

Chapter One: Understanding International Relations

1.1. Conceptualizing Nationalism, Nations and States

Nationalism

- Nationalism is one of the modern ideologies that has influenced international affairs, political and social movements.
- It expresses the state of being national, national affection, and nationality.
- It is a set of ideas that members of a particular state, nation, society or region may collectively feel towards their nation.
- Nationalism advocates national unity and independence and this could be a cause of great wars and revolutions.
- Nationalism argues that a group of peoples who share similar culture, history, psychological make up should have their own government or state.
- So, it is a political doctrine, that believes that nations should be self-governing.
- The end goal of nationalism is to have one's own **independent state** and **nation-building**
- Nationalists believe on “**self-determination**” as the right of a people to determine its own future and fate.
- But **self-determination** undermines the legitimacy, sovereignty and territorial integrity of existing states.
- Nationalism's triumph is the coming of the nation-state as key actors in world politics- accepted as ultimate, legitimate and the most basic form of political entity.
- Ex. Italy 1861, Germany 1871, Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria

Con't

- **Subject Nationality:** is a nationality that has not achieved independence. Ex. Catalan, Basque, Kurds, Scottish Nationalism, Western Sahara, Tibet
- **Chauvinism:** is an extreme nationalism that exaggerates one nation, culture, civilization and contribution. Ex. Nazism, Fascism

Development of Nationalism

There are three historical periods for the development of European nationalism.

1. During the Middle Ages

Until the 15thc both nationalism and the idea of the national states did not exist. People during the middle ages felt their greatest loyalty to their **church, feudal lords, city states** and **provinces**.

2. The Westphalia Treaty of 1648

- The **Westphalia treaty of 1648** ended the Thirty Years' War between the Catholics and Protestants.
- The treaty introduced the first inter-national system to operate based on the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the state. It institutionalized Nationalism.
- After Westphalia Treaty international politics was a matter of relations between states not religious leaders and others.

3. The French Revolution of 1789

- contributed for the development of intense nationalism that spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world.
- people placed their country's national interest above all other considerations
- Three ideals of the revolution, liberty, equality and brotherhood helped for the strength of peoples' loyalty and patriotism towards their nation.

Cont.

4. The Congress of Vienna of 1815

- Was held to reverse Napoleonic effect
- The new division of Europe imposed by the Congress had no respect for the identity of peoples such as **Belgians, Polish, Finish, Italians** and **Germans**.
i.e. **Belgium to Holland, Polish & Finish to Russia, Italy to Austria German etc.**
- All over Europe national communities demanded to be included into the politics of their respective countries. Nationalism in the first part of the nineteenth century was a liberal sentiment concerning self-determination – the right of a people to determine its own fate.

Nation

- A nation is a historical entity that evolves organically out of a more similar ethnic group who reveals its self through **myth** or **legends** and other discourses (Heywood, 2014)
- Nation is a group of people who have a shared culture, history, geography, psychological make-up and believe that they have common destiny.
- If a nation has a state it forms a compound noun – the ‘nation-state’
- nationalist leaders argue, the nation should take over the state and make use of its institutional structures to further the nation’s ends e.g. **Independence, nation-building, cultural purity, cultural preservation, expansion**
- The nation is taken as a soul added to the body of the modern state
e.g. Jew,

State

- The state is said to have emerged with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.
- The **Montevideo Convention** on the “Rights and Duties of the state” defines the state has four features: a defined territory, permanent population, an effective government and sovereignty.
- Nation-State: Nation state is an independent country containing a single nationality or homogeneous society.
- New ethno-cultural nationalism and religious fundamentalism and revivalism happening across the world with the post-cold war assertions of religion, culture and ethnicity as potent forces in world politics that also affect the state.

1.2. understanding International relations (IR)

- International relations is not merely a field of study at university but is an integral aspect of peoples everyday lives. Eg, Suez canal, Arab- Israeli conflict.
- Studying international relations enables students and professionals to better comprehend the information we receive daily from newspapers, television and radio eg. Oil price,
- international relations (a term first used by Jeremy Bentham in 1798) was seen largely as a branch of the study of law, philosophy or history.
- the first university chair of international relations was founded at the University of Wales in 1919. The objective was how to prevent future world war?
- There is no accepted way of defining or understanding international relations, and throughout the world many have established individual definitions.
- Today, international relations could be used to describe a range of interactions between **people, groups, firms, associations, parties, nations** or states or between these and (non) governmental international organizations.
- events such as **international conflict, global warming, infectious diseases, terrorism, international crime** play a fundamental part in the study of international relations.
- Participation in international relations or politics is also inescapable. Hence, understanding IR is imperative since the world is socially, politically, economically and emotionally interconnected.eg. The spread of global pandemic, covid -19.
- IR can be understood as “**who**” gets “**what**” and “**how**” which indicates the actor, the objective and the means, respectively.
- The governing principle of international relation is “**there is no permanent enemy or friend, but permanent interest**”

