FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO PEACE: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Functional approach to peace is an alternative theory of international relations which is propounded by David Mitrany. The chief objective of functionalism is to establish peace through functional cooperation by creating and extending a web of functional international organizations which would be able to solve non-political problems of the world.

Keywords: Functional Approach; Functionalism; Functional Organizations; Social; Economic; Integration; Co-operation; Peace

INTRODUCTION

It has been a main problem of international relations to establish peace among the nations who have the conflicting mutual interests and they try to solve them by war. In order to achieve world peace, several methods have been adopted by the States, such as the peaceful settlement, collective security, disarmament, trusteeship, preventive diplomacy etc.

There are mainly three basic theories regarding the peace establishment. “The first proposes peace through a world organization. This is an attempt to solve the problem by political means and belongs primarily to the earliest period of discussion”.1 “The second seeks the preservation of peace through a grand alliance. It is a military solution to the problem of peace; politics is subordinated to power.”2 This proposal belonged to the defensive period; faith in it has wand since it assumed the initiatives and difficulties of alliance, even in war time, have become acute.3 The third thesis seeks to establish peace by functional international agencies. “It depends upon an economic solution of world problems, reflecting a sense of frustration with regard to world organization and the feeling that a grand alliance is likely to disintegrate.”4 Functional approaches to peace presents an alternative view of international politics in response to security or military speculation of Realism. It is a political theory of integration proposed by David Mitrany in his pamphlet – ”A Working Peace System”. Unlike other concepts of peace, functionalism is positive and constructive approach to peace. It is presented as a universal non-political approach to political integration. It is formulated on liberal utilitarian political values.5

Functionalism assumes "that human affairs can be sliced into layers, that the concerns of man are so stratified that economic and social problems can, in a preliminary fashion, be separated from political problems and from each other".6 "Having adopted this assumption, functionalism then proceeds on the theory that the treatment of economic and social matters should take priority".7 In the opinion of functionalists the main causes of war and conflicts among nations have many social, economic and humanitarian problems of mankind and without solving these fundamental problems, permanent world peace cannot be established.

According to functionalists there are many social, economic and humanitarian causes of war. It is related to the objective humanitarian conditions. "It is the result neither of man's native instinct, nor of his acquired sinfulness, neither of state's inherent nature, nor of its irrational policy, war is a disease of
global society, caused by grave deficiencies in the economic and social circumstances of mankind."  

"Poverty, misery, ill-health, illiteracy, economic insecurity, social injustice, exploitation, discrimination - these are the factors which create the desperation, apathy, frustration, fear, cupidity and hatred which make the world susceptible to war". There is a growing appreciation that unless underlying social, economic and humanitarian problems are resolved, there can be no enduring peace.

Functionalists, to a great extent, are pragmatic and functionalism is akin to pragmatism. Their view helps in solving global problems through the promotion of social, economic and cultural cooperation among states. "Functionalism is an assertion that the development of international economic and social cooperation is a major prerequisite for the ultimate solution of political conflicts and elimination of war."

According to the functionalists to solve basic non-political problems of the world, international cooperation and international action are required for two reasons. Firstly, "the state is at fault, not because it is intrinsically a fighting organism, as the power politician would have it, but because it is increasingly an appropriate and ineffectual agency for doing what has to be done in order to promote the economic and social health of human family." The system imposes an arbitrary and rigid pattern of vertical division upon global society, disrupting the organic unity of the whole, and carving the world into segments whose separateness is jealously guarded by sovereignties which are neither able to solve the fundamental problems nor willing to permit them to be solved by other authorities. Secondly, a government cannot meet the demand of providing welfare for its citizens by remaining in isolation. Promotion of welfare and technological advancement need cooperation among states both in governmental and non-governmental set ups. Peace requires solution of economic and social problems which can be achieved only by problem solving agencies coterminous in territorial competency with the problem areas.

The main purpose of functionalism is to establish international agencies with limited jurisdiction and specific powers which can be defined by the role they perform. "The 'functional' sector of international organization is that part of the mass of organized international activities which relates directly to economic, social, technical and humanitarian matters – that is, to problems which may be tentatively described as non-political." Functional "international organizations operate in a narrowly defined field. They may try to improve international relations and to take new initiatives in field such as telecommunications, metrology, health, labour legislation and the production and consumption of different commodities or they may strive at a similar purpose on a regional level." Functionalists believes that "the appropriate administrative unit, varies with the nature of the problem of conflicts between the states, but it only accidentally corresponds to the boundaries established by the state system; more and more, the problem which are crucial to the fitness of human society for sustaining a peaceful regime are becoming bigger in scope than national states." Mitrany urged to make "the efforts to devise a comprehensive blueprint for the pragmatic development of special purpose organization, which he thinks will tend to evolve their own distinctive structural patterns, procedural system, and areas of competence in accordance with the inherent requirements of their functional missions." Functional organizations may, by focusing attention upon areas of common interest, build tendency of cooperation which will equip human being for the conduct of a system of international relations in which the expectations of constructive collaboration will replace the meaningless confrontation as the dominant figure. Thus Functionalists, focuses on the creation of specialized international institutions with technical administrative structures and procedures to which certain functional missions would be transferred from national governments.

