

Post behaviouralism

Characteristics of the System Approach

The system approach, developed under the general system theory, seeks to analyse

the international relations as a system of interactions, which are independent and

interrelated. It views the international relations as a pattern of behaviour of the

international actors. Therefore, in order to develop a scientific study of politics, it

has to be treated as a system of action. The process of exchange in politics is fairly

continuous, regular and patterned, and can be studied as a system of behaviour.

The system consists of a set of units in interaction and is possible to conceive

relations among nations as constituting a kind of system. That is why the system

consists of a known set of variables such as the political machinery, attitude, interests

and political activities along with the values as a parameter to study.

The system approach in international relations is based upon the following main

assumptions:

(i) International system is not an international political system: The concept of system is used in the context of international politics; it is taken to

mean the international political system. The international system is not international political system as it does not allocate authoritative values over them.

(ii) International and national actors: The international actors are basically the national actors who act in the international environment.

(iii) Classification of national and supra-national actors: The international actors can be classified into the following two types:

- (a) The national actors who act in the international environment
- (b) The supra-national actors, such as UN, regional organizations and other international agencies

The supra-national actors can be further classified as bloc actors and universal actors.

From these fundamental assumptions, the system theory assumes that the international system is constituted by a set of interactions among the actors or entities, such as national interests. There is a continuous process of interactions among the actors and entities, which occur at a regular interval in the international environment.

These mutual exchanges occur due to the participation in the international environment, which occur in a certain identifiable pattern and describable patterns, as an interaction among nations. The concept of system can enrich the understanding of the phenomena which will help in theory building of international relations. That is why the system distinguishes the units or actors, structural processes and the context, i.e., the environment as major elements in every system.