

Theories of International Relations: System Theory

Main Objectives:

- ❑ Understanding General Systems Theory
- ❑ Systems Theory in International Relations
- ❑ Morton Kaplan's Six Models of Int. System
- ❑ Criticism
- ❑ Conclusion

General systems theory

- First formulated by Ludwig Van Bertalanffy, a biologist
- Acc. to Ludwig -a system is “a set of elements standing in interaction”.
- In a system, internally consistent patterns are found, each interacting with other
- In social science, concept of the systems theory evolved from the general systems theory

Systems theory in IR

- ❖ Result of Behavioural revolution in social science
- ❖ Main focus on the structure (arrangement) of the international system
- ❖ An effort-to develop a theory of international politics
 - to explain the behavior and interactions of the units of international system.
- ❖ Morton Kaplan- main advocate of system theory in international relations
- ❖ Perceiving international relations from the perspective of international system
- ❖ Acc. to Mortan A. Kaplan: international relations is constituted of: “international system” and “nation-state system”.
- ❖ “Nation-states as the primary actors
- ❖ Impact of “change in the international system on the role of nation-state”
- ❖ Other related scholars: Kenneth Boulding, Kenneth Waltz, James Rosenau and McClelland etc.
- ❖ Kaplan in (1957) his book *System and Process in International Politics* outlines six models of international system:

Morton Kaplan's Six Models

1. The Balance of Power System
2. The Loose Bipolar System
3. The Tight Bipolar System
4. The Universal System
5. The Hierarchical System
6. The Unit Veto System

Kaplan's 4 new systems

Later, 1969, Kaplan added 4 more international system:

- a. The very loose bipolar,
- b. The détente,
- c. The unstable bloc and
- d. The incomplete nuclear diffusion systems

References

- IGNOU, "Systems Approach" Unit 4, IGNOU e-resource. <http://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/20896/1/Unit-4.pdf>
- Mahendra Kumar,(1967), *Theoretical Aspects of International Politics*, Shiva Lal Agrawal and Company, Agra.
- Mortan A. Kaplan, (2005) *System and Process in International Politics*, ECPR Press.
- Pushpesh Pant (2010) *International Relations in the 21st Century*, Tata McGraw - Hill Education.
- U. R. Ghai, *International Politics, Theory and Practice*, New Academic Publishing co. 2010.

Compiled by Dr. Kush Kumar Gayasen
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
J.M.S. College, Munger University