

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE III

COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER III

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

Topic:

- Development of International Relations as an academic discipline/subject

ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AS A DISCIPLINE

Growth of International Relations as a Subject

The earliest text on International Relations for the first time, was written by the Greek historian Thucydides (430-406 B.C), The Peloponnesian War was introduced with the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson chair of International Relations in 1919 at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom. Alfred Zimmern was the first holder of this chair. C.K. Webster and E.H. Carr were among the early scholars of this discipline. This subject was offered in European and American Universities from the 1920s. Simultaneously at several other places, chairs of International Relations were established such as in Hebrew University, Jerusalem (1929), Oxford University (1930), the London Academically, the study of International Relations School of Economics (1936) and the University of Edinburgh (1948).

The First World War had a deep impact on the development of this new subject in social sciences. Before the First World War, according to Alfred Zimmern, "There was no teaching of the subject as such, and very little conscious study. Grant, Hughes, Greenwood, Kerr and Urganhart wrote the first textbook on International Relations entitled, An Introduction to the Study of International Relations, (1916, Britain). A few developments around the globe like establishment of a School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in 1919, U.S.A; Independent School of International Relations at the University of Southern California in 1924; the Institute of Advanced International Studies in Paris (1923); the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace at Washington, D.C (1910); the Union of Democratic Control in England (1914); Foreign Policy Association and the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (1918); Royal Institute of International Affairs in London (1920) further helped in the development of IR. Several institutes in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan were affiliated with the above institute. Further, with the establishment of some more institutes in International Affairs such as New Commonwealth Institute in London (1934), renamed as the London Institute of World Affairs; the Institute of International Affairs in Paris in 1935; Indian Council of World Affairs in India in 1943

also played a great role in the development of IR. Thus, in the early 20th century, International Relations became a discrete academic field within Political Science. In practice, International Relations was carried out as a separate academic programme or as a subsection of Political Science. The courses taught therein were highly interdisciplinary in nature.

This subject was developing day by day. In the contemporary period, cordial relations and mutual understanding among states have greater significance for the progressive development of each nation. This resulted in providing independent status to ‘International Relations.’

Stages of development of International Relations

As a well defined academic discipline, International Relations emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. Kenneth Thompson illustrated a very comprehensive picture of different stages of International Relations which could be enumerated as follows:

The first stage can be termed as historical approach where more emphasis was laid on historical analysis rather than on the political study of international events. However, this historical approach could not develop a theoretical core for the discipline.

The second stage can be labeled as contemporaneous stage when more emphasis was laid on contemporary issues rather than on history. It emerged after the end of First World War. This approach totally neglected past, it was also partial.

The third stage began during the inter-war period when there occurred a paradigm shift from the historical and contemporaneous to a moralistic-legalistic approach. Scholars emphasised a war-free world order and suggested creation of organisations like League of Nations. However, this approach was too idealistic and ignored the hard realities of international life

The fourth stage commenced after the end of the Second World War in 1945. Now there was a shift from merely praising or condemning different states’ behaviour but to discover the causes behind such behaviour. The emphasis was now more on understanding. This shift in international relations in the fourth stage was the outcome of decolonisation, emergence of new nation-states, rise of new universal values, demographic change etc. This shift gave birth to the Realist school which believed that power was a means, as well as end in itself. International politics was nothing but a struggle for power. Morgenthau became its chief proponent.

The fifth stage started from the mid-sixties to the seventies when international organisation, trans-national institutions and multinational corporations were added to the study of International Relations, which resulted in the coming of Neo-liberal school of thought. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye emerged as its chief proponents who stressed upon interdependence, security communities, transnational economic cooperation and creation of an international regime.

Kenneth Thompson opined that the dependency theorists reacted to many of the same international economic changes as neoliberals, but in a negative sense that was dependence not positive-interdependence. These changes resulted in increased intervention by the US in the affairs of Third World countries to fulfil her own economic interests.

This further widened the gap between the world's rich and poor countries leading to North-South conflict and thus generating new debate on the global political agenda. Thus for the first time, in this stage, the South demanded the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) which became a subject of analysis in international relations. Another development of this stage was the revival of peace studies. The issues of global stability, world order and control of global violence now got predominance in the international relations.

The sixth stage may be counted from the late seventies to the first half of eighties. In this period, the efficacy of detente was questioned and 'New cold war' emerged which changed the whole scenario. On the one hand, the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, on the other, US President Reagan threatened the world by talking of star war programme. The whole world got worried about its effect on the environment and ecology. Hence, ecological and environmental issues now became the dominant subjects of international relations. In the same period, Kenneth Waltz formulated the neorealist theory and transformed the abstract principles of classical realism with a more concrete theory of realism making it more acceptable and much closer to a scientific study of international relations. The neorealist theory argued for managing and manipulating the new cold war in the 1980s.

With the emergence of the steady process of multi-polarisation, the scholars of the United States especially showed interest in third world countries. Area studies were undertaken by different universities in the US and Britain. In many cases, for field data researchers were sent to the third world countries. But the Western theories of international relations were challenged by the scholars of the third world countries. They questioned the relevance and suitability of these theories to the underdeveloped countries which constitute the two-thirds majority of the UN membership.

The seventh stage began in 1985 with Mikhail Gorbachev's new political thinking, which recognised "balance of interests" in place of the balance of power, co-operation instead of confrontation, disarmament in place of armament, internationalisation instead of nationalisation and détente in place of cold war." With the advent of this 'new political thinking', international relations entered into a new era putting emphasis on peaceful coexistence and equal security for all. At first, the US is suspicious about these new moves, but later on, it responded positively to this 'new political thinking'. During this period, since the realist and liberalist debate disappeared, the postmodernists came to fill the vacuum. Post-modernists or reflectivists argued that norms and regimes could not be studied in a positivist framework based on objectivity, but has to be analysed as an inter-subjective

phenomenon. This new trend in the 1980s was known as post-positivism. It contained four major currents: critical theory; post-modern Marxism; post-modernism and post-modern feminism.

The eighth stage began with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Republics of the USSR and Yugoslavia became independent states. The supremacy of the US paved the way for the unipolar world as it remained the only superpower. The third world countries and the countries of the erstwhile disintegrated communist bloc started seeking economic aid from the Western countries and especially from the US. The US started pressurising these countries to accept its terms and conditions for economic aid.

Thus, through the description of the above eight-stages, Thompson had aptly analysed how international relations developed from normative theory to causal theory, from idealism to realism, from realism to behaviouralism and scientism, neoliberalism to radicalism (globalism), neorealism to post-positivism and so on.

In the post-cold war period, there were several issues which gained significance in the study of international relations. Some of these were: importance of non-state actors, energy crisis, terrorism, globalisation, the fear of third world war, technological development, increasing role of trans-national organisations, non-traditional security threats, the North-South debate, environmental degradation, rise of world oligarchy and world mass, nuclearization, expansion of weapons of mass destruction, etc.

However, in spite of the fact that the study of international relations remained no more state-centric and added many new areas in its scope, it had not yet given due consideration to the issue of gender. Women had throughout been ignored in the realm of international politics, their voices had not been heard, their representation in various decision-making and policy-making bodies had been minimal, yet these issues had been totally overlooked in the study of international relations.

REFERENCES:

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