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# UNIT 12 FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES AND REGIONALISM

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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One of the impacts of advances in science and technology on international relations has been the growing interdependence of states which is reflected in the emergence of numerous international and regional organisations. The proliferation of these organisations gave rise to new schools of thought which argued that greater cooperation between technical experts or elite of countries in functional or non-political activities could eventually lead to regional or global integration and thus to peace. Adherents of this thought, the integration theorists, rejected the exclusive emphasis of realism and neorealism on conflict and competition between states and championed cooperative efforts of states in international and regional organisations. This unit examines the two approaches of functionalism and regionalism to peace.

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## 12.2 FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO PEACE

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The main architect of functionalism as a theory is David Mitrany. His essay *A Working Peace System* summarises the main arguments of the functionalists and by its very title drew attention to their major claim. functionalism is the road to lasting peace.

Writing during after the World War II, Mitrany projected the growing domestic trend towards welfare statism into the international arena and argued that wars are the result of social and economic maladjustments. While the real task of our common society is the conquest of poverty, ignorance and disease, the existing state system based on sovereignty is not only inadequate but also an obstacle to finding solutions to global problems. The increasing number of technical or non-political problems that have emerged at the international level require the creation of frameworks for international cooperation. Here the functionalist

suggested international collaboration among technicians, rather than political elite. Mitrany argued that social activities can be separated into political and non-political (technical) ones and that it is possible to establish international institutions in non-political or functional sectors where there is likely to be less resistance from states because of the welfare benefits of these institutions. .

As we observed a number of international organisations had sprung up since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. They were primarily in the fields of communications, transport, commerce, health and social welfare. Several of these organisations have survived the two great wars and are still functioning—some as specialised agencies of the United Nations and others as independent organisations. How do the activities of international functional organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) promote peace? Functionalists see this kind of activity as promoting peace in three different ways. First, it solves basic human problems that are the root causes of war. Functional organisations, such as the FAO, enable countries to feed their hungry by developing new strains of wheat and rice. Secondly, it subverts the sovereignty of nation-states. For instance, citizens of a nation, which receives support from international organisations or other countries or international organisations, are inclined to offer similar assistance to where it is needed elsewhere. They might be less inclined to support policies of their own government that are hostile to countries that contribute to helping them. Moreover, functional activities create within a country, even within a government, groups whose interests are closely tied with international interests. For instance, a health ministry which is making use of WHO's technical aid may become an advocate of world cooperation. A village doctor who depends on a vaccine supplied by the WHO may develop a vested interest in seeing that the WHO continues to function inside the country. Apart from giving some people inside a country vested interest in international activity, functional activities may foster international loyalty among people at large and counteract the harmful nationalistic activities. Citizens often support government because the government provides benefits for them. If international organisations also provide such benefits, citizens may no longer be blindly supporting of the government because the national government is not the only source of benefits. A third way in which functional activity supports peace is by bring people from different countries in face-to-face contact. Foreigners seem less 'foreign' and more human when they are living right in your midst. And it becomes difficult to accept generalisations about other national groups when such groups are living and working in ones own village or town.

Functionalists were convinced that the extension of existing network of international functional agencies that have sprung up since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century will not only address global problems but also render obsolete the rigid institutional structures of nation-states. Functionalism is, thus, very much a programme for action. It is intended to be prescriptive and policy-oriented, It is also descriptive and diagnostic as it is linked with perceptions of development in significant aspects of human nature and institutional interaction.

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## 12.3 A CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALISM

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Some members of the functionalism itself who suggested alternative routes to political integration challenged Mitrany's theory of functional integration. They are the neo-

functionalists. In contrast to the functionalists who sought to create a new world order in which the sovereign states take a back seat, neo-functionalists or the integration theorists seek to create new states through the integration of existing states. The neo-functionalist theory developed by **Ernst Haas** in the 1960s was inspired by the intensifying cooperation between the countries of Western Europe that began in the 1950s. **Haas** builds on **Mitrany**. But he rejects the notion that 'technical' matters can be separated from politics. **Integration** is a process whereby 'political actors are persuaded to shift their loyalties... towards a new centre whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the **pre-existing** national states'.

