

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

The changing role and dynamics of the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations in the post-cold war strategic environment need to be understood and interpreted within the wider theoretical framework. At the outset, we must acknowledge certain skepticism about theorising the UN peace-keeping operations. As Chomsky put it, in the analysis of international relations, ‘historical conditions are too varied and complex for anything that might plausibly be called “a theory” to apply uniformly¹.

The levels of certainty and exactness associated with the ‘physical’ sciences are not expected in the ‘social’ sciences. Instead, the focus of theoretical inquiry relating to the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations is on the process of theorising, which includes the social and political purposes of knowledge, the cognitive interests and assumptions of the scholar, as well as the manner in which the principal actors in international politics construct their images of the political world.

The aim of this chapter is to posit several theoretical perspectives to understand and interpret the role of the United Nations in the keeping and making of peace in the post-cold war world order. The policies of the

¹ Noam Chomsky, [World Orders, Old and New](#) (London, 1994), p120.

major powers after the cold war and their implications for parties involved in armed conflicts merit robust theoretical framework.

According to Fred Halliday, three “constitutive elements” have generated various theoretical approaches. They are (1) the inter-state, (2) the transnational, and (3) the systemic.² All three levels are relevant in coming to terms with analysing contemporary international relations. While assessing the role of the UN in peace-keeping and related operations after the Cold War, the three levels referred to by Halliday come alive. The United Nations as an international organisation after the Cold War, has performed various roles in peace-keeping and peace-making operations. While doing so, it has engaged with parties in conflict, such as sovereign states, ethnic or other groups, and regional organisations. Above all, the UN has played the pre-eminent political role of keeping the UN Security Council’s permanent members engaged in addressing conflict situations, along with major powers in the post-cold war international political order. So the interactions at different levels pertain to both states and non-state actors are taken into account

² Fred Halliday, ‘The Pertinence of International Relations’, [Political Studies](#), 38 (1990), p. 503

to understand and interpret the role and dynamics of the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations.

On the other hand, critical theorists and post-modern approaches question the rigid intellectual boundaries, distinctive concepts, language and subject-matter of the discipline of 'International Relations'. Post-modernists consider the division between sociology and history as artificially imposed demarcation lines, which distort our capacity to understand world politics.

Another crucial question relates to the overall purpose to which theories are being put. Here the idea is to make a distinction between explanatory and constitutive international theory. Clearly, the whole idea of the study of various international relations theories is to make sense of the international politics after the Cold War, and develop a nuanced understanding of events and developments, institutions and processes which exist in the contemporary world. The evolution of the United Nations as an international organisation in the post-cold war world order needs to be understood and interpreted within the wider theoretical framework.

If facts are sufficient, why do we need theories, or why it is incumbent upon us to construct a wider theoretical framework. Fred Halliday provides three answers to this question. As he states, "First, there needs to be some pre-conception of which facts are significant and which are not. The facts are myriad and do not speak for themselves. For any one, academic or not, their need to be criteria of significance. Secondly, any one set of facts, even if accepted as true and as significant, can yield different interpretations: the debate on the 'lessons of the 1930s' is not about what happened in the 1930s, but about how these events are to be interpreted. The same applies to the end of the Cold War in the 1980s. Thirdly, no human agent, again whether academic or not, can rest content with facts alone: all social activities involves moral questions, of right and wrong, and these can, by definition, not be decided by facts. In the international domain such ethical issues are pervasive: the question of legitimacy and loyalty should one obey the nation, a broader community (even the world, the cosmopolis) or some smaller sub-national group; the issues of intervention --- whether sovereignty is a supreme value or whether states or agents can intervene

in the internal affairs of states, the question of human rights and their definition and universality³.

