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Unit - 4

#Comparative politics: nature and major approaches

Comparative politics is key area in political science, pigeonholed by an empirical approach based on the comparative method. To put it in another way, comparative politics is the study of the domestic politics, political institutions, and conflicts of countries. It often encompasses comparisons among countries and through time within single countries, emphasizing major patterns of similarity and difference. Many political theorists like Arend Lijphart argued that comparative politics does not have a functional focus in itself, instead a methodological one. In simple form, comparative politics is not defined by the object of its study, but by the method it applies to study political phenomena. Peter Mair and Richard Rose gave modern definition of comparative politics and stated that comparative politics is elaborated by a combination of a substantive focus on the study of countries' political systems and a method of recognising and explaining similarities and differences between these countries using common models. Rose mentioned that in comparative politics, "The focus is explicitly or implicitly upon more than one country, thus following familiar political science usage in excluding within-nation comparison. Methodologically, comparison is distinguished by its use of concepts that are applicable in more than one country".

In the field of Comparative politics, the term politics has three connotation such as political activities, political process and political power. Political activity consists of the efforts by which the conditions of conflicts are created and resolved in a way pertaining to the interest of people as far as possible who play in their part in struggle for power. Political process is an extension of political activity. Political power is the major topic in comparative politics. The term power has been defined by different writers. Friedrich described power as a certain kind of human relationship. Whereas Tawney explained power as a capacity of an individual or group of individuals to modify the conduct of other individuals in a manner which he desires (J. C. Johari).

Comparative government studies were used by political researchers to get correct and valid conclusions regarding the nature and organisation of state and government. Their major objective was to discover the historical and legal similarities and dissimilarities among the various governments and their political institutions. A comparative normative-prescriptive study of constitutions was conducted. It was an attempt to recognise the best political institutions.

When applied to particular fields of study, comparative politics is denoted by other names, such as comparative government (the comparative study of forms of government) or comparative foreign policy (comparing the foreign policies of different

States in order to establish general empirical connections between the characteristics of the State and the characteristics of its foreign policy).

Many theorists articulated that "Comparative political science" as a general term for an area of study, as opposed to a methodology of study, can be seen as redundant. The political only shows as political when either an overt or tacit comparison is being made. A study of a single political entity, whether a society, subculture or period, would demonstrate the political as simple brute reality.



Unit - 5

#Approaches and Concepts of International Relations

A number of theories and concepts have been evolved to explain the conduct of International Relations having far reaching consequences for the life of the people. The two dominant constructs have been Idealism and Realism and these two theories remained central in the understanding of International Relations till the arrival of new perspectives such as Marxism, Feminism and Critical Theory which challenged these theories.

Approaches to the Study of International Relations (IR)

Behavioural approaches to study of IR are often claimed by their Western adherents to be scientific because they are based on quantitative calculations. They made us aware of the complex nature of conflicts and provided many valuable insights into decision-making. The traditional approach was rooted largely in Political Science and drew heavily from Law, History and Philosophy. Some theories to the study of International Relations are discussed below

Idealist Theory

The 19th and 20th centuries saw two general schools of thought in international relations. First was, the realist tradition, where states were in a constant state of competition for power, focussed on securing power and security through military. The second was idealism, which stressed other considerations that, all states have ideals or morals such as peace and are of view that state actions need not be motivated by power politics.

Features of Idealist Theory

Idealism holds that the wars of the 19th and early 20th century show how wrong the constant search for security is. As states continually arm themselves for warfare, war always results in destruction. If humanity is to serve nuclear age, then it must have motives for action other than security. They believe that security must be redefined.

Significance of Idealist Theory

The development of modern warfare led to wars that were far more destructive than anything that humanity had everseen. In turn, this created new thinking where the concept of security was broadened to encompass things such as health, clean water or social investment.

Benefits of Idealist Theory

The old realist regime in Europe led to major wars and ultimately, to the mass slaughter in World Wars I and II. Idealism sought to reorient thinking about IR in such a way as to stress the irrationality and contradiction of realism and its constant search for security.

Primarily, institutions such as the League of Nations and the United Nations as well as more local organisations such as the Arab League or the African Union, developed according to the idealist tradition. Their purpose was to find non-violent means to resolve conflict.

Considerations

International peace means social and economic development. When, the third world began to shake off colonialism in the 1940s to the 1960s, it became clear that these poor and underdeveloped states could not afford large military establishments.

In this era, idealism received an additional boost in the development of the poor states of the world.