The theory of functionalism is considered contradictory and vague. The most **frequent** criticism of functionalism has been that it is not clear in what way the work of the functional institutions would be coordinated. The formulations of the functionalists are of a utopian kind. Some critics have argued that functionalism does not take enough account of the working of politics. It has been said that functionalism presumes a natural willingness of people and nations to work together. It is based on the assumption of essential goodness of human nature. Functionalism implies that man is innately good and rational. This, **according** to the critics, is a one-sided view of human nature. Actually man is mixture of both **good** and evil. He can be good and rational and equally he can be irrational and selfish.

Another reason why the theory of functionalism is open to attack is that it is not and was never intended to be a systematic descriptive analysis. The writing of functionalists is scattered far and wide in numerous pamphlets, articles and books which have rarely **been** brought together within a coherent theoretical framework.

The functionalists and the neo-functionalists differ on their views regarding the **major** characteristics of society within the modern state. The functionalists seemed to point **to the** element of agreement on consensus in **society**. The neo-functionalists on the other **hand** argue that social life is dominated by **competition** among interests. It is logical therefore **that** the interest groups are allocated an important place in the process of functional integration. **Ernst Haas** describes integration as "the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new and larger setting". He further says that "integration is conceptualised as resulting from an institutionalised pattern of interest politics played out within existing international organisations".

The neo-functionalists or integration theory is centred on the requirement of a **procedural** consensus; groups are persuaded to pursue their interests through an agreed framework, which is an essential element in the end situation of the integration process. The **neo-**functionalists stress the psychology of elites in an integration process ideally culminating **in** the emergence of a new political system, whereas functionalists stressed a popular psychology in an integration process leading to a universal socio - psychological community. The **neo-**functionalists are much more interested in formal institutional framework. On the other **hand** functionalists are more concerned with change in popular attitudes as the test of effective integration. .

Functionalism and neo-functionalism are both process theories. Unlike the communication theory of Karl Deutsch they both contain a sophisticated view upon the causal links which are expected to lead from one level of integration to another. They are valuable in **the**

understanding of the pattern of international cooperation and the process of international integration.

Another drawback of functionalism is its insistence on the separability of political and economic and social spheres of activity. Actually in the present day world the political problems have economic and social roots. Hence economic and social activities cannot be disjoined from political activities.

In spite of the drawbacks and limitations of the theory of functionalism, its basic argument is clear. Functionalism is essentially an approach to world order. It is an approach which would overlay political divisions with a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all nations would be gradually integrated. In the words of David Mitrany, the functional approach springs from an agonising reappraisal of the essence and working of traditional international politics. It is an answer to the question how would world society move from a war system to a peace system? Functionalism is a combination of two closely related processes: task expansion and loyalty transfer. According to the functionalists international functional organisations and agencies promise to eliminate war by attacking the societal diseases such as poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, economic insecurity, social injustice and exploitation which subvert human beings natural inclinations and lead to war.

According to the functionalists the rapidly developing global problems require a rational restructuring of international political system, that is, the change from the state system towards various forms of international authority or what David Mitrany calls 'a new benevolent internationalism'. No doubt functionalism constitutes a very attractive set of propositions. It is mainly concerned with the gradual liquidation of the nation-state system, the principal barrier in the establishment of peace. But there is little prospect of the transformation of the present international system. The world has become more fragmented politically in the present era. With the fragmentation of global politics, so long as national states are unwilling to sacrifice national sovereignty and interests, the prospect of a drastic change in international political system is poor.

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## 12.4 REGIONALISM AND WORLD PEACE

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The increasingly complex problems of modern international society have led to multilateral cooperation in matters of mutual concern. The most interesting and significant development of international society has been the growth of regional organisations as a means of peace and security. Regionalism is not a novel feature of modern times. Greek history shows that there existed a number of regional organisations in the form of Amphictyonic Leagues since very ancient period. Regional organisations were known in the medieval times. The famous Hanseatic League was formed in mid-thirteenth century for the defence of common rights and interests by force of arms, if necessary. This was in the North German region.