In other words, theories relating to international relations and theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting the role and effectiveness of the UN peace-operations are indeed useful. The two case-studies about the Bosnian war and Sudan refugee crisis, discussed at length in the previous chapter, provide new insights into the role and dynamics of the peace-keeping and peace-making operations of the United Nations after the Cold War. This has to be placed in the wider theoretical framework to determine the virtues and shortcomings of these theoretical perspectives, and point out their utility in understanding and interpreting the role and dynamics of the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations after the Cold War.

I.

In this section, an effort is made to demonstrate the virtues of diverse theoretical perspectives and deploy them to think theoretically

³ See Fred Halliday, [*Rethinking International Relations*](#), London: 1994, p.25

about the realities surrounding the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations in the post-cold war world order. Each theoretical perspective is briefly discussed and its utility is briefly indicated. Certain select theoretical perspectives are posited to make sense of the ground-realities of the post-cold war strategic environment. At best, this is an endeavour to outline a broader theoretical framework to account for the role and dynamics of the UN peace operations.

Realist Perspective:

Realism remains the dominant theoretical tradition in understanding international relations. It describes and explains the world of international politics as it is, then how it ought to be. Acknowledging the conflictual nature of international politics, the realist gives the entity of the sovereign nation-state the supreme power in the scheme of things. It accords priority to military power of the nation-state in anarchic international environment, where states help themselves to take care of their respective security situation. Realists consider

international politics as realm of recurrence and repetition, where survival remains central to their overall state-craft.

Early realists like E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, recognised the need for international political reform and were not blind to alternative forms of political organisation. According to them, the nation-state was not necessarily the ultimate expression of political community. They believed that the patterns and laws of international politics can be constructed by developing a more sophisticated understanding of human nature.

Basically, the apparent failure of liberal principles to sustain peace in Europe after the First World War, compelled early realists like E.H Carr⁴ to give priority to 'realities of power' in understanding international politics. Carr was of the view that the liberal utopians were so concerned with eradicating the scourge of war, that they had neglected the underlying rationale of war. This line of thinking serves well to acknowledge and interpret diverse power-related motivations underlying the behaviour and policies of major powers in coming to terms with

⁴ E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis – 1919-1939: London, McMillan & Co., 1940

armed conflicts in locations, such as the ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the armed conflict in Sudan. In both cases, the role and effectiveness of the UN peace operations required assessment in light of ground-realities of both parties involved in the conflict and the policies of major powers in dealing with it. Furthermore, Carr refuted the belief of liberals that supposedly absolute and universal principles (peace, harmony of interests, collective security, free trade) were ‘the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time,’⁵ These allegedly universal principles form part of the doctrine of the harmony of interests, which constituted a central pillar of liberal internationalism.

Carr’s critique of liberals, who imputed common interests to states, pointed towards the belief of the liberals that every nation had an identical interest in peace and that any state which behaved aggressively or failed to respect the peace was acting irrationally and immorally.⁶ According Carr, it was an expression of the ‘satisfied powers’ with a

⁵ See E.H Carr, ‘The Twenty Years’ Crisis (London) 1939, p.111

⁶ See E.H. Carr, *Ibid* 1939, p.67

vested interest in the preservation of the 'status quo'. So the international political system created by the victors of the Second World War, and it was a system which favoured them at the expense of 'revisionist' powers.

The liberal utopians wanted to eliminate power as a consideration for states in the post-war world order. However, the realists maintain that the pursuit of national power was necessary to promote 'national interest' by individual states.

In international politics, clashes of national interests are inevitable. Such clashes can be minimised, for the incidents of war can be substantially reduced by forging a rough balance of power among the sovereign states of the international system. The best safeguard against armed international conflict was the prevention of one state emerging with predominant power, in relation to other states in the international political system.

The liberal alternative to the state of affairs remains that of the goal of collective security among the major powers in a given international political system. Basically, collective security is a method of placing predominant power in the hands of the victorious states, thus institutionalising the status quo. Historically speaking, the League of

Nations proved to be incapable of rising above the national interests of the major powers, failing to take account of the shifting differentials of power between the status quo and revisionist states.

