1. Critically evaluate the different approaches of peace building.

Ans: POLITICAL DEMOCRACY APPROACH ARE One lesson learnt from the experience of peacekeeping operations in the past two decades concerns the value of local-level governance and related institutions in sustaining peace after ceasefire has been signed. Democratic validation of peace agreements between authorities and rebels and later by masses has come to be seen as essential for peacebuilding. But, at the same time, both democracy and peacebuilding remain intrinsically political in nature and do have possibilities of leading to a zero-sum relationship. This means that not all gains for one imply gains for the opposite side. It is this complex relationship of democracy and peacebuilding through mechanisms like political participation and governance that forms the core of political democracy approach.

PEACE VERSUS JUSTICE APPROACH There are some who conceive peacebuilding in terms exclusively of either ‘peace’ or ‘justice’ driven approaches. The ‘peace’ driven approach puts emphasis on ‘saving lives’ and allows accommodation, even appeasement, of aggressor to swiftly achieve cessation of hostilities and violence in a conflict. Elizabeth Cousens calls it ‘political peacebuilding’ which seeks to create authoritative and eventually legitimate mechanisms which may empower the polity to handle conflict without violence and to apply established procedures for resolving rival claims and grievances. Though this approach is normally effective in ensuring negative peace, they lack the appreciation of ‘victim’s perspective’ since the protagonists of the peace approach tend to treat victim and aggressor as equals. Furthermore, this approach could threaten to fuel the aggressor’s appetite for more conflict.

RECONSTRUCTIVE VERSUS TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES Reconstructive approaches concern themselves with more tangible aspects of peacebuilding such as addressing infrastructure needs like roads, communications, healthcare and public institutions where benefits and outcomes are immediate and easily measurable. Usually the UN post-conflict reconstruction involves (a) monitoring ceasefire, (b) disarmament and demobilising rebels and ensuring their reintegration through security sector reforms, and (c) supervising or conducting elections. But given this ‘tool-kit’ of peacebuilding, it often begins to become too rigid and therefore vulnerable to donor agencies’ expansive reporting processes and preferences. Instead, these need to be locally rooted, intensive and contextualised. Moreover, these efforts of the UN peacebuilding have often been accused of being driven by major powers’ desire to implant democracy and free-market economy.

TOP, MIDDLE AND GRASSROOT APPROACHES At the top level, peacebuilding normally involves a top-down approach which has the following salient features. First, it normally involves very eminent and influential yet singular personalities. These are people with a visible public profile, working as peace-builders or norm-entrepreneurs, and who operate as intermediaries or mediators. They often have strong backing from governments of major powers, important international agencies as also from the parties to the conflict. Second, it usually involves very high-level leaders from amongst parties to the conflict and these peace-builders generally act on their own to facilitate a dialogue between these high profile protagonists of the given conflict. Such negotiations are normally arranged by these high-profile peace-builders at some neutral venue and they also help facilitate setting up the tone (sometimes even agenda) for a successful mutual bargaining amongst major protagonists in the given conflict.

CIVIL SOCIETY OR TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH The civil-society or transformational approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution involves the development of an interactive, interdependent web of activities and relationships amongst elite and grass roots to build, what Louis Kriesberg calls ‘culture of peace’. It is widely accepted that non-governmental organisations are a prominent component of the civil society.

FEMINIST APPROACH Feminists regret that feminist approaches have been underutilised in peacebuilding at community, national and international level. Women are often seen as aping the mainstream (read malestream) as an easy way to be accepted and to make contributions to peacebuilding. Feminists believe that in spite of women’s continued marginalisation in international peace and security discourses, their work in actual peacebuilding has been substantial in almost all societies, and that its importance is being increasingly recognised across the world. They call for gendering of peacebuilding approaches and strategies and urge for inclusion of women’s skills and capabilities into peacebuilding, especially in projects like healing, reconciliation, reintegration and demilitarisation.

SUMMARY It is clear from the discussion so far in this Unit that there is no single approach that is either universally accepted or uniformly applicable across a wide spectrum of conflict situations. Each conflict is unique in its own way; therefore a right mix of approaches would be naturally necessary. We have learned that scholars and thinkers have come up with a variety of approaches to highlight different aspects in peacebuilding. For example, the top-down, middle, and grassroot approaches identify the interlinkages among the three levels at which peacebuilding need to be pursued for the best possible results. On a different note, another approach emphasizes the need to adopt an integrated, coordinated approach for peacebuilding. The clear choice to be made between peace and justice is the essence of another approach. Similarly, the role and relevance of civil society and or non-governmental organisations have become the prime concerns of some other approaches. It is remarkable that the feminist theory too has important perspectives to offer on the promise women hold in transforming attitudes so that peace becomes sustainable. Notably, however, these approaches have much in common amongst them. Hence, it may not be advisable to stress only one approach and reject other approaches.

2. Briefly evaluate the role of military in the politics of Myanmar.

Ans: Politics of Myanmar’s current political situation must be understood with reference to the country’s long history of military statebuilding. The primary interest of the military has been to protect national sovereignty, unity and stability. With the change of government in 2011 came a series of political reforms in support of basic civil rights, electoral democracy and economic growth. From 2011 onwards, these reforms also created an opening for Western states to suspend or lift sanctions and engage in state capacity building, and for UN agencies and international NGOs to strengthen their engagement with Myanmar. Myanmar is thus a country with