MEANING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Till date, unfortunately, no universally accepted definition of international relations have been coined because of its continuous changing nature.

However, Goldstein and Pavehouse in his book “International Relations” write, “The field of international relations concerns the relationships among the world’s government. But these relationships cannot be understood in isolation. They are closely connected with other actors (such as intergovernmental org., multinational corp., and individuals); with other social structures (including economics, culture, and domestic politics); and with geographical and historical influences. These elements together power the central trends in IR today-globalization.”

The word “international relations” for the first time used in 1880. In UNESCO Nomenclature (1998) (It is a system developed by UNESCO for classification of research papers and doctoral dissertations), No. 5901 represent international relations within political science. In practice, international relations is studied either as a subfield of political science or as an independent discipline. The discipline of international relations deals with the war, military alliance, diplomacy, trade, cooperation & peace.

Military alliance, for example, LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) signed between India & US recently in April, 2016 with resolution ‘to exchange each other’s military base’. According to Defence and External Ministry officials, Indian and U.S. military troops would access each other’s facilities more for “technical than political reasons.” In particular, a senior official said the need for the LSA was felt during humanitarian rescue efforts such as Operation Raahat that evacuated Indian citizens from Yemen last year.


Cooperation, for this Paris Climate Summit COP 21 is a masterpiece example, wherein 148 countries come forward to keep average global temperatures no more than 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures (Accurate assessment of temperatures in 1750s – when industrial revolution began – is difficult. To overcome problem, climatologists use average temperatures recorded between 1850 and 1900 i.e., 13.7 degree C.

Source - UK Met. Office Hadley Centre, Climate Action Tracker, WMO - © GRAPHIC NEWS

People always confuse themselves among the terms ‘International Relations’, ‘International Politics’ and ‘Global Politics’. Sometimes, these term used interchangeably. According to Hans Morgenthau - "the core of international relations is international politics". However, he says, International Relations is much wider in scope than International Politics. Politics among nations is ‘struggle for power’ whereas international relations includes political, economic and cultural relations among nations. Similarly, Palmer and Perkins express that international politics is essentially concerned with the relations of state system, while international relations includes all types of relationships between sovereign states. Therefore, international relations is wider, and international politics is narrower in scope.
International relations and international politics also differ in their aim. The ultimate aim of International Relations is the establishment of ‘International peace’ through cooperation & agreement among different nations promoting mutual interests. In comparison to it, International politics is ‘struggle for power’ through conflicts, wars, political maneuvers among different nations.

In context to the term, ‘Global politics’, many argue that global politics nothing except the “branding” of the study of International Relations. Is it true, is matter of debate.

**NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Due to increasing human-activities, the relations among various states has been changing and due to these continuous changes in international relations, the meaning, nature and scope of international relations has been changing.

There are many factors which affects nature of international relations such as evolution of new nations, technological development, nuclear research, rise of multipolar world, emergence of new order, non-state organizations, global problems, so and so forth.

Due to changing nature of international relation, it is very difficult to explain the nature of international relations. However, these are the following important points explaining the nature of international relations;

a) International relations has no single definition. Unfortunately, till date, no universally accepted definition of international relations have been coined because of its continuous changing nature.

b) International relations operates in an anarchical system. There is no single organization to regulate relations among states.

c) International relations is inter-disciplinary subject. In 1998, UNESCO mentioned international relations as a sub-field of political science and economic relations, social relations and cultural relations, etc. are part of it.

d) International relations deals with key issues which concerns public global interest. Goldstein and Pavehouse in his book, “International Relations” write, International relations revolves around one key problem: how to balance interest of international states with the global interest? For example – every country has an interest in stopping global warming, a goal that can be achieved only by many countries acting together. Yet each country also has an individual interest in burning fossil fuels to keep its economy going.

They proposed three principles in context to collective goods problem. These three basic principles are – Dominance, Reciprocity, and Identity. These three offer possible solutions to this core problem of getting individuals to cooperate for common good without a central authority to make them do so.