According to the realists, peaceful change in international politics occurs with adjustments to new relations of power. In other words, new power-relationships emerge in the form of shifting strategic alliances among states. E. H. Carr was convinced that a new international order would be shaped by the realities of global power rather than morality. Carr's contribution was a critique of liberal internationalism. He was of the view that ethics was a function of politics and morality was the product of power⁷.

Hans Morgenthau's work, Politics Among Nations (1948) was aimed at carving out the principles of realism. It was meant to provide intellectual support for the role of the United States in the post-war international political system. With a view to creating 'a science of international politics', Morgenthau posited the positivist methodology of the 'hard' or natural sciences to the study of international relations.

⁷ See M. Hollis and S. Smith, Explaining and Understanding International relations. (Oxford, 1990) pp.63-64

According to Morgenthau, theories should be judged ‘not by some pre-conceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by their purpose which is ‘to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible’. They must be ‘consistent with the facts and within itself’. In a nutshell, theories must be factual, independent and retrospective.

Theories must satisfy strict empirical and logical criteria. As Morgenthau states, ‘do the facts as they actually are lend themselves to the interpretation the theory has put on them, and do the conclusions at which the theory arrives follow with logical necessity from its premises?’⁸ He clearly believed that there is a ‘knowable reality’ or ‘rational essence’ of foreign policy which theories can reveal.⁹ This constitutes the methodological approach of positivism and it was applied to the study of international politics. He identifies with realism as a school of thought, which believes the world’s imperfections are ‘the result of forces inherent in human nature’. He lists ‘six principles of political realism’ which constitutes a theoretical approach to the study of international relations.

⁸ See H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 6th Edition, New York, 1985, P.3

⁹ Morgenthau (1985), p.7

According to Morgenthau, international politics was a struggle for power among states, and that the pursuit of national interests was a normal, unavoidable and desirable activity. For Morgenthau, the concept of interest defined as power ‘imposes discipline upon the observer’ and ‘infuses rational order into subject matter of politics’.¹⁰

Realism maintains that the search for power and security is the dominant logic in global politics. States are considered as the primary actors in international politics, and that states tend to increase their military, economic and other capabilities in the pursuit of their preservation, survival and enhancement in a self-help system amidst the anarchical international environment. For Kenneth Waltz, the specific internal structure of states is largely irrelevant to their international behavior. The nature of the sovereign state-system as ‘a domain apart’ from analyses that link foreign policy exclusively with the internal social and economic characteristics of states, is crucial in Waltz's argument. The state's location in the global power configuration remains critical to comprehend state's overall behavior.¹¹

¹⁰ Morgenthau (1985), p.7

¹¹ See Waltz, [Theory of International Politics](#). New York, 1979

Waltz develops a certain kind of theoretical understanding of international politics by alluding to the nature of sovereign state-system. During the Cold war between the two super-powers, the bi-polar composition of the state-system was distinct, and Waltz believed that the international system has a precisely defined structure with three important characteristics. These are (1) the ordering principle of system (2) the character of the unit in the system and (3) the distribution of the capabilities of the units in the system.¹²

In the cold war era, the nature of the sovereign state-system can be understood by referring to the third characteristic as pointed out above. The distribution of power in such system overrides consideration of ideology, nature of domestic political system or any other internal factor relating to units or sovereign states of the inter-state structure or system. The distinction made by non-realists, such as Waltz, between major powers and minor (or small) powers is clearly of a different order. Given the distribution of power in the system, it would have definite consequences on the behaviour of the states in the system.

¹² See Waltz, (1979), pp. 88-97, 104

Clearly, the Waltzian analysis has implications for understanding and interpreting foreign policies of major powers and their positions in the functioning of United Nations in the post cold war world order. The end of the cold war between the two super-powers in 1987 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, fundamentally altered 'the distribution of the capabilities of units of the system'.