Realist Theory

Realism is a set of related theories of international relations that emphasises the role of the state, national interest and military power in world politics. Realism has dominated the academic study of international relations since the end of World War II.

Realists claim to offer both the most accurate explanation of a state behaviour and a set of policy prescriptions for improving the inherent destabilising elements of international affairs.

The basic assumption underlying the realist approach is rivalry and strife among nations in some form or the other. It may be seen as a contest for power or influence, which always goes on in international society and this contest cannot be controlled by international law or government.

Therefore, the prime function of diplomacy and statesmanship is to check the contest for power and the means to be adopted for it is new balance of power. Realism accepts for its guide the permanence and ubiquity of the struggle for power.

Basic Assumptions of Realism

The basic assumptions of realism are discussed below

- * The basic assumption of realism is that in an international anarchy where there is no overarching authority, no world government.
- * The state is the prominent actor in world politics, whereas all other actors like individuals, international organisations, NGO, etc are either less important or unimportant in world politics. The main objective of foreign policy is to protect and defend the interests of the state in world politics.
- * Realists view IR as primarily a struggle among the great powers for domination and security. National security and state survival are the core values of the realist doctrine of IR. • Realism considers state as a protector of its territory, its population and of their distinctive and valued way of life.
- * Realism points out that the area of IR is marked by considerable turmoil, discord and conflict between states dominated by great powers.

Realist Approach: Classical and Contemporary

- * Classical realism had a prominent place prior to the behaviouralist revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. Contemporary realism is associated with post behaviouralism. Like the behavioural revolution in IR, contemporary realism is largely American in origin.
- * Classical realism originated from ancient Greece and is basically normative in approach and focuses on the core political values of national security and state survival. Contemporary realism on the other hand is basically scientific in approach and focuses on the international system or structure.
- * Classical realism was propounded by ancient Greek historian Thucydides, the renaissance Italian political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli and the 17th century English political and legal philosopher Thomas Hobbes are the three outstanding classical realists of the past. George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau are among the leading contemporary realists.

Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism

Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism are as follows.

- * Politics is rooted in a permanent and unchanging human nature, which is basically self-centered, self-regarding and self-interested.
- * Politics is 'an autonomous sphere of action and cannot therefore be reduced to economics or morals. Political wisdom determines the actions of state leaders.
- * International politics is an arena of conflicting state interests. The doctrine of realism responds to the ever changing political reality.

- * Political Realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action. Realism maintains that universal moral principles can't be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place.
- * Realists are opposed to the idea that particular nations can impose their ideologies on other nations because they see it as a dangerous activity that threatens international peace and security.
- * Statecraft requires profound awareness of the pessimistic knowledge of human beings as they are and not as we might wish them to be.

Realist theory, according to Morgenthau is based on three basic assumptions

- (i) Statesmen desire to pursue their nation's interest.
- (ii) The interest of every nation in the expansion of its influence, territorial, economic, political and cultural.
- (iii) States use their power, which is also defined as influence, in the protection and furtherance of their interests. Realism explains the behaviour of states in term of the safeguard of interests and acquisition of power.

Structural Marxism

Structural Marxism is an approach to Marxist philosophy based on structuralism, primarily associated with the work of French philosopher Louis Althusser.

Marxist Theory on International Relations

According to Marxists, both realism and liberalism/idealism are simply self-serving ideologies introduced by the economic elites to defend and justify global inequality. Instead, Marxists argue, class is the fundamental unit of analysis of international relations and the international system has been constructed by the upper classes and the wealthiest nations in order to protect and defend their interests.

Two of the most important Marxist theory in international relations are World system theory (led by Immanuel Wallerstein) and Dependency theory (a Latin American School which such proponents as Andre Gunder Franke). More recent Neo-marxist work in international relations is led by scholars such as Robert Cox, but is classified separately as Critical theory or Neo-gramscianism.

Basic Characteristic of Marxism

The basic concept of Marxism is that the world is divided not into politically determined nations but into economically determined classes. Consequently, politics does not supercede economies, but rather economics trumps politics.

The various Marxist theories of international relations agree that the international state system was constructed by capitalist and therefore serves the interests of wealthy states and corporations, which seek to protect and expand their wealth.

Marxists attribute a very special status to class in their analysis of society. In contrast to liberals who believe that there is an essential harmony of interests between different social groups, Marxists hold that society is systematically prone to class conflict.