Difference between international and domestic politics

International politics

- Internal law rests on competing legal systems, and no common enforcement.
- no one has a monopoly of force, and international politics is **anarchy** and **self-help. No government**
- Anarchical
- No sovereign body
- No shared loyalty but sense of global citizenship is being emerging
- Actors are not sovereign
- No borders. No beginnings no ends

Similarities

- Power struggle
- Conflict of interest
- Power
- What is international could be domestic

Eg. International financial crisis could affect even the small economies of a country.

These force countries to have accepted international financial policies and measures.

Domestic politics

- law is generally obeyed and the police and courts enforce law.
- a government has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force- hence stability.
- Hierarchical
- Government is sovereign within its legal jurisdiction
- Loyalty is shared among the people
- Actors are sovereign
- Limited borders

Similarities

- Power struggle
- Conflict of interest
- Power

What is domestic is international

eg. The spread of disease – Covid-19 from China to all countries or the globe

Terrorism and international crime

Which force the global community to have the same policy towards these global issues

The nature and evolution of International Relations

1. The Treaty of Westphalia, 1648

- Ended the “thirty years’ war between France and Austria and their aides to control Europe.
- Since Westphalia treaty international politics was a matter of relations between states and no other political units i.e the **pope** or **church** or the **emperor**
- All states were sovereign, meaning that they laid claims to the exclusive right to rule their own territories and to act, in relation to other states.
- All states were formally equal and they had the same rights and obligations.
- However, sovereignty and formal equality led to the problem of anarchy and future alliance systems which led to WWI and WWII.
- European model of statehood and the European way of organizing international relations that eventually came to organize all of world politics.

2. Industrial revolution

new productions → new markets → natural resource → Colonization → new states after WWII based on European terms and interest

3. The end of WWI

- Contributed for the emergence of new independent and sovereign state through the principle of self-determination.
- League of Nation was also established

4. The end of WWII

led for the establishment of UN many international organizations

1.4. Actors in International Relations

“The world is a stage and the men and women merely players” William Shakespeare

There are two types of Actors in IR: **state actors** and **non-state actors**

1. State Actors

- States are the basic and the only sovereign actors of IRs
- international politics is a ‘world stage’ on which the states are the leading actors
- There is **asymmetrical** power relation among state actors in terms of **political** and **military**, **economy**, **diplomacy**, **influence** and **persuasion**

Eg. UN’s voting system and veto power in UNSC

2. Non –state Actors

- Are non-sovereign actors of IRs. These include
- International Governmental Organizations UN,AU,EU,AL, IGAD, WB, IMF,NATO, WTO
- International Non –Governmental Organizations Red Cross, Red Crescent
- Multinational Corporations (MNCs) Toyota , coca cola
- Religious institutions eg The Vatican
- Terrorists
- Individuals eg, ex- US presidents, the Catholic pope, Bill gates, Warren Buffet, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg

All these are the players and potentiaries in international relations that challenge the traditional actors of IRs, the state.

- the increased focus on **non-state actors** and cross-border issues has marked a revolutionary turn in IR; something that could be interpreted as a shift away from the inter-national (‘between-states’) to the ‘trans-national’ (‘across/beyond-states’ and their borders).

That is why according to Robert Keohane recently stated that ‘International Relations’ is no longer a suitable label and that we should instead refer to the discipline as ‘Global Studies’ or ‘World Politics’ (Keohane 2016).

1.5. Levels of Analysis in International Relations

- Kenneth Waltz's 'Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis' (1959) introduced an analytical framework for the study of IR:
- According to Waltz there are three analytical frameworks or levels of analysis for the study of international politics. These are **individual**, **state** and **systemic** level. The group level is considered as the fourth.

The individual level

- International relations can be analyzed from the perspective of individuals
- It analyzes the behaviors, motivations, beliefs and orientation of the individual in affecting a particular international phenomenon.
- It sees the psychology and emotions behind people's actions and decisions, their fears and their visions as well as their access to information and capacity to make a difference while making decisions.

