

Question

Why is it important to study International Relations and how has it evolved as an independent field of study?

(a) Introduction:

International Relations as a sub-field of Political Science is the study of the interactions among the various actors that participate in international politics. It is the study of behaviors of these actors as they participate individually and together in international political processes.

"The study of international relations is not a science with which we solve the problems of international life. At its best it is an objective and systematic approach to those problems."

(Palmer and Perkins)

The study of international relations include analysis of foreign policies or political processes between nations, and also focuses on international trade and civil society interaction.

(b) Scope of international relations:

Major areas of subject scope:

- (i) **Nation state system:** It deals with the integration of social system with political system as nation and a state. This system was proposed in Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.
- (ii) **International system and International society:** This relates to evolution of society of states and a broad international system of norms, values and rules through which states interact with each other.
- (iii) **Approaches and Theories:** This area of subject links with the theoretical foundations of the subject through three broad paradigms including traditionalism, behaviorism or positivism, and post-positivism or international society perspective. Within these paradigms, realism and liberalism are considered as most dominant theoretical approaches.
- (iv) **International political security:** This dimension focuses the relationship between security environment and political policies.

at international levels and vice versa. This inter-relationship is further evaluated through nature and determinants of foreign policy, concept of state sovereignty and national interest.

(v) International political economy: This area has achieved highest level of significance in the era of economic globalization. It deals with relationship between states and markets or politics and economy. The themes include mercantilism, economic liberalism, neo-Marxism, neo-imperialism, dependency, inter-dependency and Bretton wood system.

(c) Significance of international relations as a subject:

(i) Understanding global dynamics:

"Studying IR broadens our perspective, fostering global citizenship and understanding."

(Hill, 2019)

IR helps understand how and why countries interact with each other on political, economic and social levels. It provides insights into the complexities of global issues such as conflict, cooperation, diplomacy and trade.

(ii)

Promoting peace, security and conflict resolution:

IR as a discipline sheds light on the causes of conflicts and effective strategies for resolving them.

"IR studies helps us comprehend conflict resolution mechanisms, promoting peaceful co-existence."
(Bercovitch, 2017)

The understanding of conflict resolution is crucial for promoting peace, and stability both regionally and globally.

"In today's interdependent world regional conflicts can quickly become global security threats."

(Ban Ki-moon)

To cope with such kind of regional and global conflicts IR suggests treaties and theories. To prevent wars IR also deals with theories of nuclear disarmament and non proliferation.

(iii)

Helps in shaping foreign policy:

Understanding IR makes helps policy makers navigate complex international landscapes, making informed decisions that impact national interests.

"The pursuit of power and security is the ultimate goal of international relations." (Morgenthau, 1948)

Helps understanding economic prosperity and interdependence:

IR as a field of study helps nations negotiate trade agreements, navigate economic alliances and understand global economic trends.

"IR explores economic interdependence highlighting the importance of cooperation in a globalized world." (Stiglitz, 2002)

v) Facilitate comprehending environmental sustainability:

IR investigates how international organizations, treaties, and agreements address environmental issues at a global level.

For example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

and the Paris Agreement are the key.

IR topics that focus on coordinating global efforts to combat climate change.

"The earth has enough resources for our needs, but not enough for our greed." (Mahatma Gandhi)

(d) Emergence of IR as an independent field of study:

(i) City of state system: History of IR as a study field is traced back to thousands of years ago. Barry Buzan and Richard Little, for example consider the interaction of ancient Sumerian City-States, starting in 3500 Bc, as a fully fledged international system. They consider that IR as a discipline started with first formal system of global interaction in city state system.

(ii) Nation State System:

The second point of view debates that Peace of Westphalia 1648 formally launched IR as an academic discipline. The treaty established the system of nation state on the contending script of concept of sovereignty, political independence, non-intervention, recognition and individual freedom.

(iii) Congress of Vienna: A third view point states that actual

starting point of IR as an academic discipline is Congress of Vienna, 1807 followed by Congress of Vienna 1815 in which all European powers codified major rules of relations (international laws) such as rules of treaties, human rights, intervention, diplomacy, wars and peace.

(iv) World War-I: A body of scholars comment that IR had no academic standing till the onset of World War-I. This disastrous event led to realization that causes of this catastrophic event should be analyzed in order to avoid such events in future.

(v) Formal emergence as academic field: IR as a distinct field of study began in Britain. It emerged in 1919 with the founding of the first IR professorship: the Woodrow Wilson chair at Aberystwyth, University of Wales.

(e) Conclusion:

International relations as a subject of study is the area

that deals with the formal relations of nation states with each other. These nation states work on the formula of national interests which formulate their foreign policies. As a field of study IR is significant to understand the relations between states and global dynamics of world from socio-economic, political, environmental and governmental perspectives. International relations is not infant in its origin. It took thousands of years to be moulded into a formal area of studies. Therefore, it covers different phases and events of history and deals with the causes and problems and also suggests blueprints to tackle those. In a nutshell, international relations is the study of the "world in transition".
