



BLOCK 2
APPROACHES

BLOCK 2 APPROACHES

Block 2 is titled 'Approaches' and has four units. The Units in this Block describe and analyze four major theoretical approaches used in the study the International Relations (IR). The four approaches are: Realism, Systems Theory, Dependency Framework and Constructivism. You may ask: why should one study theories? Theories are important to understand IR, at least for two reasons: (i) Theoretical frameworks give shape and structure to an otherwise large and shapeless reality; (ii) Each theoretical perspective allows us to ask some insightful and consistent questions. **Unit 4** deals with Realism. What is Realism? The core element of Realist theory is Power. Sovereign states seek power for their security; every state fears attack from other states. Therefore, all states want to accumulate more and more power. **Unit 5** describes Systems framework. What is Systems approach? Systems theory is a grand narrative. A biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy had propounded the General Systems Theory (GST). Bertalanffy made two grand points: Systems' approach proposes to study a phenomenon in terms of the wholeness of a System – its self-organization, relationships, and interactions among its various elements. Secondly, GST intends to explain a System, e.g. international system, in its full interconnectedness with other Systems – economic system, technological system, physical system, biological system, ecological system, etc. Scholars have used Systems approach to study varied subjects – political science, international relations, economics, sociology, physics and biology, etc. As for political science and IR, Systems approach originated in the context of the Cold War; and more so, to comprehend the political processes of the developing countries. **Unit 6** is entitled Dependency Theory. In fact, it is not a theory because it cannot predict the solution. It is a framework of analysis. Dependency (*dependencia* in Spanish) is an important framework that began in the 1950s by analyzing the economic situation in Latin America. **Unit 7** deals with the Constructivist idea in IR. Constructivism is an IR theory which sees international relations as a social construct. It emphasizes the role of ideational factors such as culture, social values, identity, assumptions, rules, and language in the construction of international relations rather than the material factors such as military capabilities and economic resources.

UNIT 4 REALISM*

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be reading about Realism. Realism is one of the theoretical frameworks to study International Relations and foreign policy of a country. It is the most dominant among various theoretical approaches to study IR. After going through this Unit, you should be able to know:

- The core assumptions of Realism
- Classical Realism and Neorealism
- Criticism and relevance of Realism

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is really interesting to know that there are only two broad shades of contrasting theories or perspectives about the nature of International Relations. One perspective is that the International Relations, by its very nature, is conflict ridden. The other perspective describes IR as essentially being cooperative and peaceful. Broadly speaking, the principal theoretical approaches to the study IR agree with one of the above-mentioned assumptions. Then there are other theoretical frameworks which try to combine and reconcile the two contrasting viewpoints. Still others criticize these dominant outlooks and offer alternative approaches of looking at the IR; even change it. The aim and purpose of this Unit is to introduce you to the importance of national power and the conflict-ridden nature of IR. Realist School is a long-standing and dominant theoretical tradition in the study of IR. What follows is a discussion of the following questions: (i) What are the core theoretical assumptions of Realism? (ii) Who are the principal thinkers who have shaped Realist School of IR? (iii) Does Realism stand the test of criticisms and iv) Does it remain relevant in understanding and explaining the contemporary world?

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4.2 REALISM: MAIN ASSUMPTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Assumptions are logical beliefs and are very important as these are building blocks of a theoretical approach. For example, you assume that man is selfish by nature; or that he is a social animal who loves to cooperate and live peacefully with other human beings. These assumptions together help explain a problem and provide coherence to a perspective or approach to IR. For these reasons, it is important to know the core assumptions of Realism that it uses as its basic tools to make sense of the International Relations (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999).

i) States are the Primary Actors in the International System

This assumption of Realism has three expressed meanings: i) International politics is a domain of conflict between and among sovereign states. Conflictual interaction among these sovereign states is the core of international politics. (ii) States in international politics are sovereign, unitary and rational actors. At least at conceptual level, sovereign states are supremely powerful, unified with fixed political goals and they do cost-benefit analyses. (iii) In its interaction with other states, each state seeks to promote and guarantee its own 'interest'. The foremost interest of each state is its own security and expansion of its power. (iv) In order to ensure its own security, each state seeks to secure and accumulate power. Power alone deters others from attacking it. In other words, every state is out to enhance and expand its capability at the cost of other states.

ii) IR is Anarchic in Character

In Realism, 'anarchy' defines International Relations. Anarchy means that there is no "central authority" or "world government" to manage or put in order the international relations among sovereign states which are distrustful of each other and which, out of a sense of insecurity, accumulate more and more power so as to become 'secure'. 'Anarchy' is an assumed political condition in which there is no world authority to enforce order. This assumed condition "frees" the state to undertake cost-benefit calculations and act towards its self-interest or "national interest" by depending solely on its own capability. Capability – military, technological, economic, and political – must continue to expand and become formidable; otherwise the state may risk its life and protection.

iii) Control over Material Resources is Fundamental to World Politics

In order to enhance its capability, every state is constantly striving to gain maximum control over the material resources and this tendency to control is fundamental to the world politics. Realism tries to justify this assumption by linking it with other assumptions that the approach fosters. States are motivated to have control over material resources because i) there is no central authority to reasonably distribute the resources among its constituent units; ii) the material resources are not in abundance; and iii) the material resources add to the coercive capacity of a state against its counterparts which is critical in an anarchic political set up. These reasons motivate a state to acquire more and more capability. Besides E. H. Carr, Hans

Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, a number of other scholars have developed ideas and insights which constitute the core of Realist School. Of, course, there are important differences among these scholars; for instance, between Morgenthau and Waltz. Be that as it may, while certain assumptions and principles constitute the core of Realism, there are several strands or categories within Realism.

Three principal assumptions have been stated above. What are the implications of these and other assumptions? Let us have a look at the following:

- i) Sovereign states are the only full actors in international system. Realists draw from the ideas of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes had described man as selfish, rational and calculating. In a similar fashion, a state is selfish, rational and thinks of its interests first. It feels insecure and remains distrustful of the intentions of other states who think and behave exactly the same way. Such a state has the tendency to prepare for war and expand its power at the cost of another state, so as to guarantee its own security.
- ii) With no supranational authority to impose order, international system, inhabited by such rational, self-centred and distrustful actors, is anarchic. International system is simply a set of interacting states; each pursuing power in order to ensure its survival and further aggrandizement. In other words, anarchy in the international system produces an inherently unstable condition.
- iii) The foremost concern of every state is its security. To ensure its survival and security, a state tends to accumulate power. As one state gathers more power, other states fear it. There is the context of power accumulation by every state and an atmosphere of mutual distrust.
- iv) There is expediency in the behaviour of states. States may find it convenient to follow established international 'rules' in the short term, they do so in order to secure their long term goals viz. security and power. Realists argue that states will violate these rules as soon as they are no longer convenient to the state's pursuit of power. After all, there is no global government to enforce international law and customs.
- v) According to Realism, international system is given shape and stability by the relative power of its constituent states. This means that the system's polarity is an important Realist tool when analysing the nature of international relations on the global or regional scale. Realism's model of the anarchic international system helps it to explain the persistence of war – defined as large-scale organised violence between two or more international actors in pursuit of political ends. Realism is a good guide in explaining the causes of war in international relations. It does so by simplifying the world – highlighting just those actors and interactions that contribute to its explanation of international conflict. Realists claim that they understand the world; that their claims are grounded in actual behaviour of the states and the ruling elites; therefore Realism is empirical and scientific.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) Describe and analyze the main assumptions of Realism and their implications.

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4.3 CLASSICAL REALISM

Realism has inherited a long and rich intellectual tradition. Its principal claims can be found in important works from Greece, Rome, India, and China. Scholars suggest that Greek philosopher Thucydides’ *History of The Peloponnesian War* illustrates Realism’s scepticism about the restraining effects of morality. Thucydides notes that what is ‘right’ matters only between equals; otherwise strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. Kautilya’s in his *Arthashastra* is concerned with the survival and expansion of the state. Kautilya instructs the ruler in the usefulness of balance of power system and carving out spheres of influence. The Italian political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) advised the ruler to be strong and efficient and be concerned primarily with power and security. Such a ruler is not bound by individual morality. Any action that is deemed important for the survival of the state carries with it a built-in justification. Realists draw a lot from Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and his notion of a ‘state of nature’. Like Hobbes’s man in the ‘state of nature’, modern state is a rational, calculating actor, concerned primarily with its own security and aggrandizement. In the absence of an absolute ruler (*Leviathan*) to enforce order and punish violators, Hobbes’s supreme and self-centred individual pursues without restraints whatsoever his interest by constantly engaging in conflict. The individual in the state of nature lives a life which is ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short’. Same is true of a state living in the anarchic international system. The assumptions about the international relations as, inhabited by rational actors, being intrinsically anarchic; and states seeking to maximize their powers and control over the necessary material resources took quite a time to become the core elements of Realism. But identification of these core elements as assumptions fundamental to Realism was as equal in importance to the subject of IR as was their significance to the politics of Realism pursued by the big powers of the day – largely in the period between the two world wars. Establishing Realism as external conduct of powerful countries and also as a political perspective or framework, especially after the Second World War, was at the heart of identification and refinement of these assumptions.

Edward Hallett Carr was a noted historian, theorist, diplomat and journalist of British origin. In his famous book *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*, Carr had aimed at developing a foundation of international politics to be based on “realist thinking”. With his emphasis on Realist thinking of IR, Carr had wanted

to correct the imagination of world politics that he thought was then based on “utopia” or “utopian wishing” and not on ‘realistic’ or empirical bases. Carr conceived of Realism as (i) the impact of “thinking” upon “wishing” and (ii) end of the utopian period. He advocated Realism after criticizing the utopian or idealist view of world politics. First World War wrought devastation for the imperial powers of Europe especially the vanquished Central powers. How to prevent recurrence of another similar destructive war? US President Woodrow Wilson came with 14-Point programme wherein he proposed establishment of an international organization to maintain peace which culminated in the creation of the League of Nations in 1919. He also proposed codification of customary international law. Wilson was of the view that establishment of an international legal-institutional framework will deter states from going to war and encourage them to abide the laws and decisions of the League of Nations. Wilson made two more important proposals: the principle of collective security was enshrined in the charter of the League; and secondly, Wilson also proposed the right to self-determination of minorities in Europe and, in general, peoples of the colonies. This liberal idealism was short lived: European states did not change their behaviour and their rivalries and expansionism led to the outbreak of Second World War in 1939, within 20 years of the First World War. For Carr, talking of subjects like disarmament, collective security and an international police force was “utopia” or “utopian wishing” in the wretched context of international relations that had developed over a century between 1815 Vienna Conference and the 1914 outbreak of the First World War. Carr rejected liberal idealism, or Wilsonian idealism as it was sometimes called, as not based on rigorous thinking. He called it utopia because he thought that it was not even based on an analysis of the reality. Events proved Carr’s criticism of idealism correct. League of Nations failed. It failed to have a honourable peace treaty concluded among European imperial and colonial powers. Treaty of Versailles and all other treaties reflected the interests of the victors and the humiliation of the vanquished. League of Nations also failed to stop arms race among European powers. Disarmament, collective security and international police force were among the important political ideas that had informed the arrangement of the League of Nations. With US not being part of it and several other nations abandoning it, the League and its ideals stood defeated and abandoned within few years. In this context therefore when Carr was tossing the idea of Realism, he actually meant to develop the foundation of International Relations as a discipline as well as a practice that would “scientifically” reflect the reality of the world; or would approximate to a “true” picture of the world.

Twentieth-century ‘Classical’ Realism is generally dated back to 1939 and the publication of Edward Hallett Carr’s *The 20 Year’s Crisis*. Several more Classical Realists contributed in the decades during 1940s and 50s. It was, however, Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace*, which became the undisputed standard bearer for ‘Political Realism’ (as Morgenthau describes Realism), with its first publication in 1948. According to ‘Classical’ Realism, the desire for power and accumulate more power is rooted in the human nature. It is understandable that states are continuously engaged in a struggle to increase their capabilities without restraint. ‘Classical’ Realism explains the tendency to conflict and war in terms of human nature. Particular wars are explained, for example, by aggressive statesmen or by domestic political systems that give greedy parochial groups the opportunity to pursue self-serving expansionist foreign policies.

4.3.1 Tenets of Classical Realism

- A) ***International politics is power politics:*** ‘Classical’ Realism (also called ‘Political Realism’) claims to offer an account of IR that is ‘realistic’. There is no idealism and no wishful thinking. Global politics is, first and last, about power and self-interest. This is why ‘Classical’ Realism is also called ‘power politics’ model of international politics. Morgenthau wrote: “Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it determines the technique of political action.”
- B) ***State egoism and conflict:*** Man is selfish and competitive; in other words, egoism is the defining characteristics of human nature. Exactly, same is true of the state. Further, state system operates in a context of international anarchy. The core theme of Realist theory can therefore be summed up in the equation: egoism + anarchy = power politics. A particular feature of ‘Classical’ Realism: it strongly explains power politics in terms of egoism (unlike Neorealism which explains it terms of anarchy).