The role of regionalism as an approach to peace is a matter of controversy. The universalists object to it as being over simplistic in its perceptions. Membership and jurisdiction of regional organisations overlap and the compatibility of regional organisations with the United Nations has been questioned. It is argued that regional groupings are simply enlarged alliances only leading to bigger wars rather than discouraging them. In regional security

system smaller states are subjected to the domination of great powers within the region. During the Cold War, the growing number of regional arrangements had resulted in the concentration of power in the two superpowers vis-à-vis their respective regional or alliance partners. This phenomenon was called bi-polarization of world power. While disputes may originate between neighbouring states, they tended to develop into global wars because of the temptation for intervention by the superpowers. Moreover, peace enforcement through regional security system has limitations because of split among the members of the regional organisation and economic sanctions could not be used within a region because they could adversely affect the economic interests of its own members.

On the other hand, the defenders of regionalism support it on grounds of realism. They feel that a threat of security is most apt to originate between neighbouring states. Regional arrangements are considered to be instruments of collective self-defence and action against an aggressor would be undertaken not only more willingly but with more dispatch and efficiency by those within a region. Moreover, homogeneity of interests of various kinds such as language, culture or economic interests produces a natural trend towards regional groupings. Regional pacts are more than military agreements. They are centres of coalition diplomacy.

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## 12.5 REGIONAL SECURITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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Collective security was conceived as an alternative to the balance of power. But the limitations of collective security were increasingly recognised with the decline of the League of Nations after 1935. The collective security system as designed by the framers of the UN Charter had serious defects and omissions. It could not work to their expectations. Thus, new hopes are raised that a regional system of security would be more effective in providing a better sense of security, both psychologically and physically to nation-states. Thus, regional integration for peace and security gained ground.

Yet, in many ways regional security system has tended to ape the collective security system whose failings it was designed to overcome. Both systems depend on the organisation of collective power by mutual assistance among states to deter aggression and insure security. Both demand peace among the states as a prerequisite for effective functioning of the security system.

On the other hand, there are fundamental differences between collective security system and regional security system. Firstly, the regional security system realistically concentrates the security of a particular region to defend against erstwhile or future enemies; it knows in advance where the principal threat to security will originate. By contrast, the collective security system anticipates any state may break the peace requiring security protection worldwide. Secondly, the regional security system calls for much more limited commitments. Collective security demands a blanket commitment to protect peace. Thirdly, the regional security system presumes that breaches of peace can be effectively localised. Collective security is based on the premise that peace and war alike are indivisible,

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## 12.6 ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION

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The proliferation of conflicts in many parts of the developing world and the overload of UN duties has prompted many to advocate a larger role for regional organisations in maintaining world peace and security. Regional organisations have a legal role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations. Article 52 of the UN Charter states that local disputes should be settled regionally before referral to the United Nations and that resolution via the Security Council remains an option only if regional efforts fail. In addition, Article 53 of the UN Charter makes clear that the Security Council can utilise regional arrangements and agencies to enforce and maintain peace and security under its authority.

However, regional organisations hardly fulfilled this legal role during the Cold War, which had a dual effect on regional conflicts. On the one hand, it internationalised many of these conflicts bringing them within the superpower competition. On the other hand, the super powers also restrained these conflicts out of a fear of escalation in which they themselves may be forced to get involved.

Today, though tensions have receded between the major powers, they have exploded in various other parts of the world. There is a continuing need for the international management of conflict and the promotion of cooperation. What is to replace the superpower management which was evolved and operated during the Cold War? Many analysts emphasise the possibilities and necessity for management at the global level through the United Nations or some other variant of a great power concert. Apart from its humanitarian and peace keeping activities, the UN is unlikely to impose itself in a forceful, consistent and effective way in regional conflicts.