From the standpoint of policies of major powers, the erstwhile Soviet Union was reduced to the category of the 'major power'. It was no longer a 'super-power'. The balance of the power between the two super-powers during the Cold War no longer prevailed, and in the post-cold war world order that was emerging in the early 1990s was marked by the hegemonic position occupied by the United States as a sole 'super power', since the former Soviet Union was left with the Russian Federation as the only remaining republic and thus was reduced to a much less stronger 'major power' with the loss of number of military and other capabilities. Given the changed scenario, the United States was emerging as a hegemonic power in the initial years of the post-cold war era.

Peace-keeping and Realist Perspective

Here we deploy the realist perspective to understand and interpret the role and dynamics of the peace-keeping and peace-making operations in the post-cold war world order. The realist explanation is identified most closely with Laura Neack (1995) who argues that the most frequent contributors to peacekeeping are states that "have attempted to establish themselves as regional and/or nonaligned or rising global powers." Peacekeeping therefore, is a way for states to flex muscle and assert influence on the world stage. Mon-nakgotla (1996) goes one step further, arguing that "peacekeeping is self-interested action to establish, preserve, or increase a state's own position and power base in the world." Given this view of the world, the realist perspective would predict that major contributors to peacekeeping operations would be powerful states or states seeking to advance their position.

Such states do contribute to peacekeeping operations, yet there are numerous prominent examples that this approach cannot easily explain. States such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Fiji have provided large number of troops to peacekeeping operations. These states hardly play any part in great power politics because their national interests are only minimally affected by the outcome of conflicts occurring thousands of miles away.

Realism has laid claim to the "peacekeeping as power politics" explanation. As realism argues, IGOs (Inter Governmental Organizations) play a subordinate role to states, which is evident in the UN peacekeeping operations because IGOs play only so much a role as states allow. The contribution of funds, troops, and equipment are all conducted on a voluntary basis; thus the decision of states to contribute as well as their conduct within a mission are all influenced by state interests. States can limit what the function of their troops will be (e.g. solely an observation role), and they can withdraw their contributions whenever they decide to. Another example of TCCs (Troop contributing Countries) promoting their own interests within a peacekeeping mission is in the different ways they try to establish the security of their contingents on the ground. One example concerns European powers in UNIFIL because "concerned about the high risks that their troops would face in Lebanon, these countries -notably France- demanded more freedom of action for their soldiers and decided to deploy heavy tanks to the area." Another example is that of Italy in Somalia, where "eyewitnesses said the Italians stood by and refused to come to the assistance of the Nigerians during the attack" as a result of a deal that

the Italian contingent made with Somalis. Realism is evident in these actions because states act in their own interests, which undermines the effectiveness of the IGO, such as the United Nations. Also, realism in peacekeeping is evident in how financial power within the UN (indicated by how much a state contributes to the peacekeeping budget) allows some states to have greater power in decision-making, dictating what a peacekeeping mission should look like and where it should be deployed. An example of this is the fact that the US was the top financial contributor to the 2011/2012 peacekeeping budget and although it does not provide many troops, it still dominates the UN peacekeeping in many ways. The major financial contributors could hinder a mission's success by threatening to withdraw economic support for a mission. In addition, the Security Council, which is dominated by five permanent members (including the US), is important in providing the legal basis and mandate for the UN missions. Although peacekeeping is often described as a multinational, impartial force; the reality of the situation is that there are major powers, such as the US, who dominate decision-making in various peace-keeping operations.

As far as the United Nations is concerned, the UN Security Council's composition of the five permanent members (P-5, as it is generally called) was, in the changed political context of the post-cold war era, shaped by an altered balance of power, especially between the United States of America and the Russian Federation (hereforth, Russia). Russia no longer enjoyed the military and diplomatic parity with the United States, and consequently lost its pre-eminent position as one of the dominant super-powers. Consequently, Russia no longer enjoyed a predominant position within the decision-making group of five permanent members of UN Security Council.

