



Global Trends Chapter 1 Note

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Global Trend Chapter 1

Chapter One: Understanding International Relations

1.1. Conceptualizing Nationalism, Nations and States

- the words “nation” “state” and “country” are used interchangeably and this is not correct
- Nationalism
 - the most influential force in international affairs
 - It is noted as a factor for
 - outbreak of revolutions and wars across the globe
 - collapse of age old empires
 - marker for new borders & emergence of new states
 - used to reshape and reinforce regimes in history
 - nationalism is the doctrine that asserts the nation as the basic political unit in organizing society
- nations
 - historical entities that evolve organically out of more similar ethnic communities and they reveal themselves in myths, legends, and songs
 - A nation, in contrast to a state:

- constitutes a community of people joined by a **shared identity and by common social practices**
 - nation **was a soul** added to the body of the early modern **state machinery**
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- The **revolutions** that took place in Britain's North American colonies in **1776**, and in France in **1789**, provided models for other nationalists to follow
 - In the revolution of **1789**, the **old regime was overthrown** and with it the entire social order
 - French nation was from now on to be governed by the people, the nation
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- The **Congress of Vienna of 1815**, where a settlement was reached at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, was **supposed to have returned Europe to its pre-revolutionary ways**, Yet, nationalist sentiments were growing:
 - 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
 - the idea of self-determination undermined the political legitimacy of Europe's empires
 - Although the **nationalist revolutions of 1848** were defeated by the political establishment, the **sentiments** themselves were **impossible to control**
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- In **1861 Italy** too – long divided into separate city-states and dominated by the Church – **became a unified country and an independent nation**
 - it was only with the **conclusion of the First World War** in 1918 that self-determination was acknowledged as a right
 - After the First World War most people in Europe formed their own nation-states
 - the word “**international**” itself was coined only in 1783, by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham

- In most respects, however, the inter-national system continued to operate in much the same fashion as the **Westphalian inter-state system**
- In international politics, nevertheless, the implication of **nationalism** and its **essence is highly questioned**, current:
 - nation states are put under pressure and their role in world politics is significantly challenge
 - However, revival of nationalism is happening across the world with the post-cold war assertions of religion, culture and ethnicity as potent forces in world politics

1.2. Understanding International Relations

- We now live in a world where it is **impossible to isolate** our experiences and transactions from an international dimension
 - The limits to how international relations will continue to impact your life is tremendous
- Studying international relations enables students and professionals to better **comprehend** the information we receive daily from newspapers, television and radio
 - It provides the **necessary tools to analyze events**, and to gain a deeper comprehension of some of the problems that policy-makers confront and to **understand** the reasoning **behind their actions**
- The **world is interconnected** – geographically, intellectually and socially
- Originally, the study of international relations 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**
- there is no one accepted way of defining or understanding international relations
- 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

- Example:
 - sending international mail
 - buying or selling goods abroad
 - choosing an Olympics host or awarding a film Oscar
- events such as:
 - international conflict
 - inter-national conferences
- This all play a fundamental part in the study of international relations
- Participation in international relations or politics is also inescapable
 - No individual, people, nation or state can exist in splendid isolation or be master of its own fate
 - None can maintain or enhance their rate of social or economic progress or keep people alive without the contributions of foreigners or foreign states
- Every people, nation or state is a minority in a world that is anarchic:
 - that is, there is an absence of a common sovereign over them
 - politics among entities that have no ruler and in the absence of any ruler
- there are legal, political and social differences between domestic and international politic

Domestic law

- is generally obeyed, and if not, the police and courts enforce
- a government has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force

International law (politics)

- rests on competing legal systems, and there is no common enforcement
- no one has a monopoly of force, and therefore
 - international politics has often been interpreted as the realm of self-help
 - BUT some states are stronger than others
- in international politics, divided peoples do not share the same loyalties
 - people disagree about what seems just and legitimate; order and justice

- domestic incidents can become international and can lead to foreign policy changes and commitments
 - Example: SARS and avian flu
- At Glance: International relations is too important to be ignored but also too complex to be understood
- There are philosophical disputes about the fundamental nature of international relations:
 - Hobbesian versus the Lockean
 - Realist versus Idealist

Hobbes

- state of society to be continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short

Locke

- optimistic view
- suggested that sociability was the strongest bond between men – men were equal, sociable and free
- that nature did not arm man against man, and that some degree of society was possible even in the state preceding government

Hobbes and Locke are still able to divide approaches to the study of the nature of international relations

- International politics is pre-eminently concerned with the art of achieving group ends against the opposition of other groups
- International politics involves the delicate adjustment of power to power
 - If physical force were to be used to resolve every disagreement there would result an intolerable existence for the world's population
 - Sometimes this happens on the international stage
 - 2003 invasion of Iraq by a US coalition of the willing as a prime example

- Although difficult to establish; there are non-violent options available to states
- International politics is also about maintaining international order. But that order has to be maintained in an anarchical world
- The arena of international relations and politics seems to be continually expanding
 - In 1800 there were no international organizations