The group level

- Sees the role of lobbying groups and the way they influence national decision making on an issue. Eg. The role of trade unions, lobbyist, pressure groups, voters

The State Level

- it is the dominant level of analysis which is known as '**state-centrism**'
- the state acts as the arena in which state officials, politicians and decision-makers operate.
- the state remains the main location of power- monopoly on violence-within the international politics. I.e., the state has the legal right to use the means of violence

the systemic level

- Looks and analyzes the global system as the structure or context within which states **cooperate**, **compete** and **confront** over issues of national interest.
- It analyzes the distribution of power among states internationally.
- Internationally there are three types of power distribution that influence and condition the behavior of states viz-a viz their national interest. These are **unipolar**, **bi-polar** and **multi polar** structure.
- The systemic level conditions the ability and opportunity of individual states and groups of states to pursue their interests in **cooperative** or **competitive** ways.

Important IRs Terms and concepts

- **Polarity** :i.e., unipolar (since 1991);Bi-polar (since 1945, Britain and France), multipolar (historical since the Westphalia Treaty to WWII).
- **Power**: power is the currency of international politics. According to Hans Morgenthau international politics is “is a struggle for power”
- **Anarchy**: is a situation where there is absence of authority
- **Sovereignty**: refers a state’s ultimate authority within its territorial entity (internal sovereignty) and, (ii) the state’s involvement in the international community (external sovereignty).

Theories of International Relations

- Theories of international relations allow us to understand and sense of the world around us through various lenses.
- IR theories present contending theories about the nature of international politics.
- IR theories are divided in to three
 - traditional theories, aka mainstream IR theories
 - middle-ground theories and
 - critical theories

1. Main stream IR theories

Liberalism/Idealism

- This theory aka **Utopian**
- Views human being as naturally good, peace loving and cooperative
- Believes on the relevance of morality, diplomacy and cooperation in international politics.
- It focuses on “what it should be”
- Believes that **peace** and **cooperation** are achievable.
- The theory is influenced by philosophers like **John Locke** and **Immanuel Kant**.
- Immanuel Kant developed the idea in the late eighteenth century that states that share **liberal values** should have no reason for going to war against one another.
- Kant’s idea influenced the emergence of the **Democratic Peace Theory (DPT)**, which argues that **democracies do not go to war with each other**.

Why democracies do not go to war?

- Their citizens do not allow tax payer’s money to be used for war
- They solve their problems via peaceful means
- They have faith on institutions and diplomacy to solve emerging problems eg. LN (1920)

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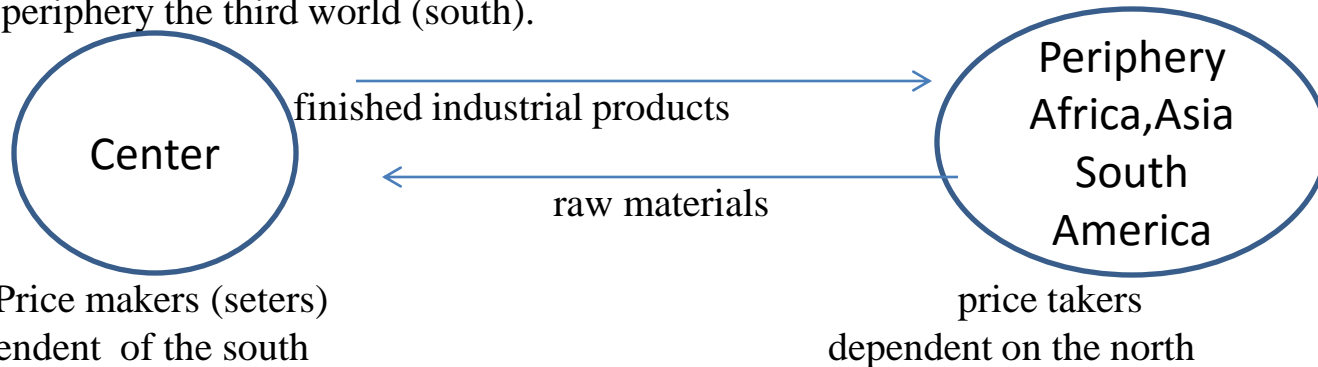
- Liberalism /idealism believes in **liberal internationalism** which says the academic study of international relations had the potential to contribute to the prevention of war and the establishment of peace.
- **liberal internationalism** argues that the prospects for the elimination of war lay with a preference for **democracy** over **aristocracy**, **free trade** over **autarky**, and **collective security** over the **balance of power** system' (Burchill, 1996: 31).
- **democracy and free trade**, are the two formative pillars of liberal internationalism, required the establishment of international relations which promote collectivist aspirations than competition.

