focuses on the differences between pluralist and solidarist perspectives, particularly regarding the relationship between international society and world society. Although

the discussion around pluralism and solidarism continues, it's important to note that international society has undergone notable changes, such as the transition from a world of constant conflict before 1945 to a more peaceful environment afterwards. This shift is accompanied by significant developments in world society, including a rising demand for human rights as people increasingly recognise their connection to a global economy and environment. Additionally, advancements in technology and social media have facilitated shared experiences across the globe. These factors have strengthened the interaction between international society and world society, potentially stabilising international society by embedding important ideas not only in the minds of political and economic leaders but also in those of everyday citizens.

Summarised Overview

The English School in International Relations is a theoretical framework that bridges the gap between realist and liberal theories. It places emphasis on the concept of an *international society* where states interact not solely based on power politics but also through shared rules, norms, and institutions.

The School differentiates between an *international system,* where states merely coexist, and an "international society," where states cooperate on the basis of common values. Additionally, the theory explores the interplay between international society and *world society*, which focuses more on individuals and non-state actors.

One of the central debates within the English School is the pluralism versus solidarism argument. Pluralists emphasise state sovereignty and minimal intervention in internal affairs, while solidarists advocate for collective efforts to address global challenges such as human rights abuses and humanitarian intervention.

This debate captures the tension between maintaining order through state sovereignty and pursuing justice through universal human rights. The theory has evolved alongside major global shifts, including the rise of the United Nations, the decolonisation process, and the expansion of the European Union, all of which have contributed to shaping the international society we recognise today.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the main distinctions between an international system and an international society according to the English School?

2. How does the English School differ from realist and liberal approaches in International Relations?

3. Who were the main exponents of English School theory and what are their contributions?

4. Explain the pluralist and solidarist debate within the English School.

5. How did historical developments like decolonisation influence the evolution of the English School?

6. What is the relationship between state sovereignty and human rights in the context of the English School?

7. How does the English School address the concept of global governance?

8. What is the significance of international law and diplomacy in the formation of an international society?

9. How do non-state actors influence the interplay between international society and world society?

10. Can the English School theory provide insights into current international crises? Explain.

Assignments

1. Discuss the core principles of the English School theory and compare them with other major theories in International Relations.

2. Analyse the pluralist/solidarist debate in the English School and its relevance to contemporary international politics.

3. Evaluate the role of international institutions in promoting order and justice within the framework of the English School.

4. How has the expansion of the European Union contributed to the development of a regional international society? Use the English School theory to support your answer.

5. Explore how the concept of sovereignty is reconciled with human rights within the English School theory.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Post Colonialism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the fundamental principles of post-colonialism and how they challenge traditional International Relations theories

- analyse the impact of colonial histories on contemporary global power dynamics and the ongoing effects of imperialism

- evaluate the intersections of race, class, and gender within the framework of post-colonialism and their implications for global justice

- explore case studies that illustrate the practical applications of postcolonial theory in understanding international conflicts and inequalities

Background

Post-colonialism is a critical lens that examines the legacies of colonialism and imperialism in shaping contemporary international relations. Rooted in the historical experiences of colonised nations, this theory critiques the dominant narratives established by powerful states that often marginalise the voices of the less privileged. Post-colonialism not only seeks to uncover the injustices rooted in colonial histories but also emphasises the ongoing struggles faced by marginalised communities today. By exploring concepts such as power, race, gender, and class, postcolonial scholars aim to reveal the complex dynamics that define global interactions. Post-colonialism provides an alternative perspective on international relations, offering insights into the complexities of global governance, security issues, and economic inequalities. Through critical analysis of case studies and theoretical frameworks, the theory helps in understanding global challenges through a postcolonial lens, highlighting the significance of diverse voices in shaping a more equitable world.

Discussion

4.2.1 Introduction

Post-colonialism is one of the prominent contemporary theories in International Relations (hereinafter referred to as IR). It focuses on how international relations are experienced by societies, governments, and people in regions that were once colonised. The term *post* in post-colonialism does not imply that the effects of colonialism have disappeared. Instead, it emphasises how colonial and imperial histories continue to shape a mindset that influences global perspectives. Post-colonialism aims not only to understand the current state of the world but also to imagine how it should be. It explores the unequal distribution of global power and wealth, questioning why certain states and groups hold significant power over others. By addressing these issues, post-colonialism brings new questions to the field of International Relations, offering alternative interpretations of history and different viewpoints on modern global events and challenges.

☐ Understanding Post-colonialism

4.2.2 Origin and Historical Development

Post-colonialism as a critical theory began to gain traction in the late 20th century, following the decolonisation of many African, Asian, and Caribbean nations. These nations, having gained independence from colonial rule, sought to challenge the longstanding power structures and ideologies that had been reinforced by European colonial powers. Scholars from these regions began to critique the Western-dominated world order, arguing that colonialism was not only an event of the past but also an enduring force that continued to influence global politics and economics. The intellectual foundations of postcolonial thought were shaped by a diverse range of scholars, philosophers, and political figures. Frantz Fanon, in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), provided a powerful critique of colonialism and its psychological and social impacts on both the colonisers and the colonised. Fanon argued that colonialism had a dehumanising effect, fostering violence and alienation. His ideas about decolonisation and the liberation of oppressed peoples became central to postcolonial theory.

☐ Origins of Postcolonialism

Meanwhile, Edward Said's groundbreaking work, *Orientalism* (1978), critically examined how Western scholars and intellectuals constructed the East (or the Orient) as the *Other*, positioning it as backward, primitive, and in need of Western intervention and control. Said's work highlighted how colonial power was not only exerted through physical occupation but also through the construction of knowledge and representations that justified exploitation. Said's theory of Orientalism has become foundational in postcolonial studies, influencing debates in both literature and international relations. The postcolonial discourse also drew on the work of thinkers such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who explored issues of *subalternity*—the idea that certain groups, particularly in the Global South, have been silenced and marginalised. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Spivak questioned whether the oppressed can ever truly have a voice within the structures of power that have historically silenced them.

4.2.3 Key Concepts in Postcolonialism

Post-colonialism in IR is characterised by several key concepts that are central to understanding its critique of mainstream theories and its unique contribution to the study of global politics. These concepts include Eurocentrism, colonial legacies, subalternity, identity and representation, and global inequalities.

Eurocentrism: Postcolonial scholars argue that mainstream IR theories, particularly realism and liberalism, are rooted in European experiences and perspectives. These theories often overlook the histories, cultures, and political systems of non-Western societies. Eurocentrism in IR is seen as a reflection of the historical dominance of European powers in global affairs. Postcolonial theorists seek to challenge this dominance by foregrounding the perspectives of formerly colonised nations.