How did this idea of human selfishness and international anarchy shape the Realist understanding of IR? Three arguments are important: First, Realists accept that no form of world government can ever be established; it means that international politics is conducted within, what in effect, is an international ‘state of nature.’ The international arena is therefore dangerous and uncertain, with order and stability always being the exception rather than the rule. Second, taking a cue from Machiavelli’s and Hobbes’s description of the nature of individual, Realists view states as rational, calculating, guided by self-interest, and working as coherent ‘units’; and regard themselves as the most important actors on the world stage. Realists’ theories of international relation are thus firmly state-centric. Third, and crucially, the fact that states are composed of, and led by, people who are inherently selfish, greedy and power-seeking means that state behaviour cannot but is inevitably bound to exhibit the same characteristics. Human egoism therefore determines state egoism; or, as Morgenthau (1962) put it, ‘the social world is but a projection of human nature onto the collective plane.’ Just as human egoism leads to unending conflict amongst individuals and groups, state egoism means that international politics is marked by inevitable competition and rivalry. As essentially self-interested actors, the ultimate concern of each state is its own survival, which thereby becomes the first priority of its leaders. As all states pursue security through the use of military or strategic means, and wherever possible seek to gain advantage at the expense of other states, international politics is characterized by an irresistible tendency towards conflict.

- C) ***A rational statecraft serves national interest:*** Realism as a School puts a lot of emphasis on statecraft. ‘Classical’ Realists particularly do that. E.H. Carr was scathing in his criticism of the Versailles treaty and the idealism that led to the establishment of the League of Nations. Carr said that global leaders allowed “wishing” to prevail over “thinking” when writing the peace treaties. Revenge and not reason dominated the thought processes of the victorious powers. Further, leaders ignored the importance of power in

international politics; and thus set the world on the inevitable course of another world war within 20 years. Morgenthau similarly emphasizes on the ‘art of statecraft’. He argued that the practical conduct of politics should be informed by the ‘Six Principles of Political Realism’, they are following: (i) Politics is governed by objective laws which have their root in human nature. (ii) The key to understanding international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. (iii) The forms and nature of state power will vary in time, place and context but the concept of interest remains consistent. (iv) Universal moral principles do not guide state behaviour, although this does not rule out an awareness of the moral significance of political action. (v) Moral aspirations are specific to a particular nation; there is no universally agreed set of moral principles. (vi) The political sphere is autonomous, meaning that the key question in international politics is ‘How does this policy affect the power of the nation?’

- D) ***Serving national interest is political morality:*** The key guide to statecraft in the Realist tradition is the concern about the national interest. This concern highlights the Realist stance on political morality. Critics consider Realism as amoral; some say it is bereft of morality altogether. Realism insists that ethical considerations should be strictly excluded from foreign policy decision-making. State policy should be guided by a hard-headed pursuit of the national interest; meaning thereby that ultimately, the state should be guided by the wellbeing of its citizens. Protecting the life, liberty and well being of its citizens, Realists claim is moral. What Realists reject, therefore, is not nationally-based conceptions of political morality, but universal moral principles that supposedly apply to all states in all circumstances. Indeed, from a Realist perspective, one of the problems with the latter is that they commonly get in the way of the pursuit of national interest. Examples are defending human rights, promoting democracy etc.
- E) ***Power politics does not mean endless conflict and war:*** Calculations about the national interest, no denying, offer the surest basis for deciding when, where and why wars should be fought. Although Realism is commonly associated with the idea of endless war, ‘Classical’ Realists have often opposed war and aggressive foreign policy. In their view, wars should only ever be fought if vital national interests are at stake, the decision to wage war being based on something like a cost–benefit analysis of its outcomes in terms of national strategic interests. Such thinking, for example, led Morgenthau and most US Realists to oppose the Vietnam War in the 1970s. Realists have also been amongst the most vocal critics of the ‘war on terror’. As many as 34 leading US Realist scholars had co-signed an open message in the *New York Times* opposing war on Iraq in 2002.

In the end, the organizing principle of Realism is the anarchic international system, wherein the actions of sovereign states are only limited by power. Realism presents a simplified model of international behaviour that addresses the persistence of war but fails to capture many other aspects of IR. Finally, and to repeat once again, all Realists agree on the importance of three fundamental ideas: statism, survival and self-help.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.
- 1) What are the tenets of ‘Classical’ Realism.

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4.4 NEOREALISM

New ideas emerged in the 1970s; some of them were critical of ‘Classical’ Realist assumptions. Together these ideas came to be described as ‘Neorealism’ or ‘Structural Realism’ as Kenneth Waltz calls it. Waltz wrote his *Theory of International Politics* in 1979 and used the expression ‘Structural Realism.

Waltz said that theories of international politics could be developed at ‘three levels of analysis – individual, the state and the international system.’ The major defect of ‘Classical’ Realism is that it is not able to explain behaviour at a level above the state. ‘Classical’ Realism explains international politics in terms of the nature and action of state only. In other words, egoism and national interest are at the core of ‘Classical’ Realism’. Waltz takes an important step forward: he explains the behaviour of the state in terms of the structure of the international system. In other words, while ‘Classical’ Realism explains international politics in terms of ‘the inside’; Neorealism does it in terms of ‘the outside’. In shifting attention from the state to the international system, Neorealism places an emphasis on the implications of anarchy. The characteristics of international life stem from the fact that states (and other international actors) operate within a domain which has no formal central authority. But how does this shape the behaviour of states? And why, according to Neorealists, does international anarchy tend towards conflict rather than cooperation? Let us explain.

Waltz draws from Systems theories. He argues that Systems are composed of a structure and their interacting units. Political structures have three elements: an ordering principle (anarchic), the character of the units (functionally alike or differentiated) and the distribution of capabilities. Waltz argues that two elements of the structure of the international system are constant: the lack of an overarching authority means that its ordering principle is anarchy, and the principle of self-help means that all of the units remain functionally alike. Accordingly, the one structural variable is the distribution of capabilities, with the main distinction falling between bipolar and multipolar systems. In other words, in the anarchic world system where all states are security conscious, power differential between states becomes crucial. Some states have more capabilities than others; and that shapes the world politics.

Anarchy is the organizing principle of the International System: The basic difference between ‘Classical’ Realism and Neorealism is their contrasting views on the source and content of states’ preferences. In contrast to ‘Classical’ Realism,

Neorealism excludes the internal makeup of different states. Morgenthau's 'Classical' Realism relied on the assumption that leaders of states are motivated by their lust for power. Waltz's theory, by contrast, omits leader's motivations and state characteristics as causal variables for international outcomes, except for the minimal assumption that states seek to survive. In other words, Waltz ignores two assumptions important in 'Classical' Realism namely egoism and power aggrandizement by the state. Instead he considers the third assumption namely, the anarchy in the international system. He wants to identify the persistent effects of the international system. Two points bear significance: states (units) in the anarchic international system are interconnected. Change in some units or change in their mutual relations produces notable changes in other parts of the international system. Secondly, international system is not the sum total of its parts. Rather, international system exhibits properties and behaviours that are different from those of the parts. Because systems are generative, the international political system is characterized by complex nonlinear relationships and unintended consequences. Outcomes are influenced by something more than simply the aggregation of individual states' behaviours, with a tendency toward unintended and ironic outcomes. As a result, there is a gap between what states want and what states get. Consequently, unlike 'Classical' Realists, Neorealists see international politics as tragic, rather than as being driven by the aggressive behaviour of revisionist states. To put it in simple words, for Neorealists, international system, from outside and above, impacts and shapes the behaviour of the states. In other words, the institutions and norms that inform the international system endow it with autonomy and, as if, with a purpose of its own.

What are the implications of international anarchy? Neorealists argue that international anarchy necessarily tends towards tension, conflict and the unavoidable possibility of war for three main reasons. (i) In the first place, as states are separate, autonomous and formally equal political units, they must ultimately rely on their own resources to realise their interests. International anarchy therefore results in a system of 'self-help', because states cannot count on anyone else to 'take care of them.' (ii) Second, relationships between and amongst states are always characterized by uncertainty and suspicion. This is best explained through the 'security dilemma'. Although self-help forces states to ensure security and survival by building up sufficient military capability to deter other states from attacking them, such actions are always liable to be interpreted as hostile or aggressive by other states. Uncertainty about motives therefore forces states to treat all other states as enemies, meaning that permanent insecurity is the inescapable consequence of living in conditions of anarchy. (iii) Third, conflict is also encouraged by the fact that states are primarily concerned about maintaining or improving their position relative to other states; that is, with making relative gains. Apart from anything else, this discourages cooperation and reduces the effectiveness of international organizations, because, although all states may benefit from a particular action or policy, each state is actually more worried about whether other states benefit more than it does. Although such Neorealist thinking had a profound impact both within and beyond the Realist tradition, since the 1990s Realist theories have often attempted to fuse other theories and assumptions, giving rise to what has been called 'Neoclassical Realism' or 'Post-Neorealism' – a new subcategory in Realism.

'Security Dilemma': Neorealism or Structural Realism reaches many of the same conclusions as 'Classical' Realism. However, it does so by looking at systemic rather than individual and state-level causes. This means that it focuses less on human nature and more on the anarchic structure of the international system in which states operate. Kenneth Waltz emphasizes upon the distinction between his approach and that of Morgenthau. Whereas 'Classical' Realism places responsibility for war at the feet of selfish and narrow-minded individual human beings, Waltz points to the anarchical structure of the international system as the main reason for the persistence of war. He asserts that states are victims of the 'security dilemma', in which effort of a state to ensure its survival threatens the security of other states around it. Following Realism's concept of self-help, Waltz argues that the only rational course of action for a state in an anarchic international system is to maintain enough military and political power to defend itself against aggression. In doing so, it might invest in new weapons or seek alliances with other states that may or may not come to its aid in a crisis. Unfortunately, these steps toward self-defence appear threatening to neighbouring states, forcing them to respond with their own military build-up and alliance making. In a world defined by mutual suspicion, one state's attempts to safeguard its survival make other states less secure, forcing them to respond with their own self-help strategies. The result is an arms race in which every state builds up its military capability in response to others' actions. This is the crux of the 'security dilemma'. Neorealists use it to explain the persistence of conflict and war on the international stage. In the absence of a world government, states are condemned to exist in an environment of mutual distrust and one state's declaration that it is seeking armed strength for purely defensive reasons is certain to be met with suspicion by its neighbours. Balance of Power, alliance system, arms race are few of the strategic tools of the states in this game of survival.

Balance of Power, Polarity and Stability: The fact that states are inclined to treat other states as enemies does not inevitably lead to bloodshed and open violence. Rather, Neorealists, in common with 'Classical' Realists, believe that conflict can be contained by the balance of power - a key concept for all types of Realists. However, while 'Classical' Realists treat the balance of power (BOP) as a product of prudent statecraft, Neorealists see it as a consequence of the structural dynamics of the international system, and specifically, of the distribution of power between and among states. To recall, distribution of power and power capability is a variable and not a constant in Waltz's thinking. The principal factor affecting the likelihood of a balance of power, and therefore the prospect of war or peace, is the number of great powers operating within the international system. Although Neorealists believe that there is a general bias in the international system in favour of balance rather than imbalance, world order is determined by the changing fate of great powers. This is reflected in an emphasis on polarity. Power polarity indicates the level of stability or lack of it, (and, polarity could be uni-, bi-, multi-, and in its various permutations and combinations).

Waltz and Neorealists have generally associated bipolar systems with stability and a reduced likelihood of war, while multipolar systems have been associated with instability and a greater likelihood of war. This had inclined Waltz and other Neorealists to view Cold War bipolarity in broadly positive terms, as a 'long peace'; and to warn about the implications of rising multipolarity of the post-Cold War era. Obviously, therefore, Neorealists are not happy about the rising tide of multipolarism.

Neorealists disagree among themselves about the relationship between structural instability and the likelihood of war. The ‘Offensive Realists’ believe that instability of a multipolar world could lead to conflict and war; whereas the ‘Defensive Realists’ maintain that since states tend to prioritize security over power, they remain generally reluctant to go to war, regardless of the dynamics of the international system.

For the Neorealists, bipolar systems tend towards stability and strengthen the likelihood of peace. This happens for two main reasons: The existence of only two great powers encourages each to maintain the bipolar system as, in the process, they are maintaining themselves. Fewer great powers means the possibilities of great power wars are reduced. The existence of only two great powers reduces the chances of miscalculation and makes it easier to operate an effective system of deterrence: Power relationships are more stable as each bloc is forced to rely on inner (economic and military) resources; whereas, external (alliances with other states or blocs) means of expanding power not being available. On the other hand, multipolar systems tend to be inherently unstable. A larger number of great powers increases the number of possible great power conflicts. Multipolarity creates a bias in favour of fluidity and, perhaps, instability, as it leads to shifting alliances as great powers have external means of extending their influence. As power is more decentralized, existing great powers may be more restless and ambitious while weak states may be able to form alliances in order to challenge and displace existing great powers. The international political outcomes that Waltz predicts include: multipolar systems will be less stable than bipolar systems; interdependence will be lower in bipolarity than multipolarity; and that regardless of unit (state) behaviour, hegemony by any single state is unlikely or even impossible.

Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* proved to be influential generating new debates and giving new impetus to existing ones. For example, the debate over whether states’ concerns over relative gains impeded cooperation?; and whether bipolar or multipolar international systems were more war prone? In the 1980s, *Theory of International Politics* came under scholarly criticism. As time went by, subcategories in Nonrealism, in particular the ‘neoliberal institutionalism’ and writings on the ‘democratic peace’ became more popular. Realism’s decline in the 1990s was amplified by international events. The closing years of the twentieth century seemed to provide strong support for alternative approaches. The disintegration of Soviet Union; formation of the European Union (EU) and economic integration in South East Asian and other regions; the wave of democratization and economic liberalization throughout the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the other parts of the developing world; and the improbability of war between the great powers all made Realism, both ‘Classical’ and ‘Neo’ and their various strands, seem outdated (Jervis 2002). It appeared that Liberal or Constructivist theories could better appreciate and explain the changes taking place in the international arena. But Realism staged a sort of comeback after the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Security of the state once again became the top concern in International Relations. Not surprisingly, the post-9/11, Realism is regarded as being better suited to address threats to national security. It is, however, ironic that its renaissance is at least partly owed to transnational terrorist networks motivated by religious extremism – non-state actors which Realism had never taken into account.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe the main arguments and assumptions of Neorealism.

