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Q2(b)

In what ways does the functionalist approach in International relations help in maintaining peace and order in global politics?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Approaches to the Study of International Relations

Approaches to the Study of International Relations: Idealist, Realist, Marxist, Functionalist and Systems theory.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the functionalist approach to peace and order in International Relations
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

Mitrany argued that peace grows from agencies built around concrete functions.

Haas's neofunctionalism added spillover and used European integration as evidence.

Keohane's institutions are a related but more State-centric account of cooperation.

The EU shows functional peace among members; it does not erase great-power anarchy.

Cox notes that functional order can lock in a hierarchy unless the order itself is questioned.

Introduction

Functionalism in International Relations argues that peace is built by practical cooperation on shared tasks, not first by a world government or by a balance of power. **David Mitrany** is the main source. Later neofunctionalism used the European Union as the test case.

Body

Mitrany's claim

- In A Working Peace System, **David Mitrany** held that form should follow function. Agencies should be designed around tasks such as health, posts, rivers, and trade.
- Loyalty would shift toward those agencies as they delivered welfare. War would become harder because societies were tied by working links.
- The approach was a reply to both power politics and to a single federal constitution imposed from above.

From functionalism to neofunctionalism

- **Ernst Haas added spillover:** cooperation in one sector creates pressure for cooperation in related sectors.
- The European Coal and Steel Community, the Treaty of Rome, and later the single market are the usual illustrations of that path toward the European Union.
- **Robert Keohane's later neoliberal institutionalism is a cousin, not a twin:** institutions reduce transaction costs and cheating among self-interested States, without Mitrany's hope that

the State itself would fade.

Peace and order

- Functional ties can create zones of stable peace among members, as in Western Europe after 1950.
- United Nations specialised agencies, technical standards, and some peacekeeping support tasks follow a functional logic even when the Security Council remains realist.
- Order here is problem-solving order, which Robert Cox would call work within the given interstate system.

Limits

- High politics of security, identity, and survival do not spill over on a timetable. Charles de Gaulle, Brexit, and wars on the EU's edge show the ceiling.
- Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer treat anarchy and relative power as first. Functional clubs do not remove the security dilemma among great powers.
- The Global South often experienced functional agencies as rules written in the core, which is Cox's point about whose order is being stabilised.

Flow diagram

Mitrany form follows function -> Task agencies
Task agencies -> Haas spillover
Haas spillover -> European Union
Waltz Mearsheimer anarchy -.limits. -> European Union

Conclusion

Functionalist peace is cooperation by task, with Mitrany's working agencies and Haas's spillover. It explains the European Union's internal order better than it explains great-power war. It is a method of tying States, not a substitute for power politics at the system's top.

Facts & figures

David Mitrany

A Working Peace System: international agencies should match technical functions, not a prior political map.

Ernst Haas

Neofunctionalism: sectoral integration spills into neighbouring sectors and toward political union.

ECSC 1951

Coal and steel pool among six European States, the usual first step in the EU story.

Robert Keohane

After Hegemony: regimes can sustain cooperation among egoist States by information and iteration.

Robert Cox

Critical theory asks who an order serves; problem-solving theory, including much functionalism, works inside it.

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