Colonial Legacies: The impact of colonialism extends far beyond the formal end of colonial rule. Post-colonialism in IR highlights how the political, economic, and cultural structures established by colonial powers continue to shape global systems today. Former colonial powers continue to exert influence through international institutions, trade relations, and military interventions. For instance, many of the current global conflicts, economic disparities, and political tensions can be traced back to the boundaries and systems established during colonial rule.

Subalternity: The concept of the subaltern, popularised by Antonio Gramsci, particularly in his Prison Notebooks, and later developed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) refers to those groups who are

□ Key Thinkers in Post-colonialism

□ Core Concepts: Eurocentrism & Colonial Legacies

systematically oppressed and marginalised, particularly in postcolonial contexts. In IR, postcolonial scholars argue that these subaltern voices have been excluded from global decision-making processes, as they are not represented in international institutions or diplomacy. The challenge for postcolonial theorists is to give voice to these marginalised groups and to understand how their exclusion perpetuates global inequality.

Identity and Representation: Postcolonial theory also examines how colonialism shaped the identities of both the colonisers and the colonised. Representation plays a key role in the ways in which the West has portrayed the East as inferior, backward, and in need of intervention. Postcolonial scholars critique the representations in Western literature, media, and international discourse, emphasising the need for a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of non-Western societies.

Global Inequalities: A central theme in postcolonial IR is the recognition of global inequalities that persist in the international system. These inequalities are not just economic but also political, cultural, and social. Postcolonialism critiques the ways in which global power structures perpetuate these inequalities, often through mechanisms like international trade, debt, military intervention, and the actions of international organisations.

4.2.4 Post-colonialism's Influence on International Relations Theory

Postcolonialism has had a profound impact on the field of International Relations, challenging existing theories and offering new ways of thinking about global politics. While mainstream IR theories, such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism, are often critiqued for their Eurocentric bias and state-centric focus, postcolonialism broadens the lens by incorporating the experiences and perspectives of the Global South. Postcolonialism critiques the state-centered approach of traditional IR, arguing that it overlooks the lived realities of individuals and communities who are affected by the historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism. It calls for a more inclusive understanding of global order that takes into account the power imbalances, historical injustices, and inequalities that persist in contemporary international relations. In addition to critiquing existing theories, postcolonialism has also offered alternatives, such as the idea of a *Global International Society*. This concept envisions a world order in which non-Western perspectives are fully incorporated into international governance, and the voices of marginalised groups are heard and valued. This concept challenges the traditional Westphalian system of sovereignty and advocates for a more pluralistic and inclusive global system.

❒ Subalternity, Representation, and Global Inequality

❒ Impact and Alternatives in Postcolonial IR

4.2.5 Contribution of Edward Said

Edward Said is widely regarded as one of the most influential thinkers in postcolonial studies. His groundbreaking work, *Orientalism* (1978), reshaped the way scholars, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, understood the relationship between the West and the non-West. Said's contribution to postcolonialism lies primarily in his critical analysis of how Western powers constructed knowledge about the Orient—referring broadly to the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa—and used that knowledge as a form of control and domination. Through his work, Said introduced new ways of examining power, culture, and representation in international relations and global politics.

Said argued that Western representations of the East were not neutral or objective but were deeply tied to colonial interests and imperial ambitions. He introduced the concept of Orientalism as a system of thought that depicted Eastern societies as *exotic*, *backward*, *irrational*, and *inferior* to the supposedly *civilised*, *rational*, and *superior West*. This portrayal served to justify colonial domination by portraying it as a civilising mission intended to uplift the '*uncivilised*' parts of the world. Said contended that such representations were created through literature, academic writings, art, and media, which together formed a body of knowledge that positioned the West as the centre of power and authority over the East.

A key contribution of Said's work was his emphasis on the interplay between knowledge and power. He drew upon the theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault, who argued that knowledge is not simply a reflection of reality but a means through which power is exercised. Said applied this idea to colonial contexts, showing that the production of knowledge about the Orient allowed Western powers to maintain dominance over colonised peoples by defining them in ways that supported colonial hierarchies.

In addition to critiquing the West's representations of the East, Said also addressed the impact of these representations on the identity and agency of the colonised. He argued that the West's portrayal of the East as passive and dependent denied the people of the region the ability to represent themselves and participate in global discourse on their own terms. This silencing of non-Western voices is a central concern in postcolonial studies, as it reflects the broader structures of inequality that persist in international relations. Said's work extended beyond the analysis of colonial history to examine how these patterns of representation continued in the postcolonial era. He argued

Edward Said's Contribution

Orientalism as Discourse of Power

Knowledge-Power Nexus in Orientalism

Impact on Identity and Agency

that even after the formal end of colonial rule, the stereotypes and assumptions created by Orientalist discourse continued to influence Western policies, media portrayals, and public perceptions of the non-Western world. This continuing legacy of Orientalism reinforced global inequalities and shaped contemporary international relations in ways that privileged Western interests.

Furthermore, Said's scholarship challenged the disciplinary boundaries of International Relations (IR) by introducing cultural and literary analysis into discussions of global politics. He encouraged IR scholars to move beyond state-centric and Eurocentric approaches and to consider the cultural, historical, and ideological factors that shaped international systems and relationships. His work opened space for the development of critical and postcolonial approaches within IR, inspiring a generation of scholars to question dominant narratives and to explore the perspectives of the Global South. Edward Said's contributions to postcolonialism are profound and enduring. Through his critique of Orientalism, he revealed how Western knowledge systems were complicit in the maintenance of colonial and postcolonial domination. He brought attention to the power of representation in shaping global politics and called for a rethinking of international relations that acknowledges the voices, histories, and agency of formerly colonised peoples. Said's work remains a cornerstone of postcolonial theory and continues to influence debates on culture, power, and inequality in global affairs.

□ Said's Legacy in IR

□ Influences on Said

4.2.5.1 Influence of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi on Edward Said's Work

Edward Said's Orientalism did not emerge in an intellectual vacuum. His groundbreaking critique of Western representations of the East built upon the works of earlier anti-colonial thinkers who had already analysed the psychological, cultural, and political dimensions of colonial domination. Among those who strongly influenced Said's thinking were Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, both of whom provided deep insights into the process of othering—the construction of colonised peoples as fundamentally different, inferior, and subordinate to the colonisers.

Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and revolutionary from Martinique, made significant contributions to understanding the psychological impacts of colonialism in his works, especially *Black Skin*, *White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon explored how colonial domination operated not only through political and economic control but also by shaping

Fanon's Psychological Impact of Colonialism

the consciousness and identities of the colonised. He argued that colonialism imposed a sense of inferiority on the colonised subject, compelling them to internalise the coloniser's image of them as uncivilised, irrational, and backward. This process of othering created a colonial world divided into binaries: coloniser versus colonised, civilised versus savage, white versus black. Fanon highlighted that this internalisation of inferiority dehumanised both the colonised and the coloniser, leading to psychological trauma and violence.

Said's Adaptation of Fanon's Theories

Said drew from Fanon's understanding of how representation and ideology reinforced colonial structures. Fanon's insistence that colonialism shaped not only the material conditions but also the cultural and symbolic world of the colonised resonated deeply with Said's critique of Orientalism. Said adapted Fanon's insights by showing how the West used literature, scholarship, and media to create enduring stereotypes of the non-Western world, locking the Orient into an imagined role of the exotic, passive, and irrational other. Said emphasised that such representations were not innocent or neutral; they served as tools of imperial control, echoing Fanon's argument that colonial domination functioned through both violence and the manipulation of identity and knowledge.

Memmi's Analysis of Colonial Identity

Similarly, Albert Memmi, a Tunisian-French writer and philosopher, provided crucial analyses of the psychological dimensions of colonialism. In his seminal work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), Memmi examined the mutual dependence and contradiction within the colonial relationship. He argued that the coloniser maintained power by constructing the colonised as inherently inferior and dependent, while at the same time fearing the potential of the colonised to resist and challenge this imposed identity. Memmi described how colonialism created rigid categories of identity, where the colonised became trapped in a position of subjugation, defined entirely through the lens of the coloniser's gaze.

Said's Extension of Memmi's Ideas

Said found Memmi's exploration of identity, domination, and resistance highly relevant to his own analysis of Orientalism. He extended Memmi's ideas by illustrating how the West's academic and cultural productions systematically depicted the East as an object of study, denying the people of the Orient their subjectivity and voice. Said also echoed Memmi's recognition of the inherent contradictions in colonial discourse, where the coloniser simultaneously dehumanised and exoticised the colonised, creating an image that justified domination while masking the realities of oppression. Both Fanon and Memmi emphasised that resistance to colonialism must begin with reclaiming self-definition and dismantling the imposed

categories of otherness. Said carried forward this legacy by urging scholars to critically interrogate the ways in which knowledge, especially in the field of international relations, continued to reproduce colonial assumptions. He argued that postcolonial scholarship must challenge these enduring legacies of othering and create space for the voices, histories, and agency of the formerly colonised.

In short, Edward Said's Orientalism owes much to the foundational works of Fanon and Memmi. While Fanon revealed the psychological violence of colonial domination and Memmi unpacked the structures of identity and power within colonial relationships, Said applied these insights to the field of culture, literature, and global politics. He demonstrated how othering persisted beyond formal colonialism, shaping the postcolonial world and influencing contemporary global relations.

4.2.6 Conclusion

Postcolonialism examines a world dominated by powerful states and their interests, challenging existing beliefs about how countries behave and what drives them. It pushes us to question how a hierarchical international system has developed and challenges traditional ideas in international relations about power and its functioning. By highlighting everyday injustices and oppressions, particularly during crises, postcolonialism encourages us to analyse issues like nuclear threats or the exploitation of factory workers from the viewpoint of those without power. While it shares some similarities with other critical theories, postcolonialism offers a unique perspective by focusing on the legacies of colonialism and imperialism and their ongoing impact. It emphasises how global inequalities related to race, class, and gender are crucial for understanding international relations. By closely examining how these factors manifest in specific situations, postcolonialism provides a valuable alternative lens and theoretical tools to understand the complexities of our world.

Summarised Overview

Postcolonialism in International Relations explores the critical dimensions of power, identity, and historical context that shape our understanding of global interactions. Postcolonialism challenges traditional theories that often overlook the experiences and perspectives of formerly colonised nations.

By analysing the implications of colonial legacies, this unit aims to illustrate how race, class, and gender intersect to create systems of oppression that persist in

contemporary society. The theory examines case studies that highlight the ongoing effects of colonialism, from economic exploitation to cultural representation.

This approach encourages a nuanced understanding of international issues and helps in developing a critical awareness of the importance of postcolonial perspectives in analysing global power dynamics and advocating for social justice. Postcolonialism helps in gathering better ideas and strategies to address the challenges posed by globalisation, conflict, and inequality, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive discourse in International Relations.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the key principles of postcolonialism, and how do they differ from traditional International Relations theories?

2. How does colonial history continue to influence contemporary global politics?

3. In what ways do race, class, and gender intersect to shape the experiences of marginalised groups?

4. Discuss the significance of decolonisation in the context of International Relations.

5. Analyse a case study that exemplifies the application of postcolonial theory in understanding international conflicts.

6. How do Western narratives of development impact postcolonial societies?

7. What role do cultural representations play in shaping perceptions of the Global South?

8. How can postcolonialism contribute to discussions about global justice and equity?

9. Identify and explain the challenges faced by postcolonial scholars in the field of International Relations.

10. Discuss the various influences on Edward Said in developing Post-Colonial Theory?

Assignments

1. Discuss the contributions of Edward Said to postcolonial theory and its relevance in International Relations.

2. Analyse the impact of colonial legacies on contemporary international economic structures.

3. Explore the concept of "othering" in postcolonial discourse and its implications for global politics.

4. Evaluate the role of postcolonial feminism in addressing issues of gender and race in International Relations.

5. Examine the relationship between nationalism and postcolonial identity in a specific country or region.

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UNIT 3

Feminism and Green Theory

Background

The intersection of Feminist Theory and Green Theory in International Relations (IR) presents a critical framework for understanding the complexities of global issues in today's interconnected world. While traditional IR often prioritises state sovereignty and economic interests, these two theories challenge the status quo by emphasising the significance of gender and ecological perspectives. Feminist Theory critiques the patriarchal structures that marginalise women's voices and experiences in global politics, advocating for a more inclusive approach to governance. Similarly, Green Theory addresses the urgent environmental crises arising from anthropocentric practices, advocating for an ecocentric view that recognises the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities.

Together, these theories highlight the systemic inequalities that perpetuate social and environmental injustices, offering innovative insights into how power dynamics shape global policies. By merging these perspectives, scholars and practitioners can develop holistic approaches that address the root causes of inequality and environmental degradation.

This unit will deeply analyse the core concepts of both theories, examining their implications for global governance and their potential in expanding the horizon of theoretical assumptions of the discipline of International Relations.