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4.5 CRITICISM OF REALISM

Realist approach puts an overemphasis on the power-centric configuration of international relations. Realism stretches the power seeking tendency of the states to the extent that it makes occurrence of conflict and war inevitable. As power-seekers, states are aggressive in their external conduct. This approach denies that states capable of cooperation and mutual help. Whereas, the new perspectives, some of are which have been discussed in this course, see states both as aggressive and cooperative. Further, these new approaches make a powerful critique of IR and offer alternative views about IR as well as how to change the IR.

Similarly, Realism’s assumption of IR as anarchic negates the possibility that there could be a transnational institutional arrangement for cooperation and even enforcement of international decisions. It could call the other world-visions as “utopias” but the very existence of the United Nations since 1945 and its deterrent role in preventing another world war did not qualify the political condition of anarchy exactly as Realism had imagined it. The United Nations is not synonymous to a world government but definitely it represents the global aspiration for peace and cooperation. It provides for collective security and entrusts the Security Council to authorize ‘use of force’ under Chapter VII which then is left for member-states to implement.

Realism is criticised for treating state as the sole actor in international politics. Even in the context of a post-Cold War political environment where the actors have become pluralised with blurred boundaries of participation, Realism’s state as the sole wielder of power was heavily challenged. To defend itself from the damages from these criticisms, Realism tried to reformulate its theoretical proposition in the light of changing political circumstances. Some Realist reformulations, for example, took place in the light of idealist/liberal explanations of world politics as the latter’s explanations of IR were based on an integrated approach of development and democratic peace. Such attempts to reformulate Realism, however, have raised further criticisms. Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, for example, observed that the Realist paradigm was degenerating as its conceptual foundations were being stretched beyond recognition or utility. As Realism had stretched its conceptual boundaries to other theoretical approaches, Legro and Moravcsik thus ask, “Is everybody now a realist?”

In explaining the decline of Realism, Thomas Walker and Jeffrey Morton had the following to say: “With the end of the Cold War, the expansion of democracy,

and the increasing importance of global trade and international organizations, the world is no longer neatly suited to realist concerns. ...In effect, research in international relations is no longer bound by one paradigmatic vision of global politics. Evidence...shows a field with a plurality of theoretical concerns.”

4.6 LET US SUM UP

Among the conflict or cooperative speculations of IR, Realism adheres to conflict and war. The conflicts speculation of Realism is captured through its “core assumptions” in the section that follows. The section identified that i) states are the actors in the international system, each seeking its own security and aggrandizement of power, if need be, at the expense of others, ‘Classical’ Realists emphasize on the goals of the state. ii) International system is anarchic. Neorealists take anarchy as the organizing principle of the international system. iii) Control over material resources are fundamental to the theoretical assumptions of Realism. Emotions and idealism have no place in world politics. Morgenthau’s “six principles” of Political Realism emphasize upon the centrality of power in the International Relations. Waltz explains the causes of war or conflicts into three images that are man, state and states system, and argues that anarchic set up of world politics informs the behaviour of states because anarchy (i.e., absence of world government) generates security threats as well as necessity for power maximization. Criticism does not mean that Realism *as an approach* to IR has ceased to exist. Despite far reaching changes in the world, state remains the dominant and deciding actor in politics and continues to supply the much needed fuel to re-energise various Realist theoretical assumptions time and again. Such re-energising ventures, however, take place in the context where other theoretical paradigms are kept in purview in order to avoid being considered as archaic in the changing circumstances. The relevance of Realism continues to surface in the contemporary discourse on the nature of IR. The events of 9/11 in the United States and the preemptive/anticipatory measures that US took thereafter have been seen as developments favouring the Realist enterprise of theory building. The frequent reference to “homeland security” as reason for foreign policy actions, including America’s ‘global war on terrorism’ (GWOT) and interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, etc. shows the ascendance of Realist thinking in the policy-making circles in the US.

4.7 REFERENCES

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4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - State seeks to secure and accumulate power
 - IR is anarchic in nature
 - Control over material resources is fundamental to world politics

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Power politics
 - State egoism and conflict
 - National interest and power politics does not support endless conflict and war

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - States are unitary, functionally similar actors
 - International system is characterised by anarchy
 - The distribution of power capabilities is the main, system-level variable to explain state behaviour

UNIT 5 SYSTEMS APPROACH*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 The Concept of System
- 5.3 Systems Approach to International Relations
 - 5.3.1 Systems Approach of Morton Kaplan
 - 5.3.2 Systems Approach of Kenneth Waltz
 - 5.3.3 Systems Approach of Keohane and Nye
 - 5.3.4 Systems Approach of Alexander Wendt
 - 5.3.5 Systems Approach of Immanuel Wallerstein
- 5.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.5 References
- 5.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to study the Systems approach to International Relations. After going through this unit, you would be able to:

- Explain the origins of the Systems approach
- Narrate the application of Systems approach to International Relations and
- Examine the salient features of various Systemic theories in International Relations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Systems approach became the hallmark of Political Science and International Relations (IR) during the Cold War period. The complexities in the Cold War period, such as the emergence of the technologies of mass destruction (i.e., atom bombs, and other lethal weapons), inventions in the fields of cybernetics, computer science, etc., emphasized the requirement of an integrated and comprehensive approach to address the complex problems unearthed during the Cold War period. This led to the development of the General System Theory (GST) and the application of Systems approach to the various branches of natural and social sciences. The Systems approach, in general, believes that each and every System in the universe is interconnected and exert influence over one another. Therefore, we need to examine the dynamics of Systems to understand a particular phenomenon in the universe.

5.2 THE CONCEPT OF SYSTEM

The systems approach is a framework to understand a phenomenon in terms of the wholeness of a system, its self-organization, relationships, and interactions among its various elements. This approach emerged as a critic of reductionist

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tradition in science, which treats the natural as well as the social world as a fragmented whole, thereby looking at the elements to understand a phenomenon. In short, the Systems approach looks at the dynamics within a system and its influence over other systems. In International Relations (IR), a systems approach is used to understand a phenomenon by examining the function of the international system, instead of analysing the developments happening in its elements (i.e., nation states).

A system can be defined as ‘an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something’. The four distinguishing features of a system are: elements, interconnections, function or purpose, and a regulating force. Take the example of our digestive system. It has elements such as teeth, enzymes, stomach, and intestines. Elements in our digestive system are interconnected through the physical flow of food. The function or purpose of our digestive system is to digest food and extract basic nutrients from it and to transfer those nutrients into another system of our body, i.e., the bloodstream. Our digestive system is being regulated by the chemical signals. Thus, everything composed of interconnected elements has a function or purpose, driven by a regulating force, can be treated as a system. Human beings are the part of a number of systems in society and each system is interconnected and exerts its influence over the other systems in society.

The Systems approach is the intellectual child of the General Systems Theory (GST), which was introduced by the Austrian-born Canadian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-1972). Bertalanffy’s magnum opus, *General Systems Theory: Foundation, Development, Application* (1968), is the canonical text of the Systems theory. According to him, the System is ‘a complex of components in mutual interaction’ and he set forth the GST as a discipline focusing on the formulation of principles valid for Systems in general. During the time Bertalanffy was working on GST, the world was undergoing unprecedented incidents such as the Cold War rivalry between two antagonistic blocs, and the threat of the weapons of mass destruction. Many people worried that the world was on the verge of destruction. At the same time, advancements in the fields of science and technology especially in cybernetics indicated the possibility of applying knowledge for controlling human behaviour and society. In 1949, James Grier Miller, Head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago, coined the term ‘behavioral science’ as a field of the integrated study of the biological, psychological, and social dimensions of human behaviour. Then the focus of some sections in academia shifted to conduct interdisciplinary research on human behaviour and social conflicts. In order to achieve this goal, with the support and funding of the Ford Foundation, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) was established, in Stanford, California in 1954. Several scholars who were interested in peace and building a comprehensive theory about human behaviour and social conflicts were invited to associate with the Center. Among scholars who played a major role in advancing General Systems Theory along with Ludwig von Bertalanffy were, the economist and peace activist Kenneth Boulding, psychologist James Grier Miller, the physiologist Ralph Gerard, and the mathematician-biologist Anatol Rapoport. In 1956, they established the Society for General Systems Research (SGSR) and it began to organize annual conferences and to publish a *General Systems Yearbook* since then. Building on the General Systems framework, James Grier Miller launched the journal, *Behavioral Science*, in 1956, and Boulding initiated

the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* in 1957. Thus, GST and behavioural science went hand in hand as an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to study and control social relations.

The GST was developed as a discipline to formulate general principles of Systems so that all branches of natural and social sciences can develop their own systems theories. Kenneth Boulding made a bold statement when he said that GST is the skeleton of science which is aimed at providing a structure of systems on which each particular discipline can fit its own flesh and blood. Thus, GST seems to be appealing to the leading scholars of that time and they adapted it to their concerned disciplines. For instance, Talcott Parsons applied GST to sociology, Bela H. Banathy to linguistics, and Howard T. Odum to ecology - the list continues. The scholars of political science and IR also adapted General Systems Theory to their disciplines and the following part of this Unit examines it in detail.

5.3 SYSTEMS APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Systems approach to IR marks a contrast to the traditional approach, which focuses only on the domestic factors such as the ideology of a nation-state, the character of the head of the state, and other internal matters that influence the behaviour of nation-states. Thus, the core of the systems approach to the study of IR, lies in the belief that the international system is an integrated whole, which is made of its structure and nation-states. The study of IR should be focused on the functions of the international system and its regulating force rather than examining the domestic factors of nation-states.

5.3.1 Systems Approach of Morton Kaplan

The first major work that presented the systems approach to the discipline of International Relations was Morton A. Kaplan's *System and Process in International Politics* (1957). Unlike Easton and Almond, whose works mainly centred on political systems within nation-states and their interactions with other political systems across the world, Kaplan's study was focused on the international system. During those days, the world was in the shadow of the Cold War, which divided nation-states into two rival camps: between the US-led capitalist bloc and the Soviet socialist bloc. As a result, Morton Kaplan envisaged the structure of the international system in the form of a polarized world.

Kaplan holds that there is a certain degree of regularity in the behaviour of nation-states' within the international system. This regularity reveals a level of internal coherence, which helps a scholar of International Relations to construct the models of the international system. According to Kaplan, it is possible to predict the evolution of various models of the international system with the help of examining previous models of the international system.

Kaplan sets forth six distinct international systems out of which, the balance of power system, and the loose bipolar system had existed in history, and the rest of the systems are hypothetical, which could emerge from the end of the bipolar system. The six systems are explained below.

- A) The Balance of Power System:** A period between the eighteenth century and 1914 (the beginning year of the First World War) had been considered as the golden era of the balance of power system. This system featured a multipolar dynamic of five dominant European powers of similar strength. These powers sought to enhance their capacities through diplomatic channels rather than military means. There were occasions of war among these powers, but it came to an end when there was a threat of the destruction of one of these powers. Hence, it was clear that they never intended to alter the system; instead, the primary goal was to preserve the system. When one power attempted to dominate the others, then other powers formed an alliance against it. When one major actor had suffered a defeat, the other powers did not exclude that state. Instead, the defeated state was reintegrated into the system by other states.
- B) The Loose Bipolar System:** Unlike the balance of power system, the loose bipolar system featured diverse actors during the period of Cold War. The basic structure of the system was two large rival blocs led by two superpowers: the United States of America and the Soviet Union. These two blocs were radically different in terms of ideologies: democratic capitalism and communism. In addition to the two blocs, there were also other actors such as Non-Aligned states and international organizations such as the United Nations. Both the superpowers avoided a direct war due to the threat of nuclear destruction via counter-attack (according to the second strike doctrine).
- C) The Tight Bipolar System:** The tight bipolar system has so many characteristics in common with the loose bipolar system. For instance, the structure of the tight bipolar system is the two rival blocs and the actors of both blocs are hierarchically organized. The tight bipolar system will be transformed into a loose bipolar system if both actors are non-hierarchically organized. Another important feature is the role of the other actors than the bloc actors. International organizations such as the United Nations will be marginalized and Non-Aligned states will either lose their significance or will disappear in the tight bipolar system.
- D) The Universal System:** The universal system is possible when the bipolar system disappears and international organizations such as the United Nations become so powerful in maintaining world peace. This system resembles Immanuel Kant's idea of the confederation of republican states which follow rule of law. What makes the universal system unique is its nature and functions. The universal system will be an integrated and solidarity system. It will have the mechanisms to perform judicial, economic, political and administrative functions. These functions may be performed by either the United Nations or any such international organization. This system is featured by a high level of cross-border cooperation and humanitarian interventions.
- E) The Hierarchical System:** This system comes into existence with the demise of the bipolar system through the breakup of one of the two blocs. Then the international order is reorganized into a political hierarchy and the ideology of the remaining bloc is enforced upon the members of the collapsed bloc. Depending on the ideology of the remaining bloc and the role of the international organizations in the changed scenario, the hierarchic system will be either democratic or authoritarian.