**DOMINANCE.** The principle of dominance solves the collective goods problem by establishing a power hierarchy in which those at the top control those below. Therefore, instead of fighting constantly to get more scarce resources, the members of group can fight for better position in ‘status hierarchy’. Then social conflicts such as over who gets resources are resolved automatically in favor of the higher-ranking actor.
The advantage of dominance solution to the collective goods problem are that it can establish order and provide stability in international system whereas its disadvantages are that it leads to oppression over small and weak countries as well as resentment within them against the countries holding top position in hierarchy system.

RECIPIROCITY. The principle of reciprocity solves the collective goods problem by rewarding behavior that contributes the group and punishing behavior that pursues self-interest at the expense of the group.

Reciprocity is very easy to enforce without any central authority, making it a robust way to get individuals to cooperate for the common good. But the reciprocity operates in both way; positively (‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours’) and negatively (“an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”). The disadvantage of reciprocity solution is that it can lead to downward spirals as each side punishes what it believes to be negative acts by other. It fuels arms races as each side responds to the other’s buildup weapons. But it also allows arm control agreements and other step-by-step conflict-resolution measures.

IDENTITY. This third solution to the collective goods problem lies in the identities of participants as members of a community. Unlike member of dominance solution and reciprocity solution, member of an identity community care about the interests of the community enough to sacrifice their own interest to benefit others.

In international relations, identity communities play important roles in overcoming difficult collective goods problems, including the issue of who contributes to development assistance, world health, or UN peacekeeping missions.

SCOPE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AS A FIELD OF STUDY

International relations compose our largest society. Since the Age of Colonization in the eighteenth century, international relations have encompassed the globe. The scope of international relations is not yet well settle. It is continuously expending & becoming very complex due to many factors such as LPG (globalization, privatization, & liberalization), advancement in technology (communication, transportation, & media), global issues (Terrorism, poverty, global warming, etc.), so on & so forth. Now, world has become a global village.

Michael Nicholson writes in his book “international relations a concise introduction” – that – scholars of international relations study, peace and war; imperialism and nationalism; the wealth of some societies and the poverty of others; nuclear weapons and the possibility of extinction; the environment and global warming; human rights across the world; the merging of states and the splitting up of states; the European Union; international organizations; religions and their political impact; trade and the development of the multinational corporation; race and gender around the globe; globalization and the information revolution.

However, for the purpose, the scope of international relations can be analyzed under:

A. STUDY OF BEHAVIOUR OF ACTORS

In international relations, we study & analyzes the behavior of actors as Goldstein & Pavehouse in his book, ‘International Relations’ write, “International relationship among the world’s governments are closely connected with other actors.” Actors include any institution as well as

Monday, August 22, 2016
individual influencing policies & decision of government in the international perspective. Actors consist of individual leaders and citizens, bureaucratic agencies in foreign ministries, MNCs and terrorist groups. Actors can be classified into state actors & non-state actors.

STATE ACTORS:

The word ‘State’ in IR does not mean a state in the US or India. There is a difference between the terms nation, state, and country, even though the words are often used interchangeably.

Country and State are synonymous terms that both apply to self-governing political entities. A nation, however, is a group of people who share the same culture but do not have sovereignty.

The most important actors in IR are states. According to Goldstein and Pavehouse;
“A state is a territorial entity controlled by a government and inhibited by a population. A state government answers to no higher authority; it exercises sovereignty over its territory-to make and enforce laws, to collect taxes, and so forth. This sovereignty is recognized (acknowledged) by other state through diplomatic relations and usually by membership in the United Nations (UN). The population inhibiting a state forms a civil society to the extent that it has developed institutions to participate in political or social life”.

Head of government (such as a prime minister) & head of state (such as president, or a king or a queen) are called state leaders. The state actor also includes the individual leaders as well as bureaucratic organizations (such as foreign ministries) that acts in the name of state.

State actors interact among themselves under a system known as “international system”. According to Goldstein & Pavehouse, the international system is the set of relationships among the world’s states, structured according to certain rules & patterns of interaction. Such rules are either explicit or implicit. These rules illustrate; who is to be considered a member of the system, what rights and responsibilities the members have, and what kinds of actions and responses normally occur between states.

Today world is divided into 195 states excluding Taiwan whereas 193 countries are UN members. Although Taiwan operates as an independent country, many countries (including the U.S.) do not officially recognize it as one. Because the People's Republic of China considers Taiwan a breakaway province of China, countries who wish to maintain diplomatic relations with China have had to sever their formal relations with Taiwan (more than 100 countries, however, have unofficial relations with Taiwan).