So the 'realist' perspective enables us to acknowledge the changing realities of power-politics at the level of international political system and altered locations of major powers and their interrelationships, and their impact on the effectiveness of the UN peace operations.

Liberal Perspective

Although certain class of realists condemned 'liberal internationalism' as a form of 'idealism' in the late 1930s and just after the Second World War, 'liberal internationalism' attained prominence as

a school of thought at the end of the twentieth century with the emerging post-cold war world order. In the early 1990s, particularly after the Gulf War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union as well as sharp decline of communism as an ideology, it seemed that the dream of the world order, associated with the statecraft of the US President Woodrow Wilson during and after the First World War, appeared to appeal certain major powers, especially Britain, France and Germany.

‘Liberal internationalism’ is essentially a project to transform international relations, so that major powers and certain minor powers would confirm to models of freedom, peace and prosperity that had apparently worked within the constitutional liberal democracies such as the United States of America.

Essentially, the project of ‘liberal internationalism’ denotes a variety of ways to achieve its goals of freedom, peace and prosperity. First of all, the idea of ‘commercial’ liberalism promotes free trade and commerce across state borders on the assumption that economic interdependence among states will reduce incentives to use force and raise the cost of doing so. The territorial divisions between states need not cause conflict, if territorial control is delinked from the quest of political power. Apart

from providing economic benefits, free trade is viewed as a means of bringing people together and thereby may attenuate their political loyalties to the entity of the nation-state.

Secondly, the idea of ‘republican liberalism’ refers to the relationship between states and their citizens. It supports the spread of democracy among states, so that governments will be accountable to their citizens and find it difficult to pursue policies that promote the sectional interests of economic and military elites. Here the debate is on the extent to which democracies are more peaceful than non-democratic states and the reasons behind alleged link between the domestic character of states and their foreign policies.

Thirdly, the idea of ‘regulatory’ or ‘institutional’ liberalism operates at the level of the international political structure. In contrast to the realist insistence that the structural anarchy of the international political system must always subordinate collective interest to national interests, liberal internationalists believe that it is possible to promote the rule of law and develop international institutions and practices that moderate the security dilemma among states.

The basic aim of 'liberal internationalism' is to moderate or neutralise those elements that realists have identified as the fundamental causes of war. In early 21st century, it faces formidable challenge of globalisation. The crucial question here is how can states represent and be accountable to their citizens when they must adapt their macroeconomic policies to the constraints of global capitalism.

Another challenge to 'liberal internationalism' relates to the place of liberal internalist values in the actual international politics within which they are acknowledged and realised. As a matter of fact, values of individual freedom, peace, and the rule of law are endorsed and realised only in some liberal democratic states. Even the oldest democracy of Britain and the oldest post-colonial democracy of the US today cannot boast of having accomplished realising the values indicated above. So the record of certain liberal democratic states in Western Europe and the United States of America is not unblemished. A majority of nation-states in contemporary world are non-democratic; indeed, most of them are authoritarian in character. Given this state of affairs today, the prospect of success of the 'liberal internalist' vision is, at best, dim.

Further, as regards 'liberal internationalism', the domestic analogy does not work at the international level. The dilemma faced by liberal internationalists is how to reform the contemporary international political system that comprises a majority of the non-liberal states.

The obvious questions that come to mind are: How should the non-liberal states be coerced or accommodated in a given strategic situation, especially in the post-cold war world? How should the major powers, such as the USA, Britain and France deal with human rights abuses committed within such major powers such as Russia and China in the contemporary post-cold war world?

Thirdly, there is a tension between 'liberal cosmopolitanism' and 'liberal internationalism'. The former refers to the subordination of the state to the liberal values of freedom and individual autonomy. Theoretically speaking, liberals have perceived the state with suspicion. In contrast, 'liberal internationalism' considers the state as given and one has to contend with this entity.