Keywords

Feminist Theory, Green Theory, International Relations, Ecocentrism, Gender Inequality, Environmental Pollution, Global Governance, Bioregionalism, Anthropocentrism

Discussion

4.3.1 Feminist Theory in International Relations: Introduction

❐ Feminist Theory in International Relations

Feminist theory has made significant contributions to the field of International Relations (hereinafter called IR) by highlighting the historical exclusion of women and the importance of gender in global politics. From its inception, this approach has pointed out that women have been largely absent from both the practice and theory of IR. This absence is evident in two main ways: women are often left out of important decision-making processes, and their everyday experiences are typically not considered relevant to international affairs. Feminist scholars go beyond simply advocating for women's inclusion. They also critically examine the concept of gender itself, viewing it as a set of socially constructed identities and a powerful organising principle in society. This perspective challenges traditional assumptions about what roles men and women should play in global politics and what issues are considered important in IR.

❐ Gender and Power in International Relations

By bringing attention to these gender-based assumptions, feminist theory reveals how they shape international political processes and affect the lives of both men and women worldwide. Rather than accepting the notion that traditional IR was neutral with respect to gender, feminist scholars argue that it was actually *gender-blind* - meaning it failed to recognise the significance of gender in international affairs. Feminist research, therefore, emphasises the importance of both women and gender in understanding IR, questioning its core concepts and assumptions in the process.

4.3.1.2 The basics of feminism

Feminism, at its core, is a political, social, and intellectual movement that seeks to understand and challenge the unequal

power relations between men and women in society. It critiques the structures, norms, and institutions that have historically marginalised and subordinated women, while also advocating for gender equality and social justice. Feminist theory emerged by critically questioning the universal claims of knowledge and politics that often overlooked or ignored women's experiences, contributions, and perspectives. It emphasises that gender is not simply a biological fact but a socially constructed identity that shapes people's roles, opportunities, and access to power in both private and public spheres.

Feminism recognises that *patriarchy*—a system of male dominance—pervades all areas of social, political, and economic life, influencing how societies organise power, knowledge, and authority. Feminist scholars argue that this system operates by normalising male perspectives as universal, objective, and neutral, while marginalising or silencing women's voices and experiences. Over time, feminism has developed into various strands, such as *liberal feminism*, *radical feminism*, *Marxist feminism*, *postcolonial feminism*, and *intersectional feminism*, each offering different critiques of gendered power structures and proposing diverse pathways toward empowerment and equality.

When feminist theory entered the field of International Relations (IR), it brought a fundamental critique of the discipline itself. Traditional IR theories, including realism, liberalism, and even critical approaches like Marxism, largely reflected male-dominated perspectives that prioritised issues of war, security, state power, and economic competition. Feminist scholars argued that these mainstream theories neglected the lived experiences of women and ignored how gendered power relations shaped international politics.

4.3.1.3 Feminist Contributions

Feminism's first major contribution to International Relations (IR) has been to make women more visible, particularly by shedding light on the widespread gendered violence they face. Feminist scholars have revealed that women around the world are routinely subjected to violence, and this has exposed an international system that often overlooks or accepts this violence as normal. For example, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's 'UNiTE' campaign estimated that up to 70% of women will experience violence during their lives, with around 600 million women living in countries where domestic violence is still not criminalised. Gendered violence is a global issue, not confined to any specific political or economic system.

Gendered Violence and Global Inequality

Researchers like Jacqui True (2012) have shown the connection between violence in private spaces, like domestic violence, and the public sphere, including workplace abuse and violence during conflict. Essentially, women everywhere lack equal economic, political, or social rights compared to men, and gendered violence is a persistent issue, whether it occurs at home or during wartime.

Reconceiving Peace and Insecurity

Viewing violence against women as part of a continuum challenges traditional IR perspectives that categorise peace and stability as distinct from violence, revealing that many so-called *peaceful* societies tolerate high levels of violence against women. This perspective offers a broader understanding of insecurity beyond state-centred security agendas typical of traditional IR. By examining violence against women in this comprehensive way, we can see it as a continuous spectrum rather than isolated incidents. This perspective challenges the traditional categories of peace and conflict used in International Relations. It shows that many societies considered peaceful or stable may actually have high levels of violence against a significant portion of their population—women.

This feminist approach offers a very different view of violence and security compared to the state-centric focus of traditional IR. It highlights how focusing solely on state security can overlook significant forms of violence and insecurity experienced by individuals, particularly women, within supposedly peaceful societies. Feminism has brought attention to the absence of women from decision-making and institutional structures. For instance, the World Bank reported in 2015 that women held only 22.9% of seats in national parliaments globally. Feminist scholars challenge traditional perspectives that focus on high politics, such as sovereignty, the state, and military security, which largely overlook the fact that men dominate state institutions and power structures.

Gender and Power in Global Security

Gendered Exclusion in Global Politics

This conventional focus on state-level interactions overlooks a crucial fact: men predominantly control state institutions and hold most positions of power and influence. It also neglects other areas that are affected by global politics. This exclusion is gendered because women often contribute to global politics in essential ways, even though they're more likely to be involved in areas not typically seen as high politics.

4.3.1.4 Feminist Critique of Traditional IR Theory

Feminism is both a theoretical framework and a political movement that challenges systems of patriarchy, gender inequality, and oppression. It aims to dismantle the structures that privilege men and subordinate women, emphasising that

Feminism: Theory and Political Movement

gender is a socially constructed category deeply embedded in political, economic, and cultural systems. Feminist thought asserts that gender relations intersect with race, class, ethnicity, and nationality, creating layered forms of domination and exclusion. Scholars like Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and bell hooks (1984) have argued that gender inequalities are rooted in power relations that cut across both private and public spheres, influencing everything from domestic life to global politics. Feminism insists on recognising women's agency and experiences, advocating for justice, equality, and transformation of existing power hierarchies.

Feminist Critique of Traditional IR Theories

Within International Relations (IR), feminist scholars critically challenge the discipline's traditional theories and assumptions. They argue that IR, historically shaped by male-dominated perspectives, has systematically excluded women and marginalised voices. Cynthia Enloe (1990) famously asked, *Where are the women?*—a question that exposes how mainstream theories like realism and liberalism neglect women's roles and the gendered dimensions of international politics. Realism, with its focus on anarchy, state survival, and power competition, treats states as abstract, masculine entities, ignoring how these logics reproduce patriarchal structures. Similarly, liberalism, despite its emphasis on cooperation and institutions, largely overlooks the structural inequalities that silence women in diplomacy, international law, and global markets. J. Ann Tickner (1992) has argued that these dominant theories reflect masculine biases that privilege militarism, rationality, and control while ignoring ethics of care, community, and vulnerability.