Population, GDP (gross domestic production), military strength, political stability, leadership quality, geographical location etc. are a few determinants of state behavior in international system.

NON-STATE ACTORS:

Excluding state actors all other comes under non-state actors. Non-state actors influence decisions of state actors (state government). These actors are also called transnational actors when they operate across international borders.

According to Goldstein & Pavehouse, Non-state actors are categorized as follows:-
**TYPE** | **WHO ARE THEY?** | **EXAMPLES**
---|---|---
**IGOs (intergovernmental Org.)** | Members are national governments | United Nations, NATO, G20, SAARC, BRICS, WTO, etc. 

**NGOs (nongovernmental Org.)** | Members are individuals & Groups | Amnesty International, Lions clubs, Red Cross, Green Peace, etc. 

**MNCs ( multinational Corporations)** | Companies that span borders | TATA, amazon, Toyota, Wal-Mart, etc. 

**Others including illegal actors** | Individual, cities, constituencies, etc. | Bono, Iraqi Kurdistan, al Qaeda, Daesh (earlier ISIS) etc. 

1. **IGOs AND IR**

The intergovernmental cooperation resulting from treaties or agreements in the forms of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs). It has been viewed as an appropriate mean for dealing with various issues in global and regional levels. IGOs are one of the international organizations (IOs). IGOs are organizations whose members consist of three or more states. IGOs has been constantly focusing on a wide range of areas such as education, culture, and political affairs, security, economy, health, and environment and many more.

IGOs serve several roles in the international system. Some IGOs play a role in settling disputes, establishing procedures and forcing their members to obey their rules. Others perform operational activities to solve major global problems. Some IGOs contribute to international bargaining as a medium for negotiation activities. Other IGOs exist to establish transnational networks comprised of other state and non-state actors.

In the contemporary world, there are a wide range of IGOs involving in activities related to security, economy, health, and environment.

Some examples of IGOs and their purposes -

- United Nations (UN) maintain international peace and security. Develop friendly relations among states, achieve international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, and achieve international cooperation in solving international problems, functions as a centre for harmonizing the actions of the nations, etc.
- World Trade Organization (WTO) manages disputes arising from trading partners, monitoring trade in the agriculture and manufacture commodities, etc.
- The Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) promote regional economic, social and culture cooperation among the state in South-east Asia.

2. **NGOs AND IR**

Definition of the term NGO is vague. However, a 1994 United Nation Document describes the term NGO as a non-profit entity whose members are citizens or associations of citizens of one or more countries and whose activities are determined by the collective will of its members of one or more communities with which the NGOs cooperates.
NGOs promote the shared interests & ideals in order to influence the policies of the governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). NGOs tackle many global problems and seek changes in the world for causes such as disarmament, environmental protection, human rights and many more.

NGOs interact with states, sub-state actors, MNCs, and other NGOs. NGOs are increasingly being recognized in the UN and other forums, as legitimate actors along with states but is not equal to them. Some of the groups have a political purpose, some a humanitarian one, some an economic or a technical one.

Some examples are:

- One of the NGOs that fight for human rights is AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. It is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights for all. They conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated. Some of the issues that has been campaigned, are armed conflict issues and protection of civilians, basic welfare of children, LGBT rights, rights of people with AIDS, women’s rights, disability rights, human impact of pollution and environmental degradation, freedom of the press and many more.

- Another example is WWF (world wildlife fund). WWF works on issues regarding the conservation, research and restoration of the environment.

3. TNCs/MNCs AND IR

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are companies that have headquarter in one state but invest and operate in other states. MNCs are based in one state but have branches operating in other states. In other words, MNCs is a large corporation operating on a worldwide basis in many countries at the same time, with fixed facilities and employees in each.

MNCs can be found in each and every sectors of economy. For example, MNCs such as Sony, Honda, Toyota, are some well-known in automobile, and electronic industries. Similarly, Dominos, McDonald and KFC and many is in food sector.