Liberal internationalists tend to differ on the issue of humanitarian intervention. They are sympathetic to the idea that sovereignty of the state should not be absolute, and that a state's claim to represent its

citizens is not legitimate if it systematically abuses their human rights. At the same time, liberal internationalists are wary of approving the use of military force by outside parties to the armed conflict on behalf of men who are being oppressed by their own government.

The key issue is that humanitarian intervention undermines the rule of international law, and can provide opportunities for powerful states to promote their own national interests by invoking liberal ideals. As regards the issue of self-determination, liberal internationalists have two distinct positions. For one, they are, in principle, favourably inclined to the idea of self-government. However, there are some liberal internationalists who are wary of supporting a principle that in practice often subordinates the individual citizen to the interests of the sovereign nation-state.

This divide among liberal internationalists points towards two different theoretical positions about the role of the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations in the contemporary post-cold war world order.

The end of the Cold War in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Communism in 1991 (with the dissolution of the Soviet Union) enhanced the influence of liberal theories of international relations. Francis

Fukuyama asserted that the collapse of the Soviet Union as a super-power, with a rival ideology of 'communism' as opposed to ideology of 'capitalism' practiced by the USA, proved that liberal democracy had no serious ideological competitor. According to him, it was 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government'. For Fukuyama, the end of the Cold War represented the triumph of the 'ideal state' and a particular form of political economy, 'liberal capitalism', which 'cannot be improved upon': there can be 'no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions'. According to him, the end of the East-West conflict confirmed that liberal capitalism was unchallenged as a model of, and endpoint for, humankind's political and economic development. He views history, like many liberals, as progressive, linear and 'directional'; and he is convinced that 'there is a fundamental process at work that dictates a common evolutionary pattern for all human societies ----- in short, something like a Universal History of mankind in the direction of liberal democracy.'¹³

¹³ See F. Fukuyama, [The End of History and the Last Man](#) (London :), pp. xi-xii, and P.48.

Evidence of Fukuyama's argument was sought in transitions to democracy in the 1990s and in early decade of the twenty-first century, in Africa, East Asia and Latin America. Even the political changes that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe, in the wake of collapse of communist regimes that were earlier politically and ideologically tied up with the erstwhile Soviet Union.

However, there are certain valid criticisms to Fukuyama's position. First of all, his assertion that Western path to modernity no longer faces a universal challenge of the kind posed by communism, and will be acceptable to the whole world is not correct.

Secondly his argument assumes that the West is the progenitor of moral and political truths, and that progress will compel all societies to practice those truths, regardless of national and cultural distinctions of people on this planet earth.

Thirdly, Fukuyama's observation that the spread of capitalism now faces little or no resistance within the wider international community is

to be tested against the prevailing ground-realities in the contemporary global political economy.

Fourthly, Fukuyama's belief that progress in human history can be measured by the elimination of global conflict and the adoption of principles of legitimacy which have evolved over time in domestic political order. This constitutes an 'inside-out' approach to international relations, where the exogenous behavior of states can be explained by examining their endogenous political and economic arrangements.

In this connection, Doyle's claim that 'liberal democracies are uniquely willing to eschew the use of force in their relations with one another', reflects a view which refutes the realist contention that the anarchical nature of the international system means states are trapped in a struggle for power and security.¹⁴

Fukuyama's world-view denotes a neo-Kantian position, which assumes that particular states, with liberal-democratic credentials, constitute an ideal which the rest of the world will emulate. It must be

¹⁴ See Andrew Linklater, 'Liberal Democracy, Constitutionalism and the New World Order', in R. Leaver and J. Richardson (eds.), The Post-Cold War Order: Diagnoses and Prognoses (St Leonard's, 1993), P.29

acknowledged that liberal democracies have transcended their violent instincts and institutionalised norms that tend to pacify relations between and among sovereign nation-states to a significant extent. Further, there is growing recognition of the trend that the major powers have shared principles of legitimacy that should govern the conduct of nations in the post-cold war world order. Such projection of liberal-democratic principles to the international realm provides that best prospect for a peaceful world order, which is predominantly governed by major powers that are essentially liberal democracies such as the USA, the UK, Germany and France. In the contemporary international political system, Russia and China, however, do not form part of this league of liberal democracies. According to Fukuyama, such democracies 'should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognise one another's legitimacy'.¹⁵