- F) The Unit Veto System:** The unit veto system is one in which all states possess the capability to destroy one another, but all of them are aware of the consequences of the attack: that aggression will trigger a retaliatory attack. The consciousness about the retaliatory action discourages each and every nation-state from attacking other countries. Kaplan held that the advancements in the fields of communication and technology minimize the danger of an accidental war under the unit veto system.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer,

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) Name the six international systems set forth by Morton Kaplan.

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5.3.2 Systems Approach of Kenneth Waltz

Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of Neorealism or ‘Structural Realism’, has immensely contributed to the advancement of the Systems approach to IR. In his 1954 book, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, Waltz introduced three levels of analysis in international relations. They are, respectively, the selfish nature of man; the behaviour of states and institutions; and the pressure of the international system. Waltz further stated that the issues of high politics, such as war are determined by the international system. According to Waltz, the war is instigated by the international system, and it could not be eliminated by changing the behaviour of states’ leaders and nation-states. Therefore, in this book Waltz made an argument that an analysis of the international system was needed to understand international politics. It was in his 1979 book, *Theory of International Politics*, that Waltz set forth the major canons of Neorealism and the salient features of his Systems approach as explained below.

- A) The Composition of the International System:** According to Waltz, the international system is composed of its structure and its interacting units, i.e., nation-states. He holds that structure of the international system is made of three elements: (i) ordering principle, (ii) the function of the units, and (iii) the distribution of material capabilities. The first element of the structure is its ordering principle, and according to Waltz, it is anarchic. This is due to the absence of a world government for maintaining international peace. In the absence of a world government, there is no mechanism to ensure the survival of nation-states other than a self-help system. The third attribute of the structure is the distribution of material capabilities among units in the international system. Material capabilities are primarily military weapons and manpower. In addition to that economic resources that support the enhancement of military infrastructure are also treated as a material capability.

- B) Distribution of Material Capabilities as the Regulating Force:** Like the ‘invisible hand’ in the market, the structure of the international system regulates the behaviour of nation-states through the distribution of material capabilities. How does it work? We have already seen that the ordering principle of the structure is anarchy, and self-help is the only means to ensure the security of the nation-states. These two factors lock nation-states in a security dilemma and instigate them to augment capabilities for balancing the power of their rivals. The third attribute of the structure is the distribution of material capabilities. Here material capabilities function as a regulating force or catalyst for developments in international politics. For instance, suppose when one of the nation-states augments its capabilities, then its potential rivals are compelled to scale-up their military strength, make alliances or bandwagon with a more powerful state so that they can ensure their own security. Sometimes the disproportionate distribution of capabilities may make some states more powerful than their rivals and it may instigate war. However, due to nation-states being rational actors their behaviour is based on the logic of the consequences. In sum, material capabilities act as catalysts for war, diplomatic initiatives, military alliances, and bandwagoning.
- C) Autonomy of the International System:** One of the major contributions of Waltz’s Neorealism is the severing of the link between the ‘low politics’ (i.e., politics within nation-states and the ‘high politics’ (politics of the international system). All issues of national or local importance come under the purview of ‘low politics’. For instance, unemployment, inflation, environmental issues, human rights, etc., are part of low politics. ‘High politics’ refers to the issues related to international politics such as war, defence, national security, and foreign policy. According to Waltz, low politics cannot affect international politics. Moreover, nation-states are like-units, therefore, the nature of political systems (i.e., authoritarian, democratic or ideological orientations), size of nation-states and their capabilities cannot make any difference in their function in the international system. The function of all nation-states is to ensure their national security in a condition of international anarchy. Therefore, irrespective of the internal dimensions of politics all nation-states behave in the same manner with regard to their foreign relations. By making a clear distinction between national politics and international politics, Waltz argues that the structure of the international system regulates the behaviour of nation-states through the distribution of material capabilities. In sum, Waltz suggests that the structure of the international system regulates the behaviour of nation-states and it is not possible that nation-states regulate the function of the international system. Hence, Waltz argues that in order to understand the developments in international politics one has to examine the external dimensions of politics (the dynamics in the international system). As far as Waltz is concerned, focusing on domestic factors for understanding international politics is a reductionist approach. Instead, Waltz sets forth Neorealism as a framework to understand international politics by examining the dynamics in the international system, and thereby, seeks to establish the autonomy of the international system.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer,

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the salient features of the systems approach of Kenneth Waltz?

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5.3.3 Systems Approach of Keohane and Nye

Works of Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye set forth Neoliberal understanding of the international system. Their joint book, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (1977, 2001), is one of the earliest works to systematically examine the processes that later came to be known as globalization. The opening statement of the book is that “We live in an era of interdependence”, owing to the increasing pace of cross-border transportation, communication, and trade. In this book, Keohane and Nye define interdependence as ‘situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries. This book further elaborates the neoliberal idea of ‘complex’ interdependence and its implications for international politics, especially its functions in an anarchical international system. Another classic text of Neoliberalism in IR is Keohane’s, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984). As its title indicates this book proposes that cooperation among nation-states is possible even without a dominant power in the lead role.

Keohane and Nye developed Neoliberalism as a systemic theory, which explains how international institutions facilitate mutual interdependence among nation-states and regulate the behaviour of nation-states. In order to understand the Systems approach of Neoliberalism, we have to understand the concepts such as international institutions, organizations, and regimes according to Neoliberalism. International institutions are defined as ‘sets of rules, principles, and expectations that govern interstate relations’. For instance, ‘liberal trading order’ is an international institution because it has certain rules and principles to serve that purpose and expectations that states open their markets for ensuring the smooth functioning of international trade. Here, the function of the international institution is to help states negotiate and enter into mutually beneficial agreements. International organizations are the formal embodiment of international institutions. In other words, the international institution is a broader realm, and it subsumes an international organization under its concern. For instance, the World Trade Organization is an international organization, which is constituted to serve the purpose of an international institution, i.e., the ‘liberal trading order’. An International organization is featured with a headquarters and other offices, governing council and employees, budgets, and agency to take actions against its member states. The United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO) are the best examples of international organizations. Another key term, often discussed by Neoliberals is

international regime. The term international regime has been used to refer to rules and norms within a particular issue-area. For instance, the Climate Change Regime governs rules and norms to mitigate global climate change. In the same manner, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime is aimed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, and TRIPS Regime deals with the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. The presence of international institutions has significantly increased since the end of the Cold War. The number of formal international organizations had risen from three hundred in the 1970s to six thousand at the dawn of the 21st century. The function of international institutions, international organizations, and international regimes is to strengthen interdependence. The salient features of Keohane and Nye's Systems Approach are as discussed below.

- A) The Composition of the International System:** As far as Waltz is concerned, the international system is composed of its structure and nation-states as its interacting units. However, according to Keohane and Nye, states are not the only central actors in the international system; rather they expand the scope of the international system by incorporating international institutions and non-state actors into its components. Today it is very clear that international institutions, non-state actors such as transnational corporations and global civil society groups are exerting influence on nation-states. Hence, Neoliberals analyse the role being played by international institutions, organizations, regimes, transnational corporations, and civil society groups in international relations.
- B) Nature of the International System:** Keohane and Nye share with Neorealists the belief that the nature of the international system is anarchical. However, they make an addition that interdependence also is a structural feature of the international system. In other words, both Keohane and Nye argue that the international system is anarchical and interdependent at the same time. The international system is anarchical in the sense that there is no world government above sovereign nation-states and the increasing pace of cross-border transportation, communication, trade and the growing number of international organizations all show that “we live in an era of interdependence”. While agreeing with Neorealists that anarchy is a problem as it triggers conflict among nation-states, Keohane and Nye find hope in interdependence that it makes possible the cooperation among nation-states, which eventually alter the nature of the international system.
- C) Regulating Force in the International System:** Keohane and Nye suggest that institutions are functioning as the regulating force in the international system. Institutions create norms that are binding on nation-states and that influence the behaviour of nation-states and change the patterns of international politics. For instance, many nation-states including India had to amend their patent laws to conform to the WTO's guidelines on intellectual property. The role of institutions is increasing in this era of complex interdependence with the presence of a number of actors, other than nation-states, including international organizations, transnational corporations, and global civil society groups. The quintessential example of the growing role of non-state actors in international relations is Greenpeace, which is an international organization engaged in protecting the global environment and promoting peace. They have succeeded in pressurizing governments across the world by gaining public opinion on issues related to the environment, nuclear testing, etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer,
ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Write a brief note on the Systems approach of Keohane and Nye?

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5.3.4 Systems Approach of Alexander Wendt

Structural Constructivism, set forth by Alexander Wendt, is noted for its Systems approach. Constructivism as an IR theory that argues that international relations are a social construction. It emphasizes the role of ideational factors such as culture, social values, identity, assumptions, rules, and language in the construction of international relations rather than the material factors such as military capabilities and economic resources. Even though Constructivism emerged in the wave of post positivism/postmodernism/poststructuralism in IR in the late 1980s, Alexander Wendt took a slight deviation and made his version of Constructivism (i.e., Structural Constructivism) compatible with some basic assumptions of Neorealism and Neoliberalism. Major works of Wendt are his article, *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics* (1992), and his book, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). Salient Features of Wendt's Systems Approach are explained below.

- A) The Composition of the International System:** Like Neorealism and Neoliberalism, Structural Constructivism of Alexander Wendt holds that the international system is composed of its structure and nation-states. However, Wendt differs with Neorealism and Neoliberalism on the elements of the structure. He argues that the structure is made of social relationships. Social relationships are comprised of shared knowledge, social practices, and material resources. The shared or intersubjective knowledge and social practices define who are the enemies, rivals, and friends for one nation-state to another in the international system. For instance, the shared knowledge about each other and their practices accordingly inform the United States and North Korea that both of them are 'enemies' to each other. Most of the member states in the European Union consider one another as 'friends'. Material resources acquire meaning according to shared knowledge and practices. For instance, the nuclear development programme of North Korea will definitely irk the United States. The scaling up of military infrastructure of a member state in the European Union does not cause any tension among its counterparts, because it does not pose any threat to them.
- B) Ideational Factors as the Regulating and Constitutive Force:** As far as Wendt is concerned, the ideational factors such as identity, norms, culture, etc., are functioning as the regulative as well as the constitutive forces that influence the behaviour of nation-states in the international system. For

instance, the identity of a nation-state as ‘democratic’ country informs it that it should stand for the cause of human rights and democratic values across the world. The ideational factors constitute the interests of nation-states. In other words, ideational factors constitute the interests of nation-states, and it also informs nation-states about the appropriate behaviour in the international system.

- C) The Consequence of Anarchy:** Wendt agrees with Neorealism and Neoliberalism that the nature of the international system is anarchic. However, he has a unique explanation about its consequence. Neorealism of Waltz holds a pessimistic view towards anarchy and suggests that the self-help is the only mechanism to ensure security. This gives a one-sided picture on the consequence of anarchy, a condition of ‘war of all against all’. However, Keohane and Nye are optimistic that the ill-effects of the anarchy can be mitigated through institutions. On the contrary, Wendt is neither pessimistic nor optimistic about the consequence of the anarchy. Rather, he is agnostic in this regard and states that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’, which indicates that the meaning and consequence of anarchy are dependent upon the nature of relationships among nation-states. Wendt further suggests that anarchy can take three principal forms: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian. Enemies create Hobbesian anarchy which is similar to the anarchy depicted by Neorealism. Nation-states, who are in Hobbesian anarchy feel insecure and sometimes pose a threat to world peace. Lockean anarchy is less competitive and is in some respects closer to the anarchy sets forth by Neorealism. The relationships among friends create Kantian anarchy, which is cordial and does not pose any threat to peace.

5.3.5 Systems Approach of Immanuel Wallerstein

Immanuel Wallerstein’s Systems approach, known as the World-Systems approach, is the comprehensive version of the dependency theory. Wallerstein sets forth his Systems approach through the following books: *The Modern World-System, Volume 1: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1974), *The Capitalist World Economy* (1979), *The Modern World-System, Volume 2: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (1980), *The Modern World-System, Volume 3: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730-1840s* (1989), *The Modern World-System, Volume 4: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789–1914* (2011).

According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the present or the modern world-system is a capitalist one, which emerged in Europe during the period between 1450 and 1650 (this period is also known as the long sixteenth century). Through the process of colonization, this system was extended to North and South America, Asia, and Africa and thereby every region of the world was integrated into a capitalist system. Therefore, the basic argument of Wallerstein is that the world is not a set of independent and separate nation-states. Instead, nation-states are the part of a larger system (i.e., the World-System), which is the set of relatively stable and political relationships, being regulated by the global capital. Therefore he suggests that focussing solely on developments within each nation-state will not bring a clear picture of the developments in the world-system, rather we have to examine the world system as a whole, its regulating force and the interactions of its

components. Salient Features of Wallerstein's Systems Approach are explained below.

A) The Composition of the Modern World-System: According to Wallerstein the key components of the modern World-System are economic zones, nation-states, social classes, and status groups. Economic zones are the classification of the geographical regions on the basis of the division of labour (i.e., economic zones primarily engaged in the production of primary commodities and zones focused on the manufacturing of the most advanced commodities). Wallerstein holds that there are three economic zones on the basis of the division of labour, and they are respectively: 'core', 'peripheral', and 'semi-peripheral'. The 'core' is the technologically advanced zone in the world, or known as the 'global north'. The 'core' specializes in the production of the most advanced commodities and featured by capital-intensive production, the possession of cutting-edge technologies, and the highly developed industries. Due to these factors, the 'core' gets high profits from economic activities. The 'core' is represented by Western Europe, the United States, and Japan. In sharp contrast, the 'peripheral' is the least developed regions in the world, and they are also known as the 'Global South'. The 'peripheral' is engaged in the production of primary commodities. The 'peripheral' economic zone is relatively less technologically sophisticated and more labour intensive than that of the 'core'. Due to these reasons, the 'peripheral' gets low profits from its produces. The 'peripheral' is represented by most regions in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The 'semi-peripheral' is an area with a mixture of about half "core-like" and half "peripheral-like" activities. The example of 'semi-peripheral' economies is India, China, and South Africa.