MNCs are increasingly powerful as independent actors. Many of the industrial MNCs have annual sales of tens of billions of dollars each (hundreds of billions for top corporations such as Wal-Mart. MNCs are able to match to most international organizations (IOs) in size and financial resources. The largest IGO (UN) has about 2 billion dollars a year in revenue, compare to more than 250 billion dollars. The largest state (United States) has government revenues of 2 trillion dollars. Therefore this shows that the power of MNCs does not rival the largest states but exceeds many poorer states and many IOs.

MNCs are view as citizens of the world beholden to government. It act globally in the interests of their (international) stockholders and owe no loyalty to no state. MNCs are motivated by the need to maximize profits.

MNCs also contribute to their host country’s development. As MNCs operate in the other states, it will provide job opportunities for the locals in that state and thus, helped to stabilize the economy in that state.

4. ILLEGAL ACTORS AND IR
These actors include terrorist organization, criminal groups as well as political groups that advocate violence. These actors are considered as transnational actors but they act in an illegitimate manner. Most of these groups have a great capacity of financial resources and thus, are able to influence the state’s policies. Some of them are even capable to threaten the state’s security. Most operated secretly which makes it hard for the authorities to track them down. Most of these groups are involved in drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, firearms and many other crimes. Daesh (earlier ISIS), Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, book haram, Yakuza in Japan, The Sicilian Mafia in Italy and many are a few example of illegal actors.

B. LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In international system, many actors involved at once. This makes competing explanation and theories very complex to understand. So in order to understand it, scholars of IR have put forward many levels of analysis. A level of analysis in IR is based on a set of similar actors or processes that suggests possible explanations to ‘why’ questions. Level of analysis offer different sorts of explanations of international events.

According to Goldstein & Pavehouse, four main levels are-

1. THE INDIVIDUAL level of analysis concerns the perceptions, choices, and actions of the individual human beings. Great leaders influence the course of the history, as do individual citizens, thinkers, soldiers, and voters. For example Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Lenin and many more. It is said, without Lenin there might well have been no Soviet Union. Similarly, without Mahatma Gandhi, the scenario of India’s struggle for independence might be different.

2. THE DOMESTIC (or STATE or SOCIETAL) level of analysis concerns the aggregations of individuals within states that influence state actions in the international arena. Such aggregation include interest groups, political organizations, and government agencies. These groups operates differently (with different international effects) in different kinds of societies and states. For instance, Indo-Pak relations due to issue in Jammu & Kashmir. The politics of ethnic conflicts and nationalism, bubbling up from within states, plays an increasingly important role in the relations among states.

3. THE INTERSTATE (or INTERNATIONAL or SYSTEMIC) level of analysis concern the influence of the international system upon outcomes. This level of analysis therefore focuses on the interactions of states themselves, without regard to their internal makeup or the particular individuals who lead them. This level pays attention to states’ relative power positions in international system and interaction (for example, trade) among them. It has been traditionally system the most important of the level of analysis.

4. THE GLOBAL level of analysis seeks to explain international outcomes in term of global trends (such as evolution of human technology, era of globalization and many) and forces that transcend the interactions of states themselves.

**CASE STUDY- ANALYSIS OF U.S. ATTACK ON IRAQ (2003)**

At The Individual Level, the war could be attributed to Saddam Hussein’s irrational gamble that he could defeat the forces arrayed against him, or to President Bush’s desire to remove a leader he personally deemed threatening.
At Domestic Level, the war could be attributed to the rise of the powerful neoconservative faction that convinced the Bush administration and Americans that Saddam was a threat to U.S. security in a post-September 11 world.

At The Interstate Level, the war might be attributed to the predominance of U.S. power. With no state willing to back Iraq militarily, United States (as the largest global military power) was free to attack Iraq without fear of a large-scale military response.

Finally, At Global Level, the war might be attributed to a global fear of terrorism, or even a clash between Islam & the West.

There is no single correct level for a given “why” question. Rather, different levels of analysis suggest multiple explanations and approaches to consider in trying explain an event.


C. SUB-FIELDS OF IR

The scope of the field of IR may also be defined by the subfields it encompasses. Traditionally, the study of IR has focused on questions of war and peace, today it has become a subfield of IR known as international security studies. Similarly, the international political economy (IPE), a second main subfield of IR, concerns trade and financial relations among nations and focuses on how nations have cooperated politically to create and maintain institutions that regulate the flow of international economic and financial transaction.


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