Such inside-out approach is rejected by neo-realists who claim that the moral aspirations of states are thwarted by the absence of an overarching authority which regulates their behaviour towards each

¹⁵ See Fukuyama (1992), p. xx

other. The basic point here is that the anarchical nature of the international system homogenises foreign policy behaviour by socialising states into the system of power politics.

Waltz, a neo-realist, asserts that there is the similarity of foreign policy behaviour among states with diverse political orders within those states. Certain similarity in the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War seems to suggest that such identical behaviour points towards their common location in the international system in the Cold War era.¹⁶

Constructivist Perspective

With a view to understanding and interpreting the role and dynamics of the UN peace-keeping and peace-building operations in the post-cold war international political system, we need to think in terms of the purposes to which various theories of international relations are

¹⁶ See Kenneth Waltz, 'America as a Model for the World?', [Political Science and Politics](#), vol/24, No. 4 (1991), p.667; See also Linklater (1993), pp.29-31

deployed. This should help us in distinguishing between explanatory and constitutive international theory.

Explanatory theories of international relations refer to testing hypothesis, advancing causal explanations, describing events and explaining general trends and phenomena, with the aim of creating a plausible image of the international politics.

Contrary to such theories, one could construct theories which focus on the preconceptions, experiences and beliefs which affect the way they understand the subject. Language, culture, religion, ethnicity, class and ideology ----- these factors shape our world-view. So particular cultural and linguistic frameworks serve as the lenses through which we perceive the world politics. In other words, there is a need to examine background assumptions to explain our choices, priorities and prejudices, because ‘all forms of social analysis... raise important questions about the moral and cultural constitution of the observer.’¹⁷ A self-awareness of our belief-systems would enable us to determine the underlying of major powers in international politics. In this connection, Linklater maintains, ‘all social

¹⁷ See J. Macmillan and A. Linklater (eds.), Boundaries in Question : New Directions in International Relations. London:

analysts should reflect upon the cognitive interests and normative assumptions which underpin their research.’¹⁸

The underlying suggestion is that the ‘international’ is refracted through the mind of the observer. In other words, constitutive international theory is directly concerned with the significance of human reflection on the nature and character of world politics.

Since the end of the Cold War, a new constructivist approach to international theory challenged the rationalism and positivism of neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Constructivists reject metatheoretical critique of critical theorists and focus on empirical analysis of world politics. Constructivism is characterised by an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures, on the role of identity in shaping political action, and on the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures.

Constructivists have articulated three core ontological propositions about social life, propositions which they claim illuminate more about world politics. First of all, to the extent that structures can be said to

¹⁸ See Andrew Linklater, ‘The Question of the next stage in international relations theory: a critical – theoretical point of view,’ *Millennium*, vol. 21, no.1(1992).

shape the behaviour of social and political actors, be they individuals or states, constructivists hold that normative or ideational structures are just as important as material structures. They argue that systems of shared ideas, beliefs and values also have structural characteristics, and that they exert a powerful influence on social and political action.

Secondly, constructivists argue that understanding how non-material structures condition actors' identities is important because identities inform interests and, in turn, actions. They maintain that understanding how actors develop their interests is crucial to explaining a wide range of international political phenomenon. As Alexander Wendt put it : 'Identities are the basis of interests.'¹⁹

Third, constructivists contend that agents and structures are mutually constituted. Institutionalised norms and ideas 'define the meaning and identity of the individual actor and the patterns of appropriate economic, political, and cultural activity engaged by those

¹⁹ A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It : The Social Construction of Power Politics,' International Organization, vol. 6, no.2 (1992), p.398

individuals’,²⁰ and it ‘is through reciprocal interaction that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests.’²¹

Clearly, the implication is that international norms that uphold liberal democracy as the dominant model of legitimate statehood, and which license intervention in the name of human rights etc., only exist and persist because of the continued practices of liberal democratic states (and strong non-state actors).