The second component of the modern world-system is the nation-state. The modern World-System is politically organized into a sovereign and territorially bound nation-states.

The third component of the modern world-system is social classes. In a capitalist world-system, social classes are formed on the basis of people's relationship to the means of production. Those who own the means of production are the capitalists and those who are deprived of it are the workers. The fourth component of the modern world-system is the status groups, the social groupings based on solidarity derives from cultural identification. Social divisions based on religion, language, race or ethnicity belongs to this category.

B) Nature of the Modern World-System: According to Wallerstein, the modern world-system is capitalist and under this system economic power rests in the hands of those who own the means of production. Since the owners of the means of production (individuals, private corporations, and state organizations) are obsessed with the appropriation of maximum profits, the capitalist modern world-system is inherently exploitative. The capitalists exploit the workers and the core exploits the peripheral states, thereby leading to extreme economic inequalities in the world economy.

C) Regulating Force in the Modern World-System: The regulating force in the modern world-system is the global capital, which organizes the economic activities across the world. Most of the Marxist thinkers, including world-

systems theorists, consider the globalization as an economic transition in which the requirements of global capital are fulfilling through the implementation of neoliberal economic programmes across the world. In this condition, nation-states in the peripheral are restrained by the core, international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and transnational corporations, in accordance with the interests of global capital. For instance, the structural adjustment programmes proposed by the IMF compel several nation-states in the global south to roll-back their welfare programmes. By influencing the prerogative of a nation-state to take the decisions regarding matters under its jurisdiction, the global capital has shown that it is able to challenge the concept of state sovereignty.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer,
ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.
- 1) Write a short note on the modern world-system.

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5.4 LET US SUM UP

In sum, the behavioural revolution in the 1950s and 1960s initiated the Systems approach to Political Science and IR. Major System theorists to IR are Morton Kaplan, Kenneth Waltz, Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, Alexander Wendt, and Immanuel Wallerstein. Most of the Systems theorists to IR view the international system, as an integrated whole, made of its structure and nation-states as its primary units. They also argue that the System has a mechanism to control the behaviour of nation-states, therefore, the developments in International Relations is a consequence of the function of the international system rather than that of the result of the domestic factors. The significance of the Systems approach to IR is that it sets forth a distinct framework to analyse International Relations.

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5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following systems
 - Balance of Power
 - Loose bipolar
 - Tight bipolar
 - Universal
 - Hierarchical
 - Unit veto system.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - The composition of the International system
 - Distribution of material capabilities as the regulating force
 - Autonomy of the International System

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - International institutions facilitate mutual interdependence among nation-states and regulate the behaviour of nation-states
 - International institutions help states negotiate and enter into mutually beneficial agreements

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Basic argument of Wallerstein that the world is not a set of independent and separate nation-states
 - Nation-states are the part of a larger system (i.e., the World-System), which is the set of relatively stable and political relationships, being regulated by the global capital
 - We have to examine the world system as a whole, its regulating force and the interactions of its components



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UNIT 6 DEPENDENCY THEORY*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Different Versions of Dependency Theory
 - 6.2.1 Moderate Version
 - 6.2.2 Radical
 - 6.2.3 World-Systems Theory
- 6.3 Major Concepts in Dependency Theory
 - 6.3.1 Dependency as the Result of a Historical Process
 - 6.3.2 Core, Periphery, Semi-Periphery and Enclave Economy
 - 6.3.3 Dependency Theory as a Critic of Liberal Theories
 - 6.3.4 Critique of Modernization Theory
 - 6.3.5 Development of Underdevelopment
 - 6.3.6 Neoliberal Globalization Entrenching the Dependency
- 6.4 Criticism
- 6.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.6 References
- 6.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you are going to go through the dependency (*dependencia*) theory; the developments that led to its origins; and significance and its major versions. The Unit also examines criticisms of dependency theory. After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the origins and major versions of dependency theory
- Examine the major concepts in dependency theory and
- Narrate criticisms of dependency theory

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Dependency theory emerged in Latin America during the second half of the 1950s as a critic of liberal theories of socio-economic and political development. Dependency theory can be defined as an explanation of the economic backwardness of a nation-state due to the external influence. Theotonio Dos Santos (1936–2018), one of the major proponents of dependency theory defines it as a historical condition which shapes the structure of the world economy in favour of some countries thereby adversely affecting the development of others. Dependency is a situation in which the economy of a country is conditioned by the development and expansion of the economy of another country. Dependency theory seeks to understand and explain the reasons for the persistent economic backwardness and underdevelopment of the countries in the global south and sets forth suggestions to resolve this problem.

*Dr. Roshan Varghese V., Research Scholar, Political Science, IGNOU, New Delhi

6.2 DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF DEPENDENCY THEORY

Dependency is not a single unified theory rather it is a set of theories or frameworks to study continued economic dependence and underdevelopment in some countries/ regions and its social, cultural, economic and foreign policy fall-outs. Dependency scholars are divided into a number of camps including that of a moderate version represented by Raul Prebisch, radical or Marxist-Leninist version propagated by Andre Gunder Frank, and a more comprehensive World Systems theory set forth by Immanuel Wallerstein.

6.2.1 Moderate Version of Dependency Theory

Works of Raul Prebisch (1901-1986) played a major role in generating the dependency theory. Raul Prebisch was an Argentine economist and during his illustrious career he served as a professor of economics, Director-General of the Argentine Central Bank, head of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). During his tenure as the Executive Secretary of ECLA, Prebisch brought out a ground-breaking study titled, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems* (1950), which was an inquiry into the economic backwardness of Latin American countries.

According to Prebisch, it is the 'adverse' terms of trade (ToT) with the developed countries which has historically deteriorated the economic condition of Latin American countries. ToT is the ratio between a country's export prices and its import prices. While Latin American countries are the producers of primary commodities, they export it to the industrially advanced countries. These primary commodities are processed and transformed into the finished products in the industrially advanced countries. These finished products are exported to the developing countries including that of the Latin American region. In other words, countries export their primary commodities at cheaper prices and import finished products at higher prices and this adversely affects their economy. On the basis of his empirical study conducted with Hans Wolfgang Singer (1910-2006), Prebisch set forth the Prebisch-Singer terms-of-trade thesis (PST). PST suggests that the economies of the producers of primary commodities are declining day-by-day due to the increasing trade deficit with producers of finished products. In other words, the economic gap between the producers of primary commodities and the producers of finished products enhances in tandem with their increasing economic ties. Thus, the Prebisch-Singer terms-of-trade thesis (PST) laid foundations for the dependency theory.

Prebisch challenged the theory of comparative advantage and the liberal economists' view that the developing countries should specialize in the production of primary commodities in order to benefit from free trade. Prebisch introduced a structuralist approach to the study of the global economy, which was based on the binary oppositions of development/underdevelopment and core/periphery. In other words, his study was focused on the inherently asymmetric relationship between the developed and developing countries. Unlike liberal theories, Prebisch's approach was examining the theme of development and underdevelopment from the experience of the countries in the global south. Having set forth the reasons for economic backwardness in Latin America, Prebisch

then set forth a number of recommendations such as state intervention, economic integration of Latin America, land reforms in dismantling inequalities and import substitution industrialization (ISI). Import substitution industrialization is a trade policy, which seeks to reduce imports by promoting industries at the domestic level. The major aims of ISI are a reduction in imports thereby resolving the problem of trade deficit, promotion of local industries thereby achieving industrial self-sufficiency and also scale up economic growth. However, there were certain hurdles to a successful implementation of these recommendations. The first was the comparatively smaller markets in Latin American countries which were not enough to support the economies of scale, and keep the prices low. The second issue was related to the difficulties in transforming Latin America from agrarian economies to the industrial nations. The third problem was that ISI caused more dependency on import of capital and heavy machinery needed for industrialization.

6.2.2 Radical Dependency Theory

Radical dependency theory is built upon Marxism and Lenin's understanding of imperialism. Andre Gunder Frank, James Cockcroft, and Dale Johnson are considered to be the radical dependency theorists. The radical dependency theorists argue that the motive force behind the dependency relationship is global capitalism. The developed countries find markets for their finished products in developing countries. In addition to that, the developed countries also treat developing countries as the destination for investment. When developing countries borrow capital from developed countries, the loan repayments deteriorate their economy. Radical dependency theorists hold that the 'underdevelopment' of the countries in the global south is a historical product. Here 'underdevelopment' as a condition differs from undeveloped. Undeveloped is a condition of lack of development, and underdevelopment is the result of exploitation by another country. Centuries of colonialism, exploitation, and socio-economic and political restructuring of colonies by the imperial powers have transformed the erstwhile colonies into peripheries and their former masters (present-day developed countries) into the centre or core. As a result, the countries in the periphery have to depend upon the core (developed countries) for capital, technology, and finished goods. In other words, centuries of colonialism has transformed developing countries into the suppliers of primary commodities, cheap labour, and the repositories of capital, technologies, and finished goods.

Radical dependency theorists hold that the rigid international division of labour enforced by the capitalist system is responsible for underdevelopment in some parts of the world. Here, periphery states are tasked with the supply of primary commodities. The most striking point is that what periphery states have to supply and what they have to receive in the form of capital and technology are determined by the economic interests of the core. Here, the periphery states do not have any say or control over the matters related to their development. In such a condition, the governments in the core and the periphery states try to satisfy the interests of the bourgeoisie. This control of bourgeoisie over the core and periphery is the characteristic of the highest stage of capitalism or imperialism. In the process, the periphery countries also experience loss of sovereignty as decision-making power shifts to the core. Raw material producers become an appendage to the economies of the core. What one finds is not a genuine national capitalism in Latin America. Rather it is a capitalism that is dependent; this dependent capitalism is the result of the processes and decisions made in the core economies.

Radical dependency theorists argue that the countries in the global south cannot follow the western path to development. The long history of colonialism and the restructuring of socio-political and economic systems in the colonies created an asymmetrical structure of relations between the core and the periphery states. This has made the core as the producers of the finished products and the periphery states as the suppliers of primary commodities. Moreover, the terms of trade favour the core at the expense of the periphery, which further widens the inequalities between the core and the periphery states. Radical dependency theorists hold that the sheer exploitation in the form of exchange between the primary commodities and the finished products will only deteriorate the vulnerable condition of the developing countries. In other words, this unequal exchange advances the 'development of underdevelopment'. According to the radical dependency theorists such as Frank, underdevelopment is the condition created by the exploitation of developing countries by the undeveloped countries. Hence, a socialist revolution is the only way to break away from this exploitative and dependent relationship.

6.2.3 World Systems Theory

World systems theory, proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein, is the comprehensive version of the dependency theory. In contrast to the moderate and radical dependency theorists, who limit their study to the economic relations between the core and periphery, World Systems theory is focused on a broader geographical framework. It draws on the Lenin's understanding of imperialism and World Systems theory holds that the world as it is today can be understood only in the context of the development of global capitalism. Because, today there is only one world system, which is a capitalist world-economy, emerged in Europe during the 'long' sixteenth century (1450-1640). According to Wallerstein, this capitalist world-economy is characterized by the 'production for the market to gain the maximum profit, and unequal exchange relations between the core and the peripheral states'. Further, this global capital has generated a hierarchical structure, which determines the position of each state within this world-economy. Through this hierarchical structure and market mechanisms, the core exploits the periphery.

Wallerstein introduces the 'semi-periphery' as a third category between the 'periphery' and the 'core'. The semi-peripheral states are the emerging economies such as India, China, South Africa, and Brazil, characterized by attributes such as modern industries, cities, and large peasantry. According to World Systems theorists, the possibility of changing position in the core/semi-periphery/periphery hierarchy is very rare. Hence, the core, periphery, and semi-periphery remain as the enduring features of the capitalist world-economy. Therefore, the World Systems theory is a critic of liberal and modernization theories of socio-economic and political development. World Systems theory, further, holds that the semi-periphery states divide the periphery and it makes a unified opposition against the core a difficult task. The core maintains its hegemony due to the divisions within the semi-periphery-periphery camps. However, the World Systems theory argues that the contradictions within the capitalist global economy will lead to the decline of capitalism and its replacement by socialism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer,
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.
- 1) Give a brief introduction of dependency theory.

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6.3 MAJOR CONCEPTS IN DEPENDENCY THEORY

6.3.1 Dependency as the Result of a Historical Process

Dependency is the result of a specific historical process. Through centuries of colonialism and domination, the colonial and dominant capitalist powers restructured the socio-economic institutions of the colonies and underdeveloped regions; and integrated the economies of these countries and regions as resource suppliers into the world economy in accordance with the requirement of capitalism. As a result, the colonies and other underdeveloped regions became the suppliers of primary commodities and the markets for the finished goods manufactured by the colonial and dominant capitalist economies. Dependency theorists argue that even after the end of formal colonialism, the structure of the world economy remains without any change. Former colonies and other resource producing regions remain in the periphery of global capitalism whose centre, or core, remained for centuries in Europe and shifted to the USA over the last one hundred years.

