

Theory of Functionalism

Thinkers: David Mitrany, Ernst Haas, A.J.R. Groom

Idea of Human Behaviour: The idea of human behaviour is similar to ideas propounded by the school of liberalism. The basic idea is that man, by nature, is cooperative.

Origin: Functionalism has emerged as an alternative school to Neo-Realism and has its roots deep in the school of liberalism.

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Foundation of functionalism School in International Relations
- Neo-Functionalism
- Real life case study

FOUNDATION OF FUNCTIONALISM SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The key scholar in this field is David Mitrany. He is of the view that, firstly, transnational actors play a key role in a stable world order. This is the case because transnational actors seek cooperation through the integration of societies. To run these transactional actors, we require technicians and not laymen politicians. Secondly, he says that nation states, by themselves, do not foster the cooperation we need to establish non-political cooperative groups. We can start creating such groups at a micro-level, for instance, health, education, and so on, and then replicate such non-political groups upward at a macro-level for culture, transport, and so forth. David Mitrany says the non-political cooperative groups are based on mutual interests of the states. Thus, they do not cause any resistance amongst states. The reason that Mitrany advocates beginning at a micro-level and proceeding ahead upward is due to the spill-over effect. He says that success in such non-political cooperative groups at micro-level is bound to automatically push a state to establish more such groups in other dimensions and as this cooperation from micro to regional level will increase, there will be more cooperation and peace, and subsequently the relevance of nation states will decrease.

NEO-FUNCTIONALISM

Neo-Functionalism wants to advocate integration of the existing nation states, unlike functionalists who prefer to render nation states into museums of institutional curiosity.

They prefer political interaction and the fostering of cooperative decision making. The scholar Ernst Haas, a neo functionalist, adds that the way forward to have a completely integrated community functionalism is that rulers agree to surrender some sovereignty and pool resources for growth.

REAL LIFE CASE STUDY

A classical example of Functionalism is Ernst Haas's explanation of European Union where state leaders have surrendered some sovereign powers for the growth of the entire union. (For detailed analysis, see [Section-H, Chapter 4](#)).