Normative and ideational structures, posited by constructivists, are seen as shaping actors’ identities and interests through three mechanisms: imagination, communication and constraint. The point is that non-material structures affect what actors see as the realm of possibility: how they think they should act, what the perceived limitations on their actions are, and what strategies they can imagine, let alone entertain, to achieve their objectives. Institutionalised norms and

²⁰ See J. Boli, J. Meyer and G. Tomas, ‘Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account,’ in G. Thomas et. al. (eds.), Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual (London, 1989) P.12

²¹ See Wendt (1992), P. 406

ideas thus condition what actors consider necessary and possible, both in practical and ethical terms.

Further, normative and ideational structures also work their influence through communication, when an individual or a sovereign state seeks to justify their behaviour, they will usually appeal to established norms of legitimate conduct. A state may justify its behaviour with reference to the norms of sovereignty, or in the case of intervention in the affairs of another state, according to international human rights norms. The latter may conflict with one another in their prescriptions, which makes moral argument about their relative importance of international normative precepts, a particularly salient aspect of world politics.²²

Lastly, constructivists contend that they can place significant constraints on that actor's conduct. Institutionalised norms and ideas have moral force in a given social and political context. The effectiveness of such constraints will vary with the actor and the context.²³

²² See T. Risse, "Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics; [International Organization](#), Vol. 54, No.1 (2000), pp. 1-40

²³ See Reus-smit (1999), PP 35-36. [The Moral Purpose of the State : Culture, Social Identity and Institutional Rationality in IR](#) (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1999)

In contrast to rationalism, constructivism is distinct in three important respects. First of all, constructivists treat actors as deeply social. It means that their identities are constituted by the institutionalised norms, values and ideas of the social environment in which they act. Secondly, instead of treating actors' interests as exogenously determined, as given prior to social interaction, constructivists treat interests as endogenous to such interaction, as a consequence of identity acquisition, as learnt through processes of communication, reflection on experience, and role enactment. Third, while rationalists view society as a strategic realm, a place where actors rationally pursue their interests, constructivists see it as a constitutive realm, the site that generates actors as knowledgeable social and political agents, the realm that makes them who they are.

Due to these ontological commitments, constructivists emphasise the social determinants of social and political agency and action.

The rise of constructivism has renewed interest in international history. In the wake of the momentous changes that attended the end of

the cold war, and the ongoing processes of globalisation, the constructivist interest in the particularities of culture, identity, interest and experience created space for a renaissance in the study of world politics. If ideas, norms and practices matter, and if they differ from one social context to another, then history in turn matters. The contingency of such factors and their impact on the conduct of world politics have led constructivists to review the historical record of world politics.

Above all, constructivists have demonstrated the power of ideas, norms, and values in shaping world politics. They have shown how international norms evolve, how ideas and values come to shape political action, how argument and discourse condition outcomes, and how identity constitutes agents and agency.

The constructivists have reimagined the social as a constitutive domain, reintroduced history as realm of empirical inquiry, and emphasised the variability of political practice.

Theorising Peace-keeping, Peace-Building

We shall attempt to explore the possibility of theorising peace-keeping by referring to specific efforts made by the United Nations in the post-cold war world order. Please refer **Appendix No. 5**

To conclude, several theoretical perspectives are advanced to account for the role and effectiveness of the UN peace-keeping and peace-making operations after the Cold War. The insights, derived from these perspectives enable us to construct a theoretical framework to interpret the factors and forces responsible for credible peace-keeping missions of the UN.
