

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE III

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Topic:

- Meaning and Definitions of International Relations

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International Relations is an important branch of Social Science. The Scope of International relations is the complex relations existing among the sovereign states of the world. It is mainly concerned, among other things, with the study in depth of all events and situations affecting more than one state.

The great Greek Philosopher **Aristotle**, said that man by nature is a social animal. Being a social animal, man can't live in isolation. His basic nature and his basic needs make him to satisfy his numerous needs in association with others. Moreover no man is self sufficient even in his daily needs and therefore, he has to depend upon his fellow man for existences. Just as no individual can live in isolation, no state can afford to live in isolation. Like the individual no state is self sufficient. Naturally, it has to cultivate relations between states. These relations are the subject matter of International Politics.

International relations can be defined as political activities and other kinds and aspects of interactions among two or more states. The academic field of international relations is a branch of political science that is concerned with the study of relations between states, the foreign policy of nation-states, and the mechanisms and institutions (such as international organisations, inter-governmental organisations, international and national non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations) through which states interact. The study of international relations involves many subjects such as international and regional peace and security, international organisations, nuclear proliferation, globalisation, human rights, economic development, intervention, international financial relations, and international trade relations.

Definitions:

Since its inception, international relations has been defined in many ways. Writers differ greatly upon the definition of the subject. It appears quite natural, as **Stanley Hoffman** says, "How could one agree once and for all upon the definition of a field whose scope is in constant flux, indeed, a field whose fluctuation is one of its principal characteristics". As such, international relations cannot be defined in any generally

acceptable way. **Prof. Charles Schleicher** defines international relations as the relation among States. **Quincy Wright** defines international relations as "relations between groups of major importance in the life of the world at any period of history."

According to **Prof. Hans Morgenthau**, international relations is a struggle for power among nations. **Norman Podelford** and **George Lincoln** define international relations as the interaction of State politics with the changing pattern of power relationships. **Padelford** and **Lincoln** define it as the "Interactions of state policies within the changing patterns of power relationships".

However, a good working definition of international relations is given by **Harold** and **Margaret Sprout**. They define international relations as "those aspects of interactions and relations of independent political communities in which some element of opposition, resistance or conflict of purpose or interest is present."

According to **Hartman** "International Relations as a field of study is focused upon the process by which states adjust their national interest to those of other states".

Palmer and **Perkins** opine that International politics is essentially concerned with state system. **Sprout** and **Sprout** also defined international politics as those aspects of the interactions and relations of independent political communities in which some element of opposition, resistance and conflict

Traditional View: International Politics

It is a state dominated view in as much as definitions under this category lay emphasis on the study of politics and relations among the nation states. It considers nation states as chief actors of international politics and focuses on their political and official relations. In other words, these were the definitions of international politics and not international relations. From the initial years of the beginning of the discipline up to fifties, it was mainly known and studied as international politics. Most prevalent definitions in this category are:

Schleicher includes all inter-state relations in international politics, although he concedes that all the inter-state relations are not political. **Padelford and Lincoln** define international politics as the interaction of state policies within the changing patterns of power relationship in their later work, they defined it as the interaction of individual nation states in their pursuit of their perceived national interests and goals **Morgenthau's** definition deals mainly with political relations and the problem of power and peace. According to him, international politics is a struggle for, and use of power among nations.

Burton regards it as a system of peaceful communication whereby states consciously and in their own interest would like to avoid conflict because the costs of conflict are too high. To **Frankel** international politics embraces the foreign policies of all the states in their mutual interaction as well as in their interaction with the international system as a whole, with international organizations, and with social groups other than states, the Operation of the

international system and also the domestic politics of all the states. It is a comprehensive definition as it includes not only the interaction among states but also their interactions with international system, organisations, social groups and so on. He further clarifies that the foreign policies of different states are difficult to deal with comparatively because they cannot be studied singly and then compared, as domestic politics can, one can study them in interaction with the foreign policies of other states as well as with other elements of the international system.