Alternative Feminist Frameworks in IR

In response to these limitations, feminist scholars have developed alternative frameworks that redefine the field of IR. Feminist IR theory challenges the state-centric, power-focused paradigms and instead broadens the lens to include gendered experiences, everyday violence, and human insecurity. Scholars like Tickner (1992), Enloe (2000), and Christine Sylvester (1994) have played leading roles in advancing feminist perspectives within IR, urging the discipline to recognise the global political significance of personal lives, bodies, and social hierarchies.

Feminist IR theory is diverse, encompassing several strands. Liberal feminism, represented by scholars like Charlotte Bunch (1990), focuses on increasing women's participation in global governance, diplomacy, and peace-building, seeking institutional reforms for inclusion. Radical feminism, drawing from thinkers like Catharine MacKinnon (1989), critiques the systemic violence and patriarchal power structures embedded in both domestic and international spheres. Postcolonial feminism, championed by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), critiques

Western feminist frameworks for ignoring the experiences of women in the Global South and highlights how colonial legacies and global capitalism perpetuate gendered inequalities. Post-structural feminism, as developed by scholars such as Judith Butler (1990) and Christine Sylvester (1994), questions how language, discourse, and knowledge production in IR reinforce gendered hierarchies, urging a deconstruction of key IR concepts like sovereignty, power, and security. Expecting that men should exhibit masculine traits and women should embody feminine ones, it is pertinent to note that men can adopt feminine qualities and women can display masculine traits as these traits are not exclusively linked to biological sex.

4.3.1.5 Feminist IR Theory

Cynthia Enloe has made a transformative contribution to International Relations (IR) by questioning the discipline's traditional boundaries and assumptions. Her critical question— "*Where are the women?*"— in her famous work *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: making feminist sense of international politics* challenged the field to recognise how global politics is shaped not only by official state actors and military strategies but also by the everyday experiences and roles of women. Enloe argued that IR had long ignored how the personal and domestic spheres are intimately connected to international affairs. She emphasised that the *personal is political* and, crucially, that the *personal is international*. In doing so, she brought attention to how global politics relies on and reproduces gendered assumptions that assign women to the private, apolitical realm while positioning men as active agents of security, diplomacy, and war.

Enloe's work exposes how militarism, nationalism, and diplomacy are structured by gendered narratives. She highlighted how the portrayal of men as protectors and women as needing protection reinforces patriarchal power relations both in times of peace and conflict. This framing marginalises women's diverse roles in war zones, peace-building, and economic systems, and conceals forms of violence, such as sexual violence in conflict, that have historically been treated as side effects of war rather than as central to its dynamics. Enloe's scholarship encouraged IR to critically engage with topics such as the exploitation of women in military bases, the globalised labour of domestic workers, and the use of gendered propaganda in nation-building—all issues that had been overlooked by mainstream IR theories.

Building on Enloe's foundational work, J. Ann Tickner expanded the feminist critique of IR by directly challenging the

masculinist underpinnings of traditional theories like realism and liberalism. In her seminal work *Gender in International Relations* (1992), Tickner argued that realism constructs the international system as anarchic and competitive, privileging concepts like power and security defined through military capabilities. She asserted that these concepts are gendered, reflecting masculine values of domination, control, and independence, while ignoring alternative understandings of power rooted in cooperation, care, and interdependence. Tickner also critiqued liberalism's focus on formal rights and institutions, showing how it overlooks structural inequalities and the ways global systems exclude women and other marginalised groups from meaningful participation.

Feminist scholars have since diversified the field of IR by offering multiple strands of analysis that challenge and enrich its core concepts. Liberal feminists, such as Charlotte Bunch, advocate for the inclusion of women in global governance structures, emphasising equal rights, representation, and legal protections. Radical feminists, like Catharine MacKinnon, critique the pervasive structural violence against women and argue that the international system perpetuates patriarchal domination, both overtly and through its legal frameworks. Postcolonial feminists, led by thinkers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, interrogate how western feminist narratives can silence women in the Global South, advocating for an intersectional approach that considers how gender, race, class, and colonial legacies intersect in shaping global hierarchies.

Post-structural feminists, such as Judith Butler and Christine Sylvester, emphasise how language, discourse, and knowledge production construct gendered identities and political realities, urging scholars to deconstruct IR's core concepts like sovereignty, security, and diplomacy. Through these diverse approaches, feminist IR theory has redefined key concepts in the field. Feminists have challenged narrow definitions of security that focus solely on state survival and military strength, proposing instead human security frameworks that address economic insecurity, gender-based violence, and environmental threats. They have reimagined power not just as coercion or domination, but as relational, embedded in everyday practices and social interactions. Feminists have also questioned the state-centric focus of IR, bringing attention to non-state actors, grassroots movements, and the transnational networks of care and labour that sustain the global economy.

The contributions of Cynthia Enloe, J. Ann Tickner, and other feminist scholars have transformed International Relations by exposing its gendered foundations and expanding its scope to

□ Tickner's Feminist Critique of Realism and Liberalism

□ Diverse Feminist Approaches in IR

□ Redefining Key Concepts in Feminist IR

include the lived experiences, voices, and agency of women and marginalised groups. Feminist IR theory offers not only a critique of the discipline's exclusions but also alternative frameworks that deepen our understanding of global politics, power relations, and security. It invites IR scholars to question taken-for-granted assumptions, to adopt intersectional perspectives, and to rethink the very categories through which we understand the world.

4.3.1.4 Conclusion

Feminist research in International Relations (IR) has made significant contributions by highlighting the importance of women's experiences and roles in global politics. This approach has revealed how IR theories and practices are often based on and reinforce gendered assumptions about who does what and who experiences what in the international arena.

Moreover, feminist research emphasises that women are not just passive subjects in global affairs but active agents in political, economic, and social processes. This perspective challenges traditional views that often overlook or minimise women's contributions to international relations.

It's important to note that feminism in IR goes beyond simply focusing on women or what are typically considered 'women's issues.' Instead, it provides a lens to examine and expose power dynamics based on gender throughout global politics. By analysing women's subordination to men, gender inequalities, and the construction of gendered identities, feminist theory challenges simplistic or uniform concepts of '*women*' in IR. Feminist approaches have also revealed how gendered logic serves as a powerful organising framework in international relations. This insight helps us understand how gender shapes not only individual experiences but also broader structures and processes in global politics.