6.3.2 Core, Periphery, Semi-Periphery, and Enclave Economy

Dependency theorists categorize the economies into the two broad categories, i.e., the core and the periphery. The core economies are the developed countries in the global north (e.g. in Europe, the USA, and Japan) characterized by advanced technology and industries, supported by powerful state governments, a strong middle class (bourgeoisie) and a large working class (proletariat). In addition to the core, terms such as the ‘centre’ and ‘metropolitan’ are also used to denote the industrially developed countries in the global north. The terms such as periphery and satellite are referred to the developing and least developed countries in the global south (e.g. in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America), which are dependent on the production of primary commodities. These countries are featured with weak states, a small middle class and a large number of low-skill and agriculture workers. In addition to the core and the periphery, Immanuel Wallerstein sets forth an intermediate position, i.e., the semi-periphery, in terms of its economic condition. The semi-peripheral states are the emerging economies such as India, China, South Africa, and Brazil, characterized by attributes such as modern

industries, cities, and large peasantry. These states are also witnessing a shift from less profitable peripheral-type economic activities to more profitable core-type ones.

Dependency theorists define ‘enclave economy’ as a territory within the periphery, in which foreign capital is invested for extracting raw materials such as minerals, oil, plantations, etc. Even though the extractions in the enclave economies provide some jobs for a small group of the population in the periphery, it does not improve the economic condition of the periphery. However, its natural resources get depleted in the process and the enclave continues to suffer from lack of development.

6.3.3 Dependency Theory as a Critic of Liberal Theories

Liberal thinkers of economic development such as Adam Smith (1723-1790), believed that economic activity should be spontaneous and freed from all forms of regulations. Smith argued that if economic activities were allowed to operate without regulations, then it would operate in accordance with its own rules and bring immense progress in society. In tune with Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1830) supported *laissez-faire* (this French term refers to the policy, which allows free functioning of the economy) and held that free functioning of the capitalist economy without government intervention would naturally bring immense prosperity and full employment in society. David Ricardo’s (1772-1823) theory of comparative advantage provided an intellectual capital for free-trade. According to Ricardo, a country’s situation such as climate, and other natural and artificial factors provide a comparative advantage in producing certain commodities. Therefore, each country can specialize in the production of those commodities which has a comparative advantage, and through the promotion of free-trade all countries can ensure the availability of commodities at the cheapest prices as possible. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who was the contemporary of Say and Ricardo, held that popular democracy and free-trade would allow all human beings to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. Bentham argued that it would eventually result in the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Political revolution in France and the Industrial Revolution in England and the resultant mass political and economic participation, a massive flow of raw materials from colonies, mass production of consumer goods, the rapid growth of markets in Europe and its colonies worldwide, tremendous material advancement in Europe set liberalism as a model for modern society.

However, the new socio-political and economic system which emerged in industrial Europe and colonies worldwide were not free from problems. It created class divisions within society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The new condition was conducive to exploitation and it gradually and steadily degraded the status of the proletariat in every social standard. Initially, the advocates of liberalism argued that problems created by industrialization would be naturally resolved by the logic of the free market. They held that wealth would flow from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat through the ‘trickle-down’ effect. Eventually, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would have a harmony of interests and would finally settle all the socio-economic problems. Therefore, in order to achieve this desirable condition, the liberals argued for more economic reforms and minimum government intervention. However, growing disparities contrary to the claims of the liberals later led to working-class movements and the formation of Marxism, the radical ideology proposed by Karl Marx (1818-1883).

It should be noted that the centuries of European colonialism not only exhausted the economy of colonies worldwide, but also the former had restructured the socio-economic and political systems of the latter. Hence, European powers could design their colonies as the provider of raw materials and the repository for capital and finished goods. This created a dependency, which continued even after the colonies became formally independent. Thus, dependency theorists refute the claims of the theory of comparative advantage espoused by liberal thinkers. According to dependency theorists ‘theory of comparative advantage is a damaging myth’.

6.3.4 Critique of Modernization Theory

Modernization theory is a perspective that the less developed countries can achieve development through accelerating economic growth and replacing the traditional values and socio-political and economic systems with that of the developed countries. Modernization theory equates development with mass industrialization, a higher level of economic growth, and the liberal democratic values. The best-known modernization theory was set forth by Walt Whitman Rostow, an American economist and political theorist, who played a major role in shaping US foreign policy toward Latin America in the 1960s.

According to Rostow, all countries have to undergo four stages of economic development for achieving the status of a developed country. The first stage is the ‘traditional’ stage, in which people do not subscribe to the work ethic, save little money, hold that the economic backwardness is part of their fate. Therefore, during this stage, people do not think much about changing their living standard so that very little social change takes place at this stage. The second stage is the ‘take-off’ stage. During this stage, less developed countries think about changing their future and discard traditional values. Due to these reasons, people start to save and invest money, promote competitions that lead to achievements, and economic growth is visible at this stage. Foreign assistance in the form of aid and assistance is very essential in entering the third stage of development. During the third stage, the country improves its technology, set up new industries and moves toward technological maturity. This stage also witnesses the transformation of traditional values and social institutions into that of the developed countries. At the fourth stage, the country enters into the final phase of development, featured with higher levels of economic growth, consumption and standard of living.

Dependency theorists hold that modernization theory is ethnocentric and ignores the social and cultural arrangements in other parts of the world and to their unique historical experiences. The proponents of modernization failed to examine the impact of colonization on former colonies, especially in figuring out the historical process over centuries that created an unfavourable condition for developing countries. According to dependency theorists, modernization theorists have ignored the exploitation inherent in the economic relations between the developed and the developing countries in terms of trade and investment. Therefore, dependency theorists argue Rostow’s modernization theory emanates from ‘one size fits all’ assumption and it fails to address the real reasons for the underdevelopment of the peripheral countries.

6.3.5 Development of Underdevelopment

‘Development of underdevelopment’ is a concept proposed by Andre Gunder Frank to denote the deteriorating economic condition of the peripheral states as the result of their dependency on the core. According to Frank, underdevelopment is a condition fundamentally different from undeveloped. Undeveloped is a condition of a region, in which its resources are not being utilized. For instance, Asia, Americas, and Africa during the pre-colonial period were undeveloped. Their land and natural resources were not utilized on a scale consistent with their potential. However, European powers during the colonial period extracted natural resources of their colonies. As a result, the resources of the colonies drained but it did not provide any benefit to the colonies, however, the economies of the colonial powers improved at the cost of the resources of the colonies. Even after the end of the colonialism, the core countries retain their dominance over the peripheral states. Thus, the exploitation of the core continues to date, and growing economic relations between the core and periphery brings advantage to the former and disadvantage to the latter. In other words, dependency will further exploit the natural resources of the periphery, deteriorate the economic condition of the periphery, and bring prosperity to the core. Thus, Frank’s concept of ‘the development of underdevelopment’ argues that development in the core countries always produces underdevelopment and poverty in the periphery.

6.3.6 Neoliberal Globalization Entrenching the Dependency

Most of the dependency theorists hold that the current phase of globalization is ‘neoliberal globalization dominated by transnational corporations (TNCs)’. As a result, the production of manufacturing goods concentrates in the hands of a few TNCs, which makes an oligopoly market at the global level. According to the dependency theorists, this will slow down production and speed up income polarization. Neoliberal globalization also witnesses increasing dependency of the peripheral states on the core and international financial institutions for capital. This drastically cuts down the ‘sovereignty’ of peripheral states in determining and implementing their policies, as they are dictated by the international financial institutions. For instance, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) set forth by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) compelled peripheral states to roll back welfare schemes and adopt free market economic policies. Through the payments of loan interests, royalties, profits and the large scale imports of finished goods the peripheral states transfer a significant amount of money to the core. This transfer of money creates a fund crunch in the peripheral states, and it will adversely affect their capacity in investing for the development of their domestic industry and infrastructure.

There are a number of empirical studies on the impact of dependency on developing countries in the global south. For instance, Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Muller’s work titled, *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations*, (1974) was an inquiry into the exploitation by the multinational corporations. The authors argue that far from creating jobs and infusing technology in the global south, companies like General Motors ‘drained off’ local investment capital. Teresa Hayter’s book titled, *Aid as Imperialism* (1971), argues that foreign assistance in the forms of loans, technology, and arms have been used to bolster oppressive dictatorships rather than lay foundations for development in the countries belonging to the global south. Foreign aid for infrastructure development

did not uplift the living standards of the people in a developing country. Rather, it distorted their economy and transformed them into debtor nations. For instance, Brazil and Mexico became debtors in the 1980s due to loan repayment. Thus, dependency theorists argue that the neoliberal globalization dominated by TNCs and financial institutions will enhance the economic gap between the core and peripheral states, and it will further deteriorate the economic condition of the peripheral states.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer,
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the major concepts in dependency theory?

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6.4 CRITICISM

Dependency theory emerged as the critique of liberal and modernization approach to development. However, in recent years, dependency theory has been the target of its opponents (i.e., liberal and modernization theories), and interestingly, it has also been criticized by Marxist thinkers. Liberal and modernization theorists argue that the success of Asian Tigers [i.e., Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong] nullify the claims of dependency theory. The Asian Tigers have succeeded in achieving their target of rapid industrialization and maintaining a higher growth rate. Moreover, they are in a position to compete with and challenge the economies of the developed countries in the global north. Liberal thinkers argue that dependency theory is unable to explain the reasons for the success of the economies such as Asian Tigers. Political scientists like Gabriel Almond observe that dependency is merely political propaganda rather than a theory.

Liberal thinker John Goldthorpe and the Brandt Report (1980) criticize radical dependency due to its biased opinion on the economic relations between the core and periphery. According to the radical position of Andre Gunder Frank, dependency will only enhance the pace of ‘development of underdevelopment’ and the core is not interested in the development of the periphery. However, the liberals argue that the core needs the periphery to grow and industrialize as a source of new investment and new market. Further, the Brandt Report suggests that the ‘rebalancing’ of the world economic system in favour of the global south (peripheral states) is desirable than its abolition. In his later work titled, *Crisis in the World Economy* (1980), even Frank changed his position on ‘development of underdevelopment’ and admitted that industrial development is possible in the peripheral states. Likewise, Fernando Henrique Cardoso wrote and explained Brazil’s relative success in industrialization and reduction in its dependence on raw material exports from the 1970s onwards. Developments in the world capitalism opened opportunities to industrialize while still remaining within the

overall context of a dependent economy. While Brazil did experience what Cardoso called ‘associated dependent development’, the neighbouring Bolivia did not, meaning thereby that dependency in terms of its dynamics differs from country to country and region to region. Radical dependency is also criticized for its preoccupied position that the problem lays in ‘capitalism’. For instance, dependency relationships existed between the communist core (erstwhile Soviet Union) and its periphery (countries allied with the Soviet Union during the Cold War period). Radical dependency theorists ignored the dependency relationships within the countries in the communist bloc.

In addition to the criticism from liberal and modernization thinkers, dependency subjects to the criticism of Marxist writers. For instance, Samir Amin in his work titled, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism* (1976), observes that historical analysis of radical dependency theory represented by Frank is too generalized. Frank’s theory fails to show unevenness of the development of the peripheral states, ranging from the backwardness of Ethiopia to the growing industries of Asian Tigers – a point also made by Cardoso. Radical dependency is also charged with its focus only on the relations between the core and periphery while ignoring the dependency within the peripheral states. For instance, while outspoken about the dominance of TNCs from the core states in the peripheral states, radical dependency ignores the domination of TNCs from the peripheral states in their counterparts.

According to Argentine post-Marxism thinker Ernesto Laclau, dependency theory is not a true Marxist analysis. In his book titled, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism* (1977), Laclau opines that Frank’s dependency theory is a mere narration of the flow of surplus from the periphery to the core. What is missing in this narration is the Marxist analysis of relations of production and the mode of production. It also fails to provide a Marxist account of the stages of economic transformation of peripheral states’ from feudalism to capitalism. Moreover, Frank is criticized for missing an important component of Marxism, the internal dynamics of the class struggle in his analysis.

Unlike treating dependency as a process of ‘underdevelopment’, thinkers such as Bill Warren argue it as a progressive stage. In his book, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (1980), Warren opines that dependency plays a major role in transforming the peripheral states from feudalism to capitalism, thereby advancing its path to socialism. The core imparts not only skills, capital and technology to the peripheral states but also the former makes the latter perfect for a ‘typical’ class struggle. As a result, the proletariats in the peripheral states become conscious about exploitation and they will be able to organize against Western capitalism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer,

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the major points of criticism of dependency theory?

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6.5 LET US SUM UP

Dependency theory has emerged as a critic of liberal and modernization theories of socio-economic and political development. Liberal theories hold that backwardness in the developing countries can be overcome with greater economic relations with the developed countries and by replicating the socio-economic institutions of the developed countries in the developing countries. However, dependency theory challenged all these arguments of liberal theories on the ground that the greater economic relations with the developed countries have only caused the exploitation of the developing countries. Dependency theory argues that economic relations between the core and periphery have led to the overexploitation of natural resources in the peripheries, the flow of surplus from periphery to the core, widening the gap between the developed and developing countries, and it has become a perennial process of the 'development of underdevelopment'. One of the salient features of dependency theory is that it could set forth a theory from the perspective of the developing countries. Dependency theory holds that the backwardness in the developing countries is the result of a historical process emanating from the emergence of capitalism. Dependency has established through colonialism and even after the end of formal colonialism, the former colonial masters could retain their control over the periphery through economic relations. Contrary to the belief of modernization theorists that the real cause of backwardness of the developing countries is internal, dependency theorists argue that it is external factors that prevent them from development. Dependency theory is not a unified approach and there are three major versions on the basis of analyzing dependency. Even though dependency theory is criticized by both liberal and Marxist thinkers, it gives us insights on the growing inequalities between the countries in the global north and the global south; and as to why countries and regions in the global south remain dependent and underdeveloped.

