

**SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE III**

**COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER III**

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**MODULE: MODULE I, ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL RELATION AS A DISCIPLINE; NATURE AND SCOPE; APPROACHES TO STUDY**

### **System Theory**

There are several theories which may be lumped together under scientific/behavioural approach. Some like Systems Theory are more comprehensive than others like Bargaining and Game Theories.

A system is defined as a set of elements interacting with each other. Another important feature of the system is that it has a boundary which separates it from the environment, the latter however, influences the system in its operations. Generally speaking, a system may be either natural (e.g. solar system), or mechanical (a car, a clock or a computer), or social (e.g. family). The social system itself may be related either to "society, or economy, or politics, or international systems."

The general concept of an international system, and of international systems, formed the basis of work for many major scholars, **Karl W. Deutsch** and **Raymond Aron** being among the most prominent. As Aron observed, there has never been an international system including the whole of the planet. But in the post-war period, "for the first time, humanity is living (in) one and the same history, and there has emerged some kind of global system". It is greatly heterogeneous but not to an extent that scholars may fail to hold them together in a discipline. As a matter of fact, **Stanley Hoffman's** working definition of the discipline was sufficient. "An international system", according to Hoffman "is a pattern of relations between the basic units of world politics which is characterised by the scope of the objectives pursued by these units and of the tasks performed among them, as well as by the means used in order to achieve those goals and perform those tasks".

Among others, **Prof. Morton Kaplan** is considered the most influential in the systems theory of IR. He presented a number of real and hypothetical models of global political organisation. His six well known models were (i) balance of power system, (ii) loose bipolar system, (iii) tight bipolar system, (iv) universal actor system, (v) hierarchical system, and (vi) Unit Veto system. The first two are historical realities; the remaining four are hypothetical models. Although Kaplan did not say that his six systems were likely to emerge in that order, yet it was expected that the Super Power being very powerful, non-aligned countries were likely to lose their status and become part of one or the other power blocs,

leading to a tight bipolar world. With the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, the erstwhile bipolarity phenomenon ended. While the United States emerged more powerful than other countries, many countries like Germany and Japan emerged as major economic powers. Thus, depending upon how one analyses the emerging global order, it may be characterized as a unipolar or a multipolar world. The present situation does not however fall strictly within any one of the **six-models of Morton Kaplan** which are described briefly below :

**1. The Balance of Power System** : This system prevailed in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this system some powerful states seek to maintain equilibrium of power individually or in alliance. Usually there is a 'balancer' - a state which assists anyone who is likely to become weaker than others so that balance is not disturbed.

**2. The Loose Bipolar System** : This was the situation during the days of cold war politics. Despite bipolar division of the global power scene, some countries refused to align with either block. They hang loose in an otherwise stratified global order. Examples : Non-aligned countries (NAM).

**3 . The Tight Bipolar System** : Think of a situation where the international actors like NAM countries are forced to align with either block, the result is-one of the tight bipolar system.

**4. The Universal Actor System** : In this system, an international organisation or actor commanding universal allegiance becomes the centre of power. Whether big or small, all states will accept the superiority of a universal actor like the United Nations. Thus, without giving up their sovereignty, nation-states will strengthen the United Nations and generally abide by its decisions. This may eventually pave the way for a world government.

**5. The Hierarchical International System** : In this system one country will become so powerful that all other states will be virtually dictated to by that one Supreme Power. This situation may be described as a 'Unipolar World Model'. The U.N. may still exist, but there will be no true non-aligned country and even the U.N. will not have enough power.

**6. The Unit Veto System** : Morton Kaplan's Unit Veto System in international context resembles the 'state of nature' as defined by Thomas Hobbes. Each state will be the enemy of every other state, because almost all the countries will possess nuclear weapons. Thus, all the international actors will be capable of using nuclear weapons against their enemies.