4.3.2 Green Theory in International Relations: Introduction

The global environmental crisis gained public attention in the 1960s, centred on the concept of the '*tragedy of the commons*'. This idea suggests that people, acting in their own self-interest, tend to overuse shared resources like land, water, and fish stocks. The 1970s saw the first United Nations conference addressing these environmental concerns, and by the 1980s, green political parties and environmental policies began to emerge. As these developments unfolded, there was a growing need for a green theory to help explain and understand the political aspects of environmental issues. The 1990s marked a significant shift in International Relations (IR) as the discipline started to recognise

the natural environment as an increasingly important area of study. This recognition was driven by mounting evidence of human-induced global climate change, which presented not only ecological challenges but also security problems. IR scholars realised that environmental issues required both theoretical analysis and practical solutions. This shift reflected a broader understanding that environmental problems were not just scientific or ecological in nature, but had significant political, economic, and social dimensions that needed to be addressed within the framework of international relations.

4.3.2.1 Basics of Green Theory

The emergence of environmental issues within International Relations (IR) has sparked significant debates among scholars regarding their theoretical and practical implications. While some perceive environmental concerns as new policy areas to be addressed within existing IR frameworks, such as realism or liberalism, others argue that these issues demand a more fundamental transformation in the discipline's core assumptions. Green Theory in IR has been central to advancing this debate, with scholars like Robyn Eckersley, Simon Dalby, John Vogler, and Hayley Stevenson playing pivotal roles in challenging the traditional state-centric and anthropocentric foundations of IR.

☐ Debates on Environmental Issues in IR

Robyn Eckersley, in particular, has made a profound contribution by arguing that environmental challenges are not merely additional topics but are fundamentally political issues that question the legitimacy of current state practices. In her influential work *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (1992), she introduced the concept of "critical political ecology," which calls for a radical restructuring of global governance towards ecologically responsible practices. She further developed the idea of the "*eco-centric state*," advocating for a redefinition of sovereignty and political authority to include environmental stewardship as a core principle. For Eckersley, the environmental crisis exposes the inadequacy of existing IR theories that prioritise economic growth, national interest, and state sovereignty without considering the ecological limits of the planet.

☐ Robyn Eckersley's Contribution to Green Theory

Similarly, Simon Dalby's contributions to Green IR theory emphasise the need to rethink security and geopolitics in light of environmental degradation and climate change. Dalby argues that traditional notions of security—centred on military threats and state survival—fail to capture the pressing global risks posed by ecological crises. In his works like '*Environmental Security*' and '*Security and Environmental Change*' he calls for a shift from militarised, state-centred security approaches to broader

☐ Simon Dalby's Critique of Security and Geopolitics

notions such as environmental security, human security, and planetary politics. Dalby's critical geopolitics perspective urges scholars to interrogate the dominant narratives of development and modernity, which often drive environmental destruction, and instead envision alternative approaches that prioritise sustainability and justice.

John Vogler, another prominent figure in Green Theory, focuses on how environmental issues challenge the core IR concept of anarchy and the emphasis on national self-interest. He highlights the unique nature of environmental problems, such as climate change and the governance of global commons, which require cooperative approaches that transcend traditional diplomatic practices. Vogler argues that these challenges push IR towards new forms of diplomacy, legal frameworks, and ethical considerations centred on global responsibility and ecological justice, going beyond the realist fixation on power politics.

Hayley Stevenson also contributes to this discourse by critically examining the gap between global environmental discourse and actual practices in international governance. She points out that environmental concerns disrupt traditional IR concepts like sovereignty and security by exposing the inadequacies of state-centric approaches in addressing global environmental threats. Stevenson's work calls attention to the need for inclusive, participatory, and transnational governance models that reflect the complexity of environmental issues and their intersection with social justice and equity.

Collectively, these scholars advance a critical perspective within Green IR theory that challenges the mainstream integration of environmental issues into existing IR theories without questioning their underlying assumptions. They argue that environmental crises expose the limitations of state-centric, anthropocentric, and growth-oriented paradigms, calling instead for a reimagining of power, security, and governance through ecocentric and justice-oriented lenses. This perspective underscores that environmental issues are not peripheral to international relations but are deeply entwined with its core theoretical debates and practices. Consequently, Green Theory in IR promotes an expanded and more inclusive understanding of global politics, one that recognises the interconnectedness of human and non-human actors and the necessity of transforming IR's foundational principles to address ecological crises effectively.

4.3.2.2 Green theory and climate change

Climate change serves as a powerful case study for understanding the influence of green theory on international

Sidebar markers:

❏ John Vogler's Challenge to Anarchy and National Interest

❏ Hayley Stevenson's Critique of State-Centric Environmental Governance

❏ Reimagining Green IR: Challenging Core Assumptions

relations, global governance, and shifting norms in environmental politics. As the most urgent environmental challenge confronting the world today, climate change is largely the result of humanity's heavy dependence on fossil fuels and the continuous exploitation of natural resources for economic gain. While traditional approaches in International Relations (IR) often explain the difficulty of state cooperation on climate issues through theories of anarchy, economic competition, and the pursuit of national interest, they offer limited pathways for reimagining solutions beyond these constraints. Green theory, in contrast, reframes climate change not simply as an issue of state cooperation but as a symptom of deeper structural problems rooted in anthropocentric worldviews, short-term economic priorities, and exploitative patterns of development.

Green theorists argue that addressing climate change demands more than policy adjustments or technological fixes; it requires a transformation in values, ethics, and global political practices. From this perspective, the crisis is seen as a manifestation of an unsustainable global system that prioritises immediate human benefits over ecological balance, intergenerational justice, and the intrinsic value of nature. This framing shifts the focus from treating the environment as a resource for human use to recognising ecosystems as integral to sustaining life itself, both human and non-human. Green theory challenges the dominant state-centric and market-driven paradigms by promoting alternative visions of global governance that prioritise ecological sustainability, community-based decision-making, and justice for vulnerable populations and future generations.

International political responses to climate change, such as the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, reflect the pressures and contradictions green theory highlights. Although the UNFCCC and its subsequent agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, demonstrate the willingness of states to engage in global environmental governance, green theorists critique these mechanisms for operating within the existing neoliberal framework. They argue that such agreements often prioritise economic development and market-based solutions, such as emissions trading schemes, over systemic changes to global production and consumption patterns. As a result, these institutional responses tend to reflect compromises that preserve the status quo rather than challenge the underlying drivers of environmental degradation.

The Paris Agreement of 2015, while hailed as a landmark accord for its inclusive approach and recognition of nationally

determined contributions, also illustrates the influence of green theory's critique. The agreement acknowledges the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and emphasises the role of non-state actors, local communities, and indigenous peoples in climate action. These aspects signal a normative shift towards more inclusive, participatory, and justice-oriented frameworks in environmental governance, reflecting green theory's call for pluralism and equity. However, green theorists caution that without a deeper transformation of values and power structures, such agreements may remain limited in their capacity to address the root causes of climate change.