Harold and Margaret Sprout define international politics as, those aspects of interactions and relations of independent political communities in which some element of opposition, resistance or conflict of purpose or interest is present. According to **Thompson**, “International Politics is the study of rivalry among nations and the conditions and institutions which ameliorate or exacerbate these relationship”. Defect of these two definitions is that they include only the conflictual and oppositional interactions between the states and not the cooperative and friendly one.

“International Politics” according to **Quincy Wright** is the art of influencing, manipulating or controlling major groups, so as to advance the purposes of some against the opposition of others. It is the process by which power is acquired, maintained and expanded, He further explains, As a discipline, it includes expositions instructing in the practice of this art, predicting the consequences of its application, evaluating it, and narrating its history.

In this way the essence and explanation of international , politics vary from author to author.

Current View : International Relations

Latest trend is to make extensive use of the term international relations in preference to international politics as it encompasses all the relevant actors, contents and relationships. No doubt, some of the definitions under the above category also cover areas other than mere politics among nations. But the following definitions are more comprehensive as they include state, international system, international organisations, other transnational and supra national agencies, non state entities, groups and relevant individuals as actors and basic unit of analysis. At the same time they also cover larger areas of relationship both conflictual and cooperative, friendly and unfriendly, power relationship and peace relationship, governmental and people-to-people relationship etc. The contents and forms of relations among the different actors are varied such as political, economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific and technological , etc. All these are part of international relations. Scholars of international relations have also used comparatively sophisticated and scientific tools of investigation. The use of the term international relations is considered appropriate as it covers all those essentials included in international politics and over and above many other current trends and terms that make it more broad and relevant.

In the words of **Quincy Wright**, “It is not only the nations which international relations seek to relate. Varied types of groups nations, states, governments, peoples, regions, alliances confederations international organisations, even industrial organisations, cultural organisations, religious organisations must be dealt within the study of international relations, if the treatment is to be realistic.” To **Quincy wright** even the use of the term international relations is too narrow. He coined another term relations between powerful nations and yet preferred to use the prevailing term international relations. He is also of the opinion that for a proper understanding of international relations one has to include such partial studies as international politics, international law, international organisation, international economics, international ethics, the psychology and sociology of international relations, world history, political geography, political demography and technology.

In sum, he defines international relations to designate the relations between groups of major importance in the life of the world at any period of history, and particularly relations among territoriality organised nation states which today are of such importance to designate the studies or disciplines describing, explaining, evaluating, or assisting in the conduct of those relations.

The above definition considerably broadens the scope of international relations to such an extent that it becomes unmanageable and unwieldy. **Hoffmann** and **Adi H.Doctor** endeavour to remove these drawbacks of the definition. Hoffmann presents a purely operational definition, “The discipline of international relations is concerned with the factors and the activities which affect the external policies and the power of the basic units into which the world is divided.” **Adi H. Doctor** is also has the same Opinion. In his own words, its study will be primarily of nation-states, because of all the interacting entities in International Politics, the sovereign State is, by all standards, the most important, but shall also include within the field of its study other important groups (race, private or cultural bodies, regional organisations like NATO) to the extent that they influence interaction among the major groups, i.e. the sovereign States. The study of inter-state relations primarily include power or opposition relations and to some extent certain cooperative relations.

Palmer and **Perkins** say, “It encompasses much more than the relations among nation states and international organisations and groups. It includes a great variety of transitional relationships, at various levels, above and below the level of the nation state, still the main actor in the international community.” They believe that its study must include new and old elements. The emphasis is still on nation-state system and inter-state relations yet the actions and interactions of various organisations and groups and of many underground forces and variables are to be considered.

The above definitions tries to define International relations mainly as the study of nation-states their political and non-political relations, their foreign affairs and policies, their

interaction with each other and with various other political and non-political groups-alliances, regional and international organisations, sub-national, trans-national and supra-national agencies. It also includes, to some extent, the study of international history, international law, international society and other psychological, cultural and strategical factors that influence the interactions and relations among states and groups.

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