In addition, the great powers are now unwilling to accept the heavy burden of conflict management in distant area of the globe. They avoid major engagement. The long-delayed response to the collapse of Yugoslavia is a vivid case in point.

With the end of the Cold War, international relations are no longer based on the polarized confrontation between two superpowers, giving regional organisations an opportunity to take a leading role in conflict resolution. Regional organisation participated in conflict resolution both independently and in cooperation with the United Nations as the normative expectations of the international community increased and superpower intervention in regional conflicts decreased.

After the end of the Cold War, most of the violent conflicts arose out of regional concerns and most of those conflicts were intra-state conflicts and not inter-state. There is the increasing regionalisation of world politics. Regional dynamics in the post – Cold War order have proved to be especially complex. Economic regionalism and security regionalism are the two important trends. The trend towards economic regionalism is more mixed than the trend towards security regionalism. In the international economy, globalisation and regionalisation appear to be pushing states in conflicting directions. With the regionalisation of international economic and security relations in the post – Cold War era, much attention is focused upon institutions like the European Union, ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation Forum (APEC) and North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the economic side,

Among the most notable cases of the role of regional organisations in conflict resolutions include the contribution of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to the settlement of conflicts in Nicaragua and Haiti and between El Salvador and Honduras; the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in Burundi, Liberia, Somalia and Sierra Leone; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Cambodia; and NATO in the former Yugoslavia. The role of regional organisations in conflict settlement also went beyond simply providing disputants with good offices. ASEAN not only facilitated negotiations, it also acted as a third party mediator, the OAS intervened in member states to protect human rights and restore democracy, while the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) undertook new responsibilities in preventing the settling regional conflicts. Moreover, NATO, the OAU, the OAS and ECOWAS teamed up with the United Nations in joint peacekeeping, while NATO and the Western European Union acted under UN authorisation in the former Yugoslavia from 1993 to 1996.

Among the above cases, ASEAN and the OAS were widely assessed as active and effective in resolving the conflicts in Cambodia and Haiti, respectively. Geographical proximity to the conflicts giving them strong incentives to re-establish peace and security in the regions, both ASEAN and the OAS intervened actively to resolve conflicts though they chose different methods of conflict resolution. Both ASEAN and the OAS were active, flexible and effective in the peace processes in Cambodia and Haiti. Although the UN Security Council and major powers made the final settlement for both the conflicts, the contributions of the two regional organisations strongly endorse the case for a greater role for regional organisations in conflict prevention and resolution.

However there are also serious drawbacks in the regional organisations because of which they have been far less active in the peaceful settlement of disputes. The first weakness of the regional organisations as a means for peacefully resolving disputes flows from the non-viability of the United Nations to create the kind of enforcement machinery contemplated in the Charter. Without the deterring impact of an effective sanctions system, some states may bypass the peaceful settlement machinery. In the second place, regional organisations have many times failed to resolve differences between their own members because of lack of consensus. For example, the role of NATO in the Cyprus dispute is a case in point. Likewise, the Arab League has so far failed to resolve the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. In South Asia, SAARC also could not play an important role in accelerating the pace of economic and social development; promote national and collective self-reliance and further the cause of peace, progress and stability in the region. Ethnic tensions in South Asia are Indo-centric. The ethnic conflicts acquire a trans-regional dimension and get further exacerbated by extra-regional powers. As bilateral and contentious issues are to be excluded from the SAARC deliberation, these issues are internationalised.

Regional actors, especially neighbouring countries with strong incentives to encourage peace, may be more suitable than the United Nations or major states outside the region in preventing and resolving local conflicts. The numerous demands on the United Nations, as well as its strained capacity in maintaining international peace and security in the post-Cold War era, constitute further reasons to increase the role of regional organisations.

## 12.7 CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN PEACEMAKING

Four conditions are needed for regional organisations to play an active and effective role in conflict resolution: legitimacy, enforcement power, resources and cooperation with the United Nations and major powers.