In short, the case of climate change demonstrates how green theory offers critical insights that extend beyond traditional IR explanations. It highlights the limitations of state-centric, technocratic, and market-based approaches while advocating for more radical shifts in how global politics conceptualises security, development, and cooperation. Green theory's emphasis on ecological sustainability, ethical responsibility, and the interconnectedness of human and non-human life challenges prevailing assumptions in international relations and calls for transformative practices in global environmental governance. This perspective continues to influence both academic debates and practical policy discussions, urging actors to rethink the foundations of global order in an era of ecological crisis.

Green theory provides a fresh perspective for analysing environmental challenges. It broadens our perspective to consider common human interests within ecological boundaries, rather than focusing solely on political and economic advantages within state borders. This approach offers a more holistic and potentially more effective framework for addressing the complex, global nature of climate change.

4.3.2.3 Conclusion

Both green theory and feminist theory present significant critiques of traditional International Relations (IR) frameworks by challenging their state-centric, anthropocentric, and patriarchal assumptions. These critical theories emphasise the need to centre marginalised voices, question dominant power structures, and advocate for justice, equality, and sustainability in global politics. Green theory exposes how prevailing models of development, security, and governance ignore the ecological limits of the planet and perpetuate environmental injustices, particularly for vulnerable communities. Similarly, feminist theory critiques the gendered nature of global politics, revealing how the marginalisation of women and other oppressed groups is intertwined with broader systems of domination and exploitation.

The convergence of these perspectives becomes most evident in the framework of ecofeminism, which bridges feminist and ecological critiques to offer a transformative lens for rethinking global politics. *Ecofeminism* highlights the deep connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, arguing that both stem from hierarchical, dualistic worldviews that privilege masculinity, reason, and control over femininity, emotion, and care. By exposing these interconnected systems of domination, ecofeminism calls for alternative models of politics that value care, interdependence, and ecological justice. It advocates for the inclusion of marginalised knowledges, local experiences, and community-led practices in global governance, thus offering a holistic and inclusive approach to addressing pressing global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and ecological degradation. Together, feminism, green theory, and ecofeminism offer powerful tools to challenge the limitations of mainstream IR and to promote a more just, equitable, and sustainable world order.

❒ Ecofeminism: Bridging Feminist and Ecological Critiques

Summarised Overview

This unit explores the critical intersections of Feminist Theory and Green Theory within the field of International Relations (IR). Traditional IR frameworks often overlook the complex relationships between gender dynamics and ecological challenges, resulting in inadequate responses to pressing global issues such as climate change and social inequality.

Feminist Theory interrogates the patriarchal structures that dominate political discourse, emphasising the importance of including diverse voices and experiences in policy-making. In contrast, Green Theory advocates for an ecological approach that prioritises the health of the planet and recognises the intrinsic value of non-human entities.

Together, these theories provide a robust critique of conventional IR, offering alternative perspectives that emphasise sustainability, social justice, and inclusivity. By integrating insights from both Feminist and Green theories, this unit aims to foster a deeper understanding of the expansion of the theoretical foundations of the discipline of International Relations by way of including recent dimensions and innovative initiatives in the theory-building process of the discipline.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What are the main principles of Feminist Theory in International Relations?

2. How does Green Theory critique traditional economic practices?

3. In what ways do Feminist and Green theories intersect and complement each other?

4. Discuss the implications of patriarchal structures on global environmental policies.

5. How can an ecocentric perspective influence feminist activism?

6. Evaluate the effectiveness of international agreements in addressing gender and environmental issues.

7. What role do non-state actors play in promoting feminist and green agendas?

8. How can local communities contribute to global environmental governance?

9. What challenges do feminist and green theories face in gaining acceptance within mainstream IR?

10. Analyse the potential for policy integration between feminist and environmental approaches in addressing climate change.

Assignments

1. Critically assess the contributions of feminist theory and green theory to our understanding of global political dynamics.

2. Explore a specific case study that illustrates the intersection of gender and environmental issues in international policy.

3. Discuss the role of global governance institutions in promoting feminist and green perspectives in policy-making.

4. Evaluate the impact of climate change on gender inequality in developing countries.

5. Propose a framework for integrating feminist and ecological perspectives in international development policies.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS

QP CODE: ………   Reg. No: …………...
                                                  Name: ……………

SECOND SEMESTER MA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE
M23PS08DC – THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SET-1

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

*Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Who coined the term "Balance of Power" in modern IR theory?
2. What is the key assumption of classical realism?
3. Define "Collective Security" in one sentence.
4. Who is associated with the concept of "Perpetual Peace"?
5. What is the primary concern of the English School?
6. Name one major international disarmament treaty.
7. What is the central theme of Post-Colonial theory in IR?
8. What do we mean by "Neo-Realism"?
9. Define "Hegemony" in world systems theory.
10. Name one prominent feminist IR theorist.
11. In which century did International Relations emerge as a formal academic discipline?
12. What does "Anarchy" mean in IR theory?
13. What is the main focus of Green Theory in IR?
14. What is "Arms Race" in the context of international security?
15. Name one structural factor in the international system according to neo-realists.

SECTION B

*Answer any **five** questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries **two** marks.*

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. Distinguish between armament and disarmament.
17. Briefly explain the evolution of the English School.

18. How does Dependency Theory view international economic relations?

19. What is the difference between classical and neo-liberalism in IR?

20. State the relevance of collective security in today's global order.

21. What is the main critique feminists make against traditional IR theories?

22. Define the concept of "Core and Periphery" in World System Theory.

23. Describe the significance of the Cold War in the development of IR theory.

24. Why is nature and scope of IR considered interdisciplinary?

25. How do postcolonial theorists understand power in global politics?

SECTION C

Answer any *five* questions in one paragraph. Each question carries *four* marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Discuss the role of Morgenthau in shaping Realist thought.

27. Explain the significance of the Treaty of Westphalia in the evolution of the IR discipline.

28. Examine the core ideas of Neo-Realism with suitable examples.

29. Describe the liberal perspective on international cooperation.

30. Outline the contributions of the English School to normative theory in IR

31. Analyze the importance of disarmament in promoting global peace.

32. Summarize the dependency theory's critique of capitalism.

33. Explain how Green Theory links environmental degradation to global inequality.

SECTION D

*Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.*

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Trace the historical evolution of International Relations as an academic discipline.