2. Realism

- aka real politik
- Considers human nature as selfish, evil, conflictual, competitive, war mongerer,etc
- It focuses on “what really is”
- Views that the international system is ‘anarchic’- absence of global governance.
- Conflict is an inevitable and continual feature of inter-national relations.
- Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes are the founding voices of realism
- It believes in power and balance of power which is the source of peace
- Argues that states are the primary and the only actors of IRs.
- State survival, accumulation of power, national interest are key concepts of realism.
- Power is the means to an end- survival in the **Darwinian** world.
- The International system is a self-help system.
- If you need peace, then prepare for war.

Structuralism/Marxism

- In Marxist terminology structuralism refers structures which promote **economic** and **class** domination.
- Marxism argues that a capitalist society is divided into two contradictory classes – **the business class** (the bourgeoisie) and the **working class** (the proletariat).
- Marx hoped for an eventual end to the capitalist society and overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.
- International **socialist revolution** is the only solution for global peace since socialists do not fight imperialist wars.
- Focuses on the inequalities that exist within the international system, inequalities of wealth between the rich 'North' or the 'First World' and the poor 'South' or the 'Third World'
- Is a paradigm focused on dependency, exploitation and the international division of labor which relegated the vast majority of the global population to the extremes of poverty,
- Structuralism focuses on center-periphery relations or **division of labor**. The center being the west (north) and the periphery the third world (south).



- Effect: 1. global inequality
2. debt burden
3. violence and instability

which were caused by
Imperialism of the capitalist west
Social (state) capitalism by USSR

- Major contributors of dependency theory are **Latin American**, **African** and the **Middle East** scholars
- **Immanuel Wallerstein's** world systems analysis provided a historicist account of the spread of capitalism from the sixteenth century to the present, providing a definitive statement on the impact of this structure on interstate, class and other social relations.

Prepared by Solomon G.

Constructivism

- Constructivism is a theory commonly viewed as a middle ground IR theory.
- the importance of values and shared interests between individuals who interact on the global stage.
- argues goals of state are shaped by their ideas and values
- Alexander Wendt, a prominent constructivist, described the relationship between **agents** (individuals) and **structures** (such as the state) as one in which structures not only constrain agents but also construct their identities and interests.

Eg. **US**, as the bastion of liberal idea

Iran (IRI) as the Islamic revolutionary state (1979) and defender of Shia sect

KSA, defender of Orthodox Islam (Sunni sect)

Israel, the only Jew and democratic state encircled by reactionaries, despotic and others

DPRK, committed to the building of socialism and fighting US's imperialism.

Ethiopia, Christian island in the sea of infidels – this was during emperor Hailesilassie I.

- International anarchy as the defining principle of international politics, it has become part of our reality.
- Anarchy is what actors make of it.
- To understand constructivism is to understand that ideas, or 'norms' as they are often called, have "power".
- IR is fundamentally political, normative, socially constructed and interest-driven.

Critical Theories

- Critical approaches refer to a wide spectrum of theories that have been established in response to mainstream approaches in the field, mainly **liberalism** and **realism**.
- they oppose commonly held assumptions in the field of IR
- call for new approaches that are better suited to understand, as well as question, the world.
- They identify positions that have typically been **ignored** or **overlooked** by mainstream IR theories.
- They provide a voice to individuals who have frequently been marginalized.
e.g. **Women, the global south, minorities, stateless peoples**
- Critical theories influenced by Marxism, oppose the internationalization of the state which led ordinary people around the globe becoming **divided** and **alienated**.
- They call that the legitimacy of the state must be **questioned** and ultimately **dissolved**.
- **emancipation** from the state is their wider agenda for the world.
- **Feminism, critical theory, post-modernism** are sub theories of Critical theories.

Post-colonialism

- focuses on the inequality between nations or regions.
- effects of colonialism are still felt in many regions of the world today as local populations continue to deal with the challenges created and left behind by the former colonial powers.
- Post-colonialism's origins can be traced to the Cold War period when much activity in international relations centered around decolonization and the ambition to undo the legacies of European imperialism.
- Edward Said (1978) developed the prominent 'Orientalist' critique, describing how the Middle East and Asia were inaccurately depicted in the West or **Euro-centrism**.
- Orientalism focuses on including the viewpoints of those from the Global South to ensure that Western scholarship (Euro-centrism) no longer spoke on their behalf.
- Euro-centrism signifies the **cultural, moral** and **rational** aspect (superiority) of the Western world and its dominance over the other.
- Afro-centrism, Orientalism are counter scholarships that focus on the centrality of Africa and Asia in their own knowledge production other than 'Western' mindset.