In **conflict** resolution, legitimacy means international recognition. The condition of legitimacy can be met if regional organisations have the mandate of the Security Council. **However**, due to the veto power of permanent members of the Security Council and their different perspectives, it becomes difficult for regional organisations to obtain the mandate they need to intervene and resolve conflicts.

The second condition refers to an organisation's ability to carry out its peace plans and to impose its decisions and will on the disputants. This may involve the use of coercive diplomacy methods such as embargoes, sanctions and blockades to isolate and weaken the disputants. Enforcement power is needed throughout the process of conflict resolution to persuade disputants to compromise and cooperate and to ensure that parties comply with agreements and their responsibilities once the fighting has ended.

The third condition relates to resources, manpower, money and materials. A regional organisation that intervenes to resolve an intrastate conflict must often sponsor the peace process and bear most of the costs. Once a political settlement is achieved, money and personnel are needed to carry out the peace agreement, facilitate and monitor elections and disarm the warring factions. In addition, large budgetary outlays are required for famine relief, to accommodate and repatriate refugees and to cover the costs of reconstruction and reconciliation programmes.

The final condition for effective regional action concerns the importance of cooperating **closely** with the United Nations and major powers. Experience during the Cold War shows that without major power support, regional organisations play only a marginal role in conflict resolution. It is imperative for regional organisations to maintain close cooperation **with** major powers to increase leverage against disputants. However, it is rare for regional organizations to meet all the above four conditions.

### 12.7.1 Economic Regionalism

The proliferation of economic regional organisations is an evidence of a growing need to **protect** the economic interests of the member countries. Regional cooperation is seen as a way of **tackling** the problem of economic development. Economic regionalism in Europe and North America has been largely successful. The most important factor **that** has **contributed** to its success is the relative degree of balance and complementarity and the **extent** to which its member states are oriented towards integrative behaviour. Economic development through economic integration and regional trade and financial links has not proved to be successful in the developing world. For example, collective economic benefit **has** been the main rationale as well as drive behind SAARC. But economic cooperation **is** dictated so heavily by political constraints. The **South** Asian region has been a theatre



for the interplay of the politics of no-war and no-peace syndrome. The centerpiece of South Asia's regional power relationships is the Indo-Pakistan relationship. India is the biggest and most developed economic power in the region and as such the leaders of her neighbours are very much concerned about India's hegemony in the region.

Thus there are several **constraints on** regional economic organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America to function as an instrument of regional cooperation. The extent and result of the cooperative effort in the regions of the developing world is going to be uncertain and the achievement of success of regional economic organisations would require extraordinary diplomatic skill and political commitment to make them a successful regional venture.

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## 12.8 SUMMARY

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In this unit we have examined two alternative routes to integration and peace, functionalism and neo-functionalism or regionalism. Emphasising cooperation between states at the international and regional levels, these two approaches to peace challenged the dominant schools of realism and neorealism which emphasised on conflict and competition between states. For the adherents of this approach, cooperation between states in functional activities and regional cooperative arrangements seemed to place 'limitations on unbridled sovereignty' and pave way for greater integration and thus peace.

The unit also examined the concepts of collective and regional security emphasising on the role of regional organisations in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. We have seen the conditions necessary for the effectiveness of regional and international organisations. With the end of bipolar conflict between the superpowers, tensions have receded between major powers. But they have exploded in many other parts of the world. There is a continuing need for the international management of conflict and the promotion of cooperation. While the extent and results of cooperative effort among the countries of the developing countries are going to be uncertain, the **roadmap** for peace envisaged by the **functionalists** and the neofunctionalists remains as relevant today as it was during the Cold War years.

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## 12.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) What are the basic assumptions of functionalism?
- 2) What is the difference between functionalism and neofunctionalism?
- 3) Critically examine the role of regional organisations in conflict prevention and resolution.
- 4) What is economic regionalism? How far has it proved to be successful as an instrument of economic integration and cooperation?