Marx for example, argues in the Communist Manifesto, which he co-authored with Engles, "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle". In capitalist society, the main axis of conflict is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Neo-liberalism

The most important distinguishing feature of the neo-liberals is their declining confidence in human progress. Unlike the traditional liberals, the neo-liberals are far less optimistic about progress and cooperation.

This however, does not means that they are as pessimistic as the realists or neo-realists as seen in the previous unit. As a category, the term neo-liberal refers to post-war liberal scholars who retained much of the belief of the traditional liberals except perhaps sharing their optimism.

Views on Neo-liberalism

Approach As noted by Zacher and Mathew, "Liberals not wanted to be branded as idealists as were many interwar liberals, the international events of this century have made them worry about being too optimistic and in keeping with the ethos of contemporary Social Science, many have felt more comfortable about explaining than predicting".

Basic Features of Neo-liberalism

The post war liberalism or neo-liberalism is broadly divided into four main strands of thinking i.e. institutional liberalism, sociological liberalism, republican liberalism and interdependence liberalism. However, we shall confine ourselves to only those aspects

of these strands that are of immediate concern to us for the purpose of understanding this topic.

Neo-realism

Neo-realism also called contemporary realism and structural realism, is a more recent strand of realism that developed during the 1980s under the influence of Kenneth Waltz while neo-realists continue to acknowledge the central importance of power, they tend to explain events in terms of the structure of the international system rather than the goals and makeup of individual states.

Views on Neo-realism

Waltz's theory of structural realism is not the only version of neo-realism. A second group of contemporary realists, prominent among whom is Joseph Grieco, have integrated Waltz's idea with the ideas of more traditional realists such as Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffmann and Robert Gilpin to construct a contemporary or modern realist profile.

Such neo-realists, however, identify two barriers to international cooperation, fear of those who might not follow the rulers and the relative gains of others.

The Third Version of Neo-realism

There is yet another version, the third version of neo-realism, which is increasingly becoming popular as security studies. This form further divided into two sub-groups namely, Offensive Neo-realism and Defensive Neo-realism.

While offensive neo-realists emphasise the importance of relative power, defensive neo-realists are confused with neo-liberal institutionalists as a branch of liberalism. However, all this has evolved strong reactions from a number of scholars. Several critics point out that contemporary realists like Waltz who construct a realist theory without relying on an assumption about human nature, tend to assume that states are competitive and egoistic entities.

Moreover, in the work of contemporary structural realists, these traits appear to be prior to the interactions of states as though they existed before the game of power politics began.

Social Constructivism Approach

Constructivism, in general, maintains that knowledge is constructed by an individual, from within, rather than being transmitted to a learner from an external source. Vygotsky (1978), the founder of social constructivism, emphasises the importance of interaction with others such as peers, teachers and parents in order to build knowledge.

Campbell (2004) argues that the best learning occurs in the middle of social interaction. The adoption of a constructivist approach is a technology-rich environment, which promotes the full potential of technologies in producing and disseminating resources.

A constructivist view can be a unifying view, because it can include so many strategies, like enquiry learning and Science/technology/society which have at times been labelled by some as "far from being faddish, the teaching activities supported by constructivism represent the best practices of Science teachers since time immemorial".

Critical International Theory

Critical international relations theory is a diverse set of schools of thought in international relations that have criticised the theoretical, meta-theoretical and political status quo, both in IR theory and international politics more broadly from positivist as well as post-positivist positions.

Positivist critiques include Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches and certain strands of social constructivism. Post-positivist critiques include post-structuralist, post-colonial, 'critical constructionist, critical theory, Neo-gramscian, most feminist and some English school approaches, as well as Non-weberian historical sociology, international political sociology, critical geopolitics and the so-called new materialism. All of these later approaches differ from both realism and liberalism in their epistemological and ontological premises.

Such theories are now widely recognised and taught and researched in many universities, but are less common in the United States. They are taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in many major universities outside the US, where a major concern is that "a myopic discipline of IR might contribute to the continued development of a civil society in the US that thinks, reflects and analyses complex international events through a very narrow set of theoretical lenses".

The Feminist Approach of International Relations

It is propounded by feminists like Cynthia Enloe and Spillie Peterson. It suggests that international relations are competitive power oriented and exploitative mainly because of male domination in politics. It argues that international world have been more balanced harmonious and effective if women were given their due share. Liberal feminists opine that to create gender equality, education, political mobilisation and pressure, change is required. Radical feminists are of the view that capitalism is the root cause of gender inequality and this can be weeded out by socialism.

