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Level: 3rd Year (Semesters 5)

Option : international relations

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Meaning and Definition of International Relations

International Relations is an important branch of Social Science. The Scope of International relations is the complex relations existing among the sovereign states of the world. It is mainly concerned, among other things, with the study in depth of all events and situations affecting more than one state.

International relations can be defined as political activities and other kinds and aspects of interactions among two or more states. The academic field of international relations is a branch of political science that is concerned with the study of relations between states, the foreign policy of nation-states, and the mechanisms and institutions (such as international organizations, inter-governmental organizations, international and national non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations) through which states interact.

The study of international relations involves many subjects such as international and regional peace and security, international organizations, nuclear proliferation, globalization, human rights, economic development, intervention, international financial relations, and international trade relations.

Traditional View: International Politics

It is a state dominated view in as much as definitions under this category lay emphasis on the study of politics and relations among the nation states. It considers nation states as chief actors of international politics and focuses on their political and official relations. In other words, these were the definitions of international politics and not international relations. From the initial years of the beginning of the discipline up to fifties, it was mainly known and studied as international politics.

Current View: International Relations

Latest trend is to make extensive use of the term international relations in preference to international politics as it encompasses all the relevant actors, contents and relationships. No doubt, some of the definitions under the above category also cover areas other than mere politics among nations. But the following definitions are more comprehensive as they include state, international system, international organizations, other transnational and supra national agencies, non-state entities, groups and relevant individuals as actors and basic unit of analysis. At the same time, they also cover larger areas of relationship.

Both conflictual and cooperative, friendly and unfriendly, power relationship and peace relationship, governmental and people-to-people relationship etc. The contents and forms of relations among the different actors are varied such as political, economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific and technological, etc. All these are part of international relations. Scholars of international relations have also used comparatively sophisticated and scientific tools of investigation.

The use of the term international relations is considered appropriate as it covers all those essentials included in international politics and over and above many other current trends and terms that make it more broad and relevant.