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6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Dependency theory is a critic of liberal theories of socio-economic and political development
 - Definition given by Theotonio Dos Santos
 - Three different version of dependency theory: moderate, radical and world system theory

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Dependency as the result of a historical process
 - Core, periphery, semi-periphery and enclave economy
 - Dependency theory is a critic of liberal theory; modernization theory; development of underdevelopment; and neoliberal globalization entrenching the dependency

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
 - Liberal thinkers argue dependency theory is unable to explain the reasons for the success of the economies such as Asian Tigers
 - Political scientists like Gabriel Almond observe that dependency is merely political propaganda rather than a theory
 - Liberals argue that the core needs the periphery to grow and industrialize as a source of new investment and new market
 - Marxist critique of dependency theory is that it is not a true Marxist analysis
 - Internal dynamics of the class struggle is missing in dependency theory

UNIT 7 CONSTRUCTIVISM*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 What is Constructivism?
- 7.3 Philosophical Foundations of Constructivism
- 7.4 Major Assumptions of Constructivism
 - 7.4.1 Social Construction of Reality
 - 7.4.2 Influence of Ideational Factors
 - 7.4.3 Mutual Constitution of Agents and Structure
 - 7.4.4 International Anarchy
- 7.5 Different Versions of Constructivism
 - 7.5.1 Modernist
 - 7.5.2 Modernist Linguistic or Rule-oriented Constructivism
 - 7.5.3 Radical
 - 7.5.4 Critical
- 7.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.7 References
- 7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to examine the uniqueness of Constructivism among International Relations theories. After going through this Unit, you would be able to:

- Explain the philosophical foundations of Constructivism
- Narrate the salient features of Constructivism and
- Examine the major versions of Constructivism

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Constructivism or Constructivism is a theory in International Relations which holds that developments in international relations are being constructed through social processes in accordance with ideational factors such as identity, norms, rules, etc. This standpoint of Constructivism is contrary to the 'atomized' or 'individualist' and 'materialist' interpretation of international relations by the mainstream theories in IR [i.e., Neorealism and Neoliberalism]. Both Neorealism and Neoliberalism hold that material factors such as military capacity and economic resources are catalysts for developments in international relations. Since the nature of international relations is anarchical, the actions of nation-states are heavily depended on their self-interest (i.e., to augment the military capabilities and economic resources), and calculations about consequences (i.e., to avoid

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actions that adversely affect states' security). In such considerations, there is no room for normative concerns and sociability. Thus in an anarchical world, states are concerned about their (self) security; hence, the study of international relations should be focused on material factors that affect state security. This approach of mainstream theories neglected the ideational factors, which influence the behaviour of nation-states.

The developments since the end of the Cold War give impetus to Constructivism. For instance, Realism and its variant Neorealism hold that stability of the international system is maintained through a balance of power between major states and their alliances. Therefore, the proponents of Neorealism believed that some states would emerge to balance the United States to offset its power in the absence of the Soviet Union. They also predicted the emergence of new great powers in a multipolar system. Kenneth Waltz, the chief advocate of Neorealism, forecasted the rise of new great powers in a short span of time. However, it has not happened since the end of the Cold War. The developments since the Cold War also challenged the core assumption of liberalism, liberal optimism or a belief in progress. Francis Fukuyama's essay titled, *The End of History*, which was published in 1989 and his book titled, *The End of History and the Last Man*, which was published in 1992 were about the ultimate victory of liberal values. According to Fukuyama, the disintegration of the Soviet Union marked the dismantling of ideological divisions and thereby the world witnessed the universalization of liberal values. In a similar vein, Robert Keohane shares the liberal optimism about progress. Liberalism strongly believes that international relations can be transformed from conflict to cooperation through interdependence and democracy. Many believed that the victory and universalization of liberal values after the end of the Cold War would make the world a better place to live in. However, the world has been witnessing the resurgence of civil wars, international terrorism, non-state violence and genocide, 'failed' states and state itself involved in 'ethnic cleansing' since the end of the Cold War. These developments undermined the liberal optimism about peace and cooperation at the domestic and international levels. Thus, the developments since the end of the Cold War have questioned the ability of Realism and Liberalism and their variants in predicting and explaining international relations. The critics of Realism and Liberalism hold that the emphasis on material factors while neglecting the ideational factors are the major reasons for weakness of these theories in understanding the recent developments in international relations. The incidents ranging from genocides to civil wars are very much related to the ideational factors like 'identity'; therefore, a new paradigm in analyzing these developments became the need of the hour.

Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the increasing pace of globalization drastically altered the international environment hitherto. The new developments triggered a new set of problems and opportunities for nation-states, transnational corporations, and civil society groups. At the same time, nation-states across the world witnessed serious debates on questions such as, what is national identity and what is national interest? This was to re-shape their policies to address the changing international environment. A 'Constructivist lens' was required in this regard. In sum, the new developments at the domestic as well as international relations led to the rise of Constructivism in IR.

7.2 WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVISM?

The term ‘Constructivism’ encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives whose converging point is the view that ‘we have no direct access to reality’. But the Social world that is accessible to us, is constructed through our social relations. Our social relations are constructed through the ideas we share about the world. In other words, we construct the ‘social world’ in accordance with our ideas (about the world on the basis of our experiences and perceptions about it). It holds a view that the social world and our ideas are mutually constitutive.

Constructivism in the academic discipline of IR argues that international relations are a social construction. States, alliances, and international institutions are the products of human interaction in the social world. They are being constructed through human action imbued with social values, identity, assumptions, rules, language, etc. Constructivism is a three-layered understanding of international relations involving metaphysics, social theory, and IR theory. First, Constructivism is a metaphysical stance. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy, which examines and interprets the nature of reality. Therefore the scholars who treat Constructivism as a metaphysical stance seek to examine and interpret the real nature of international relations. Second, constructivism as a social theory focuses on the role of knowledge and knowledgeable agents in the constitution of social reality. In other words, Constructivists examine the role of shared understanding, and discourses in the construction of international relations. Shared understanding means the perception of people or nation-states about their counterparts and the social world. This shared understanding is formed through perceptions about the other (people or nation-states) and interactions in society or international relations. Our perceptions and interactions inform some knowledge about the other and this knowledge constructs social reality. Thus, our knowledge about social reality is constructed through our perceptions and interactions. Finally, Constructivism as an IR theory seeks to conduct research on sound social ontological and epistemological foundations. In other words, IR Constructivism holds that international relations are a social construction; therefore, its study requires a particular set of methods. Constructivism enhanced the scope of IR by incorporating ideational factors such as identity, norms, and rule into its fold. For instance, IR Constructivism examines the role of identities, norms in the constitution of national interests, and the social construction of new territorial and non-territorial transnational regions.

The term ‘Constructivism’ was coined for International Relations by Nicholas Greenwood Onuf in his book, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* [1989]. However, it was the works of Alexander Wendt especially his 1992 article, *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, and his 1999 book, *Social Theory of International Politics* which popularized Constructivism in IR. Wendt’s version of Constructivism, a state-centric and structural one, helped it to find a place among the mainstream theories of International Relations.

7.3 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

Even though Constructivism is a recent entrant into the club of IR theories, its genesis can be traced back to the works of German philosopher Immanuel Kant

(1724–1804). Kant heralded a Constructivist turn in epistemology by setting forth a viewpoint that the production of knowledge is influenced by the consciousness. Having been influenced by Kant, Neo-Kantians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proposed an ‘objective hermeneutics’, which stressed the importance of understanding consciousness. During this period a number of German thinkers came forward to state that human sciences [such as history, literature, law, politics, etc.] could not be studied like natural sciences. These thinkers argued for a separate methodology for human sciences. The most influential of them were Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Edmund Husserl (1869-1938), Max Weber (1864-1920) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900). The works of these thinkers had immensely contributed to the birth of Constructivism in IR. For instance, Dilthey held that the subject matter of human sciences is the ‘human mind’, which reflects in languages, actions, and institutions. In order to understand the human mind one has to examine cultural aspects and historical processes in which languages, actions, and institutions are constructed. Husserl introduced phenomenology as a method for the description and analysis of consciousness. Weber’s contribution to Constructivism is that he introduced ‘*verstehen*’ as a method to understand and explain the meaning of motivations that lead to actions. Nietzsche challenged the concept of ‘objectivity’ and ‘value neutrality’ in social theories. According to Nietzsche, our statement about the world is highly influenced by our assumptions and convictions about the world. Therefore, the piece of knowledge produced by a scientist is inevitably ‘subjective’ rather than the result of an ‘objective’ analysis.

Another influential figure who contributed to the birth of Constructivism is Austrian philosopher Alfred Schutz (1899–1959). According to Schutz, we always try to typify people and things to understand them. Further, Schutz argues that our knowledge about people and things are highly influenced by our perceptions and interactions with them. Having been influenced by the works of Schutz, American sociologists Peter Ludwig Berger (1929 – 2017) and Thomas Luckmann (1927 – 2016) jointly introduced the concept of the ‘social construction of reality’. According to them, interactions of people in society evolve concepts about human behaviour and these concepts become habituated and eventually institutionalized. Our knowledge about society, people, things or our conception of reality is constructed through our interaction in society and is the result of our interpretations on the basis of our experiences in these interactions. In other words, the reality is socially constructed which is the result of our interpretations on the basis of our experiences in interactions. Berger and Luckmann published a book titled, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (1966) on this theme.

Works of the French philosophers also had profoundly influenced the birth and evolution of Constructivism. For instance, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) argued that social phenomena are as real as ‘things’ (material objects) and should be studied as such. His argument firmly established the Constructivists’ concept of the primacy of the ideational factors. Other important French thinkers who influenced the germination of Constructivism were Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004). Postmodernism proposed by Foucault was aimed at uncovering the discourse and power structures that control practices in society. Discourse can be defined as ‘language-in-action’ or it is about what we say (language) about things in conversation and how we do (practice) things in our everyday lives. Foucault believed that discourse or ‘language-in-action’ has power. In other words, discourse designs the rules in society about ‘what

should be’ and ‘what should not be’. Poststructuralism set forth by Derrida aimed at deconstructing the dominant readings of reality.

Constructivism came into existence as a response to the ‘third debate’ in IR. The third debate, between Neorealism and Neoliberalism, was a synthesis movement to make IR more scientific. It succeeded in reaching a common ontological and epistemological position between Neorealism and Neoliberalism. Both theories hold that ‘material resources’ are the catalysts for development in international relations, the structure of international system shapes the behaviour of nation-states and nation-states take their decisions on the basis of the logic of consequences. Epistemologically, both theories adopted positivism to make IR more scientific. Positivism believes that natural as well as social worlds are functioning in accordance with certain universal laws. There are regularities in the functioning of natural and the social world. Due to this reason, the same methods can be applied in the study of the natural and social world. Therefore, social science research should also be based on objectivity and value neutrality, and on the empirical validation and falsification of facts. Mainstream IR theories’ reliance on positivism triggered the ‘fourth debate’ between the proponents of positivism and postpositivism in IR in the late 1980s and that led to a number of postpositivist/postmodernist/poststructuralist theories including Constructivism.

When narrating the genesis of Constructivism one cannot ignore the influence of the English School, which is considered to be the precursor to IR constructivism. The English School interprets international relations as being social and historical. Moreover, it believes in the existence of an international society driven by norms and identity.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by Constructivism?

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7.4 MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

7.4.1 Social Construction of Reality

Constructivists believe that reality is a project under constant construction. Instead of treating the social world as a pre-given entity, Constructivists consider it as a ‘world as coming into being’. Social reality is derived from inter-subjective knowledge and our interpretations about the social world. This is contrary to the functioning of the celestial body. For instance, Sun, Moon, Earth and other planets of our solar system are functioning in accordance with certain objective laws.

Our understanding and interpretation of the universe cannot influence and alter its functioning. However, social reality is constituted of our inter-subjective (or shared) knowledge and interpretations about the social world and this may influence and alter our social relations. Here, the knowledge is constructed inter-subjectively, which means the knowledge is produced in the interactions amongst people. For instance, Alexander Wendt in his influential article, *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, explains how knowledge is constructed inter-subjectively by depicting the story of ‘Alter’ and ‘Ego’. Alter and Ego, are two imagined characters, who meet each other for the first time. Therefore, both do not have any idea about the nature of the other, which means they do not have any friendship and enmity beforehand. In such a condition, their interactions will inform them about the nature of the other – whether the counterpart is trustworthy or unreliable, friendly or hostile. The same thing is happening in international relations, where interactions among nation-states inform them about the nature of international relations, who are the friendly nations and enemies. Constructivists also hold that the experiences during the course of interactions and the interpretations may change the imagery about the other. In other words, interactions and interpretations may transform the enmity to friendship and the vice versa. The book titled, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein (1996) sets forth the argument that international relations do not function independently of human action and cognition. Moreover, the book argues that norms and ideas play a major role in defining the identities of actors thereby prescribe the proper behaviour for actors. This is just in contrast to the logic of consequences or rational-choice suggested by Neorealism and Neoliberalism.