Feminist Critique of Realism

Even when the modern state accommodated gender issues, international relations continued to primarily deal with the patriarchal aspects of the state. International relations theorists, did not relate to the demands from the women's movement or with change that was to effect social and political systems.

Feminist writers like Rosemary Grant argue that realist theory endorses patriarchy because realists patriarchy is necessary for maintaining social order of state. International Relations theory privileges man and excludes women because it is man who is identified with the state and the state is the basis of patriarchal relations in realist discourse. Feminists critique the realist argument that accepts the premise that the citizen is identified with the men and women are the 'other', the outsider. Feminism is the advocacy of the rights of women. It explains that women have been disadvantaged compared to men and are subordinated to men because of a system of patriarchy. They submit that this approach is patriarchal and has biases against women and hides their role.

They see war and nationalism as being gendered processes. Feminists advocate a feminist approach to state security and international relations as one that will show the gender biases and correct these biases.

Post-modernism

Post-modernism is a broad movement that developed in the mid-to late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture and criticism and that marked a departure from modernism. It is characterised by broad skepticism, subjectivism or relativism, a general suspicion of reason and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.

Two most important themes of post-modernism, as discussed by Devetak relate to the power knowledge relationship and the textual strategies used by post-modernist international theorists. The theme of power knowledge relationship in post-modern

scholarship is most deeply influenced by the works of Michel Foucault. Unlike the positivists, he does not believe that knowledge is immune from the workings of power.

Main Argument of Post-modernism

Foucault's main argument is that power in fact produces knowledge. For him "All power requires knowledge and all knowledge relies on and reinforces existing power relations". According to post-modernists, truth is not something external to social settings, but is instead part of them.

Resultantly, post-modernists are primarily interested in knowing which types of 'truths' and knowledge practices support what kinds of power relations.

In the context of international relations, post-modern international theorists have used his insight to examine the 'truths' of international relations theory to see how the concepts and knowledge claims that dominate the discipline in fact are highly contingent on specific power relations. Smith uses two recent examples from the work of Cynthia Weber and Jens Bartelson on the concept of sovereignty to illustrate the power-knowledge relationship.

Concepts of International Relations

The State System

The world community is organised over 185 sovereign states. The organisation of humankind into sovereign states is now called the state system.

Palmer and Perkins define what is variously described as Western state system, the nation-state system or (sovereign) state system as, "It is the pattern of political life in which people are separately organised into sovereign states that must manage to get along together".

Sovereignty and a definite territory are two of the essential attributes of a state of course. There should always be, as Garner said, a community of persons, having an organised government. It is the dominant pattern today. International relations, in fact, are relations and interactions among the states which constitute the state system.

Non-state Actors

Non-state actors are individuals or organisations that have powerful economic, political or social power. They are able to influence at a national and sometimes international level but do not belong to or ally themselves to any particular country or state.

According to Pearlman and Cunningham, now state actors are defined as "an organised political actor not directly connected to the state but pursuing aims that affect vital state interests".

Other than having characteristics such as having power and the ability to influence, non-state actors have a base or headquarter in a certain state but their activities will not only be operating in the state itself but will also be operating beyond the borders of the state.

Types of Non-state Actors and their Roles

Sub-state Actors Sub-state actors are groups of people or individuals with similar interests not beyond the states that are able to effect the state's foreign policy. They are also known as domestic actors.

Inter-governmental Organisations (IGO)

IGOs are organisations whose members consist of three or more nations-states. There are two main types of IGOS namely, the global IGOs and the regional IGOs. Global IGOS are organisations having universal or nearly universal membership which means every state is a member like the United Nations (UN), WTO, IMF and many more. Regional IGOs are a subset of states as members based on a particular interest or region, such as the Association of South-East ASIAN Nations (ASEAN) and many others.

Transnational Corporations (TNCs)/ Multinational Corporations (MNCs)

There are two types of transnational actors which are the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) or Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). MNC is a large corporation operating on a worldwide basis in many countries at the same time, with fixed facilities and employees in each.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs are private international actors whose members are not states, but are volunteers from populations of two or more states, who have formed organisations to promote their shared interests and ideals in order to influence the policies of State Governments and Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs).

Sovereignty

In simple words, sovereignty means the supreme power of the state both internally and externally. It is the attribute of sovereignty which distinguishes the state from other associations or organisations.

One of the earliest definitions of sovereignty was given by the French Philosopher Jean Bodin (1530-1596) who defined it as, "Supreme power over citizens and subjects, unrestrained by law". Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), elaborated on the concept of Sovereignty, shifting the emphasis from the person of the king to the abstraction called government or state. Hobbes equated the sovereign with the state and government.

