

Assumptions of Systems Approach: Morton Kaplan

(1) International Relations as International System:

International relations can be analyzed as a set of relations among international actors i.e. as an international system

(2) International System is not International Political System:

When the concept of 'system' is used in the context of International Politics it is, taken to mean International System and not International Political System. It cannot be described as International Political System because it does not allocate authoritative values. Basic international units or actors are sovereign states and as such no international actor or agency can authoritatively implement values/decisions over them. Hence, it cannot be described as International Political System.

(3) International Actors and National Actors:

What are known as international actors are basically the national actors acting in the international environment?

(4) National and Supra-National Actors:

The International actors can be classified into two main categories:

- (i) The national actors acting in the international environment, and
- (ii) The supra-national actors like the UN, regional organisations and other international agencies.

The latter can be sub-classified as bloc actors or regional actors like the EU, ASEAN, NAFTA and others, and universal actors like the United Nations, World Bank & other international agencies.

(5) A System of Interactions:

International System is constituted by a set of interactions among the actors or entities (nations, interests and international actors).

(6) Regular Interactions:

Nations are in continuous contact. There is a continuous process of interactions among international actors and entities.

(7) Interactions for preservation of National Interests:

The activities of nations are directed towards the preservation of their national interests in the international environment.

(8) Regular Participation:

Participation in international environment gives rise to regular mutual exchanges among international actors.

(9) Patterns of Behaviour:

There are certain identifiable and describable regularities in the patterns of interactions among nations.

(10) Theory-building as the objective:

The use of the concept of system for describing or explaining or analyzing international politics can greatly enrich our understanding of the phenomena, which can further help us in theory-building in international relations.

(11) Several Variables or Elements:

All systems' approaches use units (or actors), structures, processes, and context (environment) as major elements of the system. These elements are considered as major factors in terms of which all substantive phenomena are explained.

On the basis of such a conceptual framework, Morton Kaplan discusses six models of international system:

- (1) The Balance of Power System
- (2) The Loose Bi-polar System
- (3) The Tight Bi-polar System
- (4) The Universal System
- (5) The Hierarchical System
- (6) The Unit Veto System.