The mutual advantages brought by such working international agencies will deter beneficiaries of war mongers. The benefits carried out by the functional agencies would attract loyalty of the peoples and "humanity can transcend the limitation of national sovereignty and build a workable global system." Functionalists assume that fundamental loyalties will be increasingly shared by the state and the agencies of the world community, the sentiments of human solidarity will be deepened, and the
subjective basis will be prepared for progressively broader and more effective co-operation among the peoples of the world”.21 Functional theory purports to provide an indispensable laboratory for the experimental development of organizational patterns and techniques which may serve as models for the ultimately necessary machinery of internationalism on the highest political levels.”22

Functionalism is an ‘intellectual’ and ‘sophisticated’ approach to peace and elimination of war. "To those who are weary of superficial approaches, it justifies itself by burrowing deep under the surface of reality to find the roots of the problem. To those whose scepticism is excited by panaceas, it offers the appeal of a system which prescribes specific treatment for the primary ills from which war derives, instead of a cheap patent remedy for the secondary symptoms of human society's malaise."23

Neo functionalism: Ernst Haas is the founder of Neo functionalism. Neo functionalism is a doctrine and a strategy of regional integration and cooperation. It is constituted on David Mitrany’s work. Neo functionalists emphasized their attention only on the immediate process of integration among states, i.e. regional integration. At first, states integrate in limited and specific functional or economic spheres. After that, partially integrated states experience growing momentum for further rounds of integration in related areas. This ‘invisible hand’ of integration phenomenon was termed “spill-over”.24 In the opinion of Neo functionalists, there are two types of spill over: functional and political. Functional spill over is the interrelationship of various economic sectors or problem areas, and the integration in one policy-sphere spilling over into others. Neo functionalists believes that successful cooperation in one area would open avenue for similar cooperation in other fields. Political spill over is the construction of supranational governance set-ups, as far-reaching as the European Union(EU), or as voluntary as the United Nations(UN).25

The nineteenth century was the period of growth of international co-operation in economic and social fields. In this period many public international unions or international agencies came into existence with social and economic questions. For example, Rhine Commission established by Congress of Vienna (1815), the European Commission for Danube (1856), International Union of Railway Freight Transportation (1890), Radio Telegraphic Union (1906), the Universal Postal Union (1874), the International Office of Public Health (1909), the International Copyright Union (1886), etc.26

The League of Nations “established technical organizations and committees in various fields, sponsored international conferences for dealing with particular problems, carried out pioneering enterprises in international technical assistance, and gradually emerged as an active centre for stimulating and coordinating multilateral efforts to cope with the complexities of modern economic and social problems.”27 For example, The International Labour Organization (ILO) which was created under the Treaty of Versailles as an autonomous body of the League.

Today within UN family there exist a number of specialized agencies which operates in non-political fields, for example International Labour organization(ILO), Food and Agriculture organization (FAO)United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO)International Maritime Organization (IMO) World Metrological Organization(WMO) International Telecommunication Union (ITU) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Bank Group, International Monetary Fund (IMF) etc. These specialized agencies are working to promote peace, prosperity and welfare for the people of the world. Specialized agencies may or may not have been originally founded by the UN. Their activities are coordinated by the machinery of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.28

CONCLUSION

Functional approach to peace is presented as an alternative view of international relations. Unlike other theories of peace, it focuses on constructive, positive and non-political dimensions of peace. Functionalists assume that social, economic and humanitarian problems are the main causes of war or conflict. Peace requires solution of non-political and technical issues. Functionalists identify that
States cannot meet the demand of providing welfare for its citizens for dual reasons-first; they have their vested interests and they are involved in power politics and second; State is an ineffectual organization for solving non-political problems because these transnational technical problems are bigger than the scope of nation state. The central idea of functionalism is to create functional international organization at the micro level in non political areas. Functional international agencies would be able to solve social-economic problems and achieve effective cooperation among states. Integration in social and economic fields would lead to political unity. Through functional cooperation by the successful working of functional organization could establish a peaceful co-operative and unified global system.

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