Sovereignty has become the corner stone of the modern international system. It is this external sovereignty that we are concerned with here. This concept of sovereignty was for the first time recognised and institutionalised in the treaty of West Phalia in 1648.

It provided that

- * Only sovereign states could engage in international relations.
- * For the purpose of recognising a state as an actor in international relation.
- * All sovereign states are equal in international law and international relations.

Power

Power is a phenomenon of all relationships and political relationship is no exception to this rule. Power has been defined by Hans Morgenthau as "Man's control over minds and actions of other man" but, as minds cannot be seen, power can be determined by the behaviour of individuals and states. In international relations, power is the ability of a state to make its will prevail and to enforce respect and command obedience from other states.

Range and Scope of Power

Power is that non-divisible unit of energy, which is capable of causing a change in the actions of its victim's inspite of the victim's opposition to the change. The scope or dimensions of power constitutes its essential characteristics Power as Means to Attain an Objective When power is exerted with a view to the attainment of an objective and therefore, exists when an objective has been achieved.

Power as a Relational

It is a social phenomenon rather than a legal one. There must be at least two individuals for power to occur. The one who exerts power is the subject of power and the one over whom it is exerted is the victim of power.

Power as an Influence

Dimension Power can induce a particular behaviour. Influence is that quality of power, which has to do with the causation of a certain form of behaviour by the subject on the victim. A influences B by causing him to change his actions in some ways.

Power has a Situational

Dimension This means that power varies from situation to situation depending on the specific features of each, situation. For example, power will vary depending on whether there are three people or two, whether the victim resists the subject of power or not, and whether the resistance is intense or not.

Power has a Relative Dimension

This explains or depends whether or not a subject is able to wield power over a victim depends on the relative strengths of the subject and the victim in that specific situation. As their relative strength change, the power equation between them also changes. It is this relative dimension of power that is responsible for changes in the status of states in the international community.

Power has an Instrumental

Dimension Power is not an end in itself although some have argued about the tendency for power to assume a dynamic of its own separate and different from the goal which it is meant to achieve. Power in this case is an instrument for achieving specific goals,

Power as a Need Dimensions

The greater the need of one state, group or individual, the more likely power will be exerted upon it by those on whom it depends for the satisfaction of the needs.

Power as a Responsiveness

Dimension Power operates most effectively, where there is low possibility of resistance by the victim. Thus, where a victim can resist the effort of the subject to wield power over him, it becomes more difficult for power effort to succeed and consequently the character of power in that situation is affected.

Power as a Capability

This dimension refers to the availability of certain resource capacities for the exertion of power. Often power is equated exclusively with this capacity.

Domain of Power

The domain of an actor's power refers to the number of other actors subject to its influence. In other words, how big is B or how many Bs are there? Thus, a state may have a great deal of influence in one region of the world, while having little or no influence in other parts of the world. The domain of influence of Russia today is smaller than that of the former Soviet Union.

Weight of Actor's Power

The weight of an actor's power refers to the probability that B's behaviour is or could be affected by A. Thus, a country that has only a 30% chance of achieving its aims in trade negotiations is less powerful than one with a 90% chance. This dimension could also be labelled the 'reliability' of A's influence.

Balance of Power Theory

The 'balance of power' was used by Thucydides to explain the onset of the Peloponnesian War. It was the subject of an essay by David Hume (1742), in the 18th century and continues to fascinate international relations theorists even today. Although, many different theories carry the 'balance of power' label, the term itself, implies that changes in relative political power can be observed and measured.

The balance of power theory maintains that when one state or alliance increases its power or applies it more aggressively, threatened states will increase their own power in response, often by forming a counter balance coalition. Balance of power is a central concept of neo realist theory.

Hartman explains concept of Balance of power in international relations as a system in the sense that one power bloc leads to the emergence of other and it ultimately leads to a network of alliances. The concept of balance of power rests on the assumption that excessive power anywhere in the system is a threat to the existence of the other units.

The changing nature of power in contemporary international system further complicates the operation of the global balance of power. Globalisation, internet, weapons of mass destruction and other technological developments have made it possible for small states and even non-state groups to acquire significant power.

These factors also dilute the relative importance of military power. In the future, the balance of power may continue to operate among states engaged in prolonged disputes, but it is less applicable to conflicts involving terrorists and other non-state groups.