7.4.2 Influence of Ideational Factors

Since the reality is socially constructed, we cannot understand social realities (including international relations) by examining only material forces (such as military power, economic resources). Instead, Constructivists believe that understanding of social reality requires the examination of both ideational (identity, culture, norms) and material factors. For instance, a North Korean nuclear weapon is similar to a French nuclear weapon in terms of its material attribute and destructive effects. However, as far as the United States of America (USA) is concerned, the nuclear weapon of North Korea is dangerous and the French one is not. Both nuclear weapons get different meanings according to the nature of the USA’s relations with France and North Korea. Here, ‘identity’ as an ideational factor gives different meanings to nuclear weapons, as the USA treats the French as its ally and North Korea as its enemy (and a potential threat to the USA’s security). The notion of identity is very much related to a binary of ‘we’ and ‘other’. History, culture, political processes, and social interactions are playing a major role in forming this binary. For instance, the common history of ancestors, sharing liberal values, mutual understanding and cordial relations inform both the USA and France that they have a lot of things in common; therefore, both of them consider each other as a friend. However, on the basis of the same criteria, the USA realizes that North Korea is the ‘other’. Constructivists argue that identities are socially constructed through interactions. They, further suggest that the behaviour of nation-states in the international system is not driven solely by the distribution of power, but also depends on the ‘distribution of identities’. That is, patterns of cooperation and conflict depend on how states understand

themselves and others in the international system, rather than solely on material factors.

7.4.3 Mutual Constitution of Agents and Structure

Structuration theory was illustrated by the eminent sociologist Anthony Giddens in a number of his books starting from, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976) and *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984). Structuration theory of Giddens argues that structures and agents are mutually constitutive. Constructivists such as Nicholas Onuf and Alexander Wendt borrowed Giddens's theory of structuration to explain the mutual influence of agents and structure in the field of international relations. According to Onuf 'people and societies construct, or constitute, each other'. At the same time, Wendt used the Giddens's structuration theory to challenge the Neorealist understanding of the relationship between the structure of the international system and nation-states proposed by Kenneth Waltz. According to Kenneth Waltz, it is the structure of the international system that influences behaviour of units (nation-states or agents) and the other way round is not possible. On the contrary, Wendt argues that nation-states and the structure of the international system are mutually constitutive. Not only that, Wendt in his article, *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, puts more weight on agents (nation-states) over the structure (of the international system) in terms of one's influence on the other. In other words, Wendt's notion of agent-structure relationship is contrary to that of Neorealist and Neoliberal understanding of the agent-structure relationship.

7.4.4 International Anarchy

In IR, 'anarchy', is conceived as a social system that lacks legitimate institutions of authority. During the grand debate (neo-neo debate) between Neorealism and Neoliberalism, there was a consensus about the nature of anarchy. Both Neorealists and Neoliberals held that the absence of a world government was the major reason for international anarchy, which created a 'state of nature' outside nation-states. Hence, Neorealists preferred a self-help mechanism to address international anarchy. On the contrary, Neoliberals suggested interdependence for mitigating anarchy and overcoming insecurity in the international system. However, Constructivists have a different opinion about international anarchy. For instance, Nicholas Onuf holds that the absence of a world government does not lead to disorder and violence. Rather, there are three categories of rules (i.e. 'instruction-rules', 'directive-rules', and 'commitment-rules') to constitute and regulate international relations. Instruction-rules set forth general principles of international relations (such as sovereignty, human rights, international law, etc.) and their importance in ensuring peaceful international relations. Directive-rules have provisions for protecting these principles and punishing offenders. For instance, invading another nation-state is the violation of state 'sovereignty', and then the international community will join together against the offender. Nation-states entering into treaties on human rights and environment means they promise to protect them, means commitment-rules play a significant role in international relations. Thus, according to Onuf international relations are regulated by rules, and international anarchy is a rule by no sovereign body, and therefore a rule by everyone associated with the aforesaid rules. Wendt also negates the Neorealist and Neoliberal assumption about international anarchy. According to Wendt, there is no 'logic' of anarchy apart from the practices and interactions among nation-

state. Then the nature of anarchy is determined by ideational factors, practices, and interactions among nation-states. The relationship among friends will be very cordial, strangers will be lukewarm, and enemies will be hostile in the state of anarchy. Thus, the outcome of anarchy will be shaped by the interactions and shared understandings of nation-states.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.
- 1) What are the Major assumptions of Constructivism?

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7.5 DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

According to Emanuel Adler, Constructivist approaches can be classified according to the type of hermeneutics they use – objective or subjective; and the cognitive interest they pursue – control or emancipation. According to these criteria, Constructivism can be categorized into four main types: Modernist; Modernist Linguistic or Rule-Oriented Constructivism; Radical; and Critical.

7.5.1 Modernist Constructivism

Modernist Constructivism is characterized by ‘objective hermeneutics’ with a ‘conservative interest in understanding and explaining social reality’. Hermeneutics is a method of interpretation and the ‘objective hermeneutics’ is a method proposed by Neo-Kantians in accordance with Immanuel Kant’s understanding of knowledge production. According to Kant, even though the knowledge is about objective reality, it is filtered through our consciousness. In other words, our knowledge (about an object) is highly influenced by our consciousness. Having been influenced by the Kantian notion of knowledge, the Neo-Kantians argue that learning is a process of applying a priori forms our minds on the object of study. Therefore, ‘objective hermeneutics’ seeks to understand consciousness and motivations that lead to actions. It also relies on cause and effect analysis and reconstruction of historical processes to understand particular events. In other words, a particular event in history or a social fact is the result of a concrete historical sequence and the effect of certain causes. Building on ‘objective hermeneutics’ the modernist constructivists believe that positivist methods are applicable in the study of developments in international relations. Another characteristic of modernist constructivism is its conservative interest in understanding and explaining social reality instead of human emancipation. For instance, according to Alexander Wendt, the basic tenets of Constructivism are “(a) structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (b) the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature”.

Here, the intention of Wendt is only to explain the basic tenets of Constructivism rather than human emancipation. In other words, Wendt does not express any interest in using his understandings of norms, identities to improve the condition of humanity. Wendt's constructivism, also known as Structural Constructivism, is the modified version of the international structure proposed by Neorealism and Neoliberalism. According to Wendt, both Neorealism and Neoliberalism see the structure of the international system through a material lens. For Neorealists, the structure of the international system is featured by the distribution of material capabilities. Neoliberals see structure as capabilities and institutions. However, Wendt treats the structure as a distribution of ideas. In addition to Wendt, Emanuel Adler, Peter Katzenstein, John Ruggie, Thomas Risse-Kappen, Michael Barnett, Mlada Bukovansky, Jeffrey Checkel, Martha Finnemore and Jeffrey Legro are also considered to be the major proponents of modernist constructivism. Modernist constructivism is also known as traditional constructivism and neoclassical constructivism.

7.5.2 Modernist Linguistic or Rule-Oriented Constructivism

Modernist Linguistic Constructivists such as Nicholas Onuf argue that international relations are regulated by rules and these rules are constituted by the structures of language. Due to this reason, Modernist Linguistic Constructivists employ 'subjective hermeneutics', which is a belief that objective knowledge is impossible since the 'reality is the creation of language'. Onuf, further argues that the rules in international relations are statements about 'what should do'. 'What' informs the actors about the 'standard behaviour' according to each situation in international relations. 'Should' is a requirement that each actor in international relations has to follow that standard behaviour. These rules develop from three categories of speech acts, according to their function. They are respectively 'instruction-rules', 'directive-rules', and 'commitment-rules'. Speech acts can be simply defined as a linguistic performance in the form of a command, requests, promises, etc. Here, the communicator through speech acts influences the audience to do something. Like speech acts, the aforementioned rules seek to influence international relations. Instruction-rules inform about values and ideas or concepts in international relations, the importance of respecting them and the consequences of disregarding them. For instance, the instruction-rule, 'to respect state sovereignty', means nation-states in the international system have to respect one another's sovereignty. Disregarding sovereignty is a bad practice because it may lead to war. Rules in the form of directive speech act or directive-rules say what should be done and also sets forth specific consequences of the violation of the rule. For instance, violation of the directive-rule, 'respect state sovereignty', will have provisions to punish the offenders through military intervention and trade sanctions. Commitment-rules are the promises made by nation-states to act in a particular way in international relations. Nation-states conclude international treaties to protect the environment and human rights are the best example for commitment-rule.

The scholars associated with Modernist Linguistic Constructivism other than Nicholas Onuf are Friedrich Kratochwil, Karen Litfin, Neta Crawford, Christian Reus-Smit, Jutta Weldes, and Ted Hopf. Modernist Linguistic Constructivists examine how discourse and speech acts construct social reality. Like Modernist Constructivists, Modernist Linguistic Constructivists also hold 'conservative cognitive interests'- an interest only in the interpretation of developments in international relations, rather than the emancipation of humanity.

7.5.3 Radical Constructivism

Radical Constructivism is highly influenced by the works of German philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1889 -1976), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889—1951), and French philosophers Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). Heidegger and Wittgenstein held that social facts are constituted by structures of language; therefore, both of them challenged positivism and objectivity in the study of social facts. At the same time, the focus of the postmodernism suggested by Foucault was to expose the relations between power and knowledge. Poststructuralism proposed by Derrida tried to deconstruct the dominant readings of reality. Due to the influence of these philosophers, the Radical Constructivists adopted a subjective hermeneutics to interpret social reality, and unmask relationship between truth and power. The mainstream theories of IR treat ‘anarchy’ as the permanent feature of international relations and set forth measures to address this issue. However, Radical Constructivists challenge this standpoint of mainstream theories. For instance, Richard Ashley argues that anarchy is the result of nation-states’ reluctance to surrender their sovereignty. By justifying anarchy, mainstream theories seek to retain the present international system. Hence, Ashley accuses mainstream theorists of virtually undermining the possibility of an alternative system. According to R.B.J. Walker, the mainstream theories of IR have shrunk the scope of the discipline into a prescription for managing national borders and Walker seeks to make IR more inclusive by incorporating emerging issues of global importance. Walker’s Radical Constructivism is also criticizing Realism for its pessimism. Walker argues that theory and practice are intertwined with each other and theories set forth prescriptions. Since Realism is pessimistic it can offer only cynicism and violent practices. Feminist scholars such as Spike Peterson, J. Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, and Christine Sylvester also belong to the Radical Constructivism as they question the masculine conceptualization of international relations and argue for reforming core concepts in IR. For instance, the masculine conceptualization of state, power, interest, and security shape the conduct of foreign policy in a particular manner. For example, Realism narrates state with masculine characteristics of sovereignty that emphasizes a hierarchical leader and the capacity to wage war. According to Feminist scholars this conceptualization of international relations shapes the practices of war and diplomacy. Therefore, Feminist scholars seek to redefine and reform the concepts in IR. More than understanding international relations, Radical Constructivists seek to emancipate humankind from the oppressive forms of national and international systems.

7.5.4 Critical

Critical Constructivism combines the emancipatory mission with a pragmatist approach and objective hermeneutics. This approach believes in the active role of our mind in interpreting our experiences and observations and it holds that we revise our beliefs according to our experience. It holds that theory is always influenced by experiences and the former have to be made compatible with the evidence. Andrew Linklater, Robert Cox, Heather Rae, and Paul Keal belong to Critical Constructivism. Rather than explaining international relations ‘as it is’, Critical Constructivists examining ‘how did it become that way’, and ‘how it ought to be’. Further, the emancipatory mission drives them to move on to the possibilities of transforming the present international order. Like Radical Constructivists, Critical Constructivists also hold that the present international system is not given. The present international system is the result of a historical

process, and this process has resulted in the inclusion and exclusion of certain people. Critical Constructivists like Andrew Linklater hold that an investigation into this historical process is required for emancipating humanity. Robert Cox also agrees with this standpoint. Heather Rae and Paul Keal are explaining how the evolution of modern sovereign nation-state with exclusive territorial jurisdiction is related to the exclusion of minority nonconformist identities from the body politic.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the different versions of constructivism?

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7.6 LET US SUM UP

Constructivism as a theory in IR argues that international relations are constructed through social practices. This standpoint is contrary to the assumption of mainstream theories of IR that international relations are regulated by the structure of the international system. One of the salient features of Constructivism is that it emphasizes the social dimension of international relations. Instead of focusing on material factors such as military capacity and economic resources, Constructivism examines how ideational factors such as identity, norms, language, etc., influence the developments in international relations. However, Constructivism is also not free from criticism. Constructivism has been the target of its critics due to its bankruptcy in predicting the future course of international relations. Constructivists neither set forth a pessimistic picture of international relations depicted by Neorealists, nor does it draw a rosier picture as done by the optimistic Neoliberals. Rather Constructivists are agnostic about the future of international relations by submitting that the future can either be conflictual, peaceful or in any other forms, depending on the interactions of actors. Hence, the critics dub Constructivism as an empty vessel, which focuses only on the social construction of international relations, and due to this reason, many IR scholars consider Constructivism as an approach rather than a theory. Even so, one cannot underestimate the role of Constructivism in enhancing the scope IR by bringing ideational factors into its fold. Constructivism offers an alternative explanation of some of the core themes in international relations such as the meaning of international anarchy, and it also suggests the prospects for change.

7.7 REFERENCES

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight following points
 - Argues that international relations are a social construction
 - States, alliances, and international institutions are the products of human interaction
 - Is a three-layered understanding of international relations involving metaphysics, social theory, and IR theory

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight following points
 - Social construction of reality in international relations
 - The influence of ideational factors
 - The relationship between the agents and structure
 - The meaning and nature of international anarchy

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight following
 - Modernist constructivism
 - Rule oriented constructivism
 - Radical constructivism and
 - Critical constructivism.