35. Critically evaluate the concept of balance of power with historical examples.

36. Compare and contrast Realism and Liberalism as classical theories of IR.

37. Examine the theoretical foundations and implications of World System Theory.

38. Discuss the emergence and key contributions of Feminist and Green Theories in IR.

39. Explain the nature and scope of International Relations in the 21st century.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ………

Reg. No: ………....
Name: ……………

SECOND SEMESTER MA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE
M23PS08DC – THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SET-2

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

*Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Who is considered the father of modern realism?
2. What is meant by "Security Dilemma"?
3. Define "Sovereignty" in international relations.
4. What is the chief aim of liberal internationalism?
5. Name the book in which Wallerstein introduced the World System Theory.
6. What is the "Anarchical Society" in English School theory?
7. Define "Decolonization" in a postcolonial context.
8. Mention one major goal of Green Theory.
9. When did International Relations become a separate academic discipline?
10. What does "Disarmament" aim to achieve?
11. What is the primary focus of the English School?
12. Who introduced the term "Neoliberal Institutionalism"?
13. What does "Balance of Terror" refer to?
14. Define "Structural Violence" from a feminist IR perspective.
15. What is a "Security Regime"?

SECTION B

*Answer any **five** questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries **two** marks.*

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. Explain the significance of the League of Nations in IR theory.
17. How does Realism interpret human nature?

18. What are the features of a bipolar international system?

19. Define collective security and cite one example.

20. How does neo-liberalism explain the role of institutions?

21. Mention two major criticisms of World System Theory.

22. What is the scope of International Relations as a field of study?

23. Briefly state the role of gender in international conflicts.

24. What distinguishes Green Theory from Postcolonialism?

25. How does dependency theory differ from modernization theory?

SECTION C

Answer any *five* questions in one paragraph. Each question carries *four* marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Evaluate the idea of "Security through Cooperation" in liberal theory.

27. Describe the arms control measures adopted post-WWII.

28. Explain the concept of polarity in international politics.

29. Summarize the main assumptions of the English School.

30. Highlight the impact of colonial history on postcolonial IR theory.

31. Discuss the rise of Non-Aligned Movement from a structural perspective.

32. Analyze the criticisms of realism from a feminist viewpoint.

33. Outline the environmental concerns addressed by Green Theory.

SECTION D

*Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.*

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Critically examine the structural aspects of International Relations with reference to balance of power and collective security.

35. Discuss the relevance of classical theories in understanding contemporary international politics.

36. Compare and contrast World System Theory and Dependency Theory in terms of their approach to global inequality.

37. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of the English School in IR theory.

38. Analyze the core arguments of Postcolonial Theory and its relevance in the post-ColdWar period.

39. Assess the role of feminist and environmental perspectives in reshaping the disciplin of IR.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

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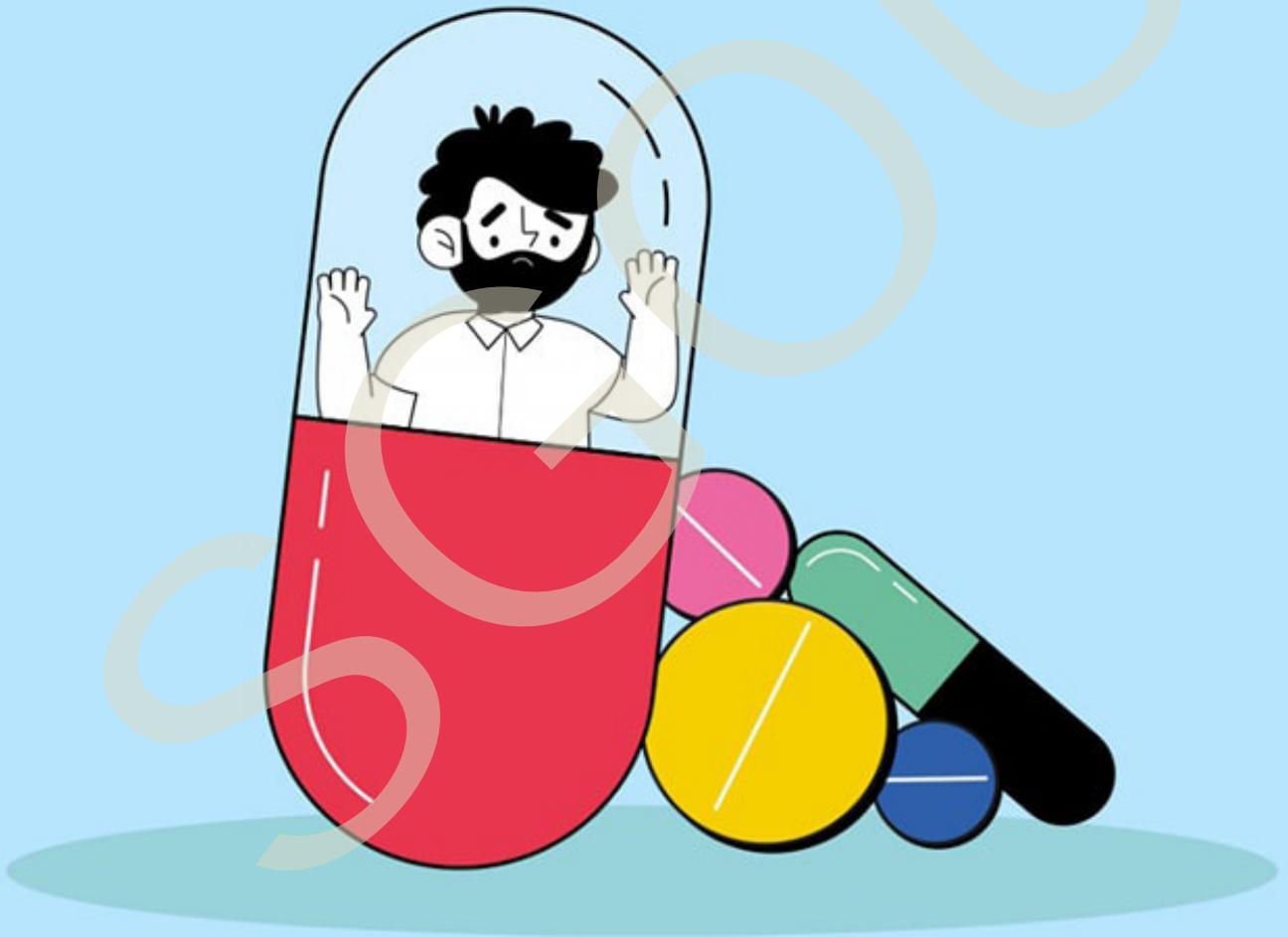email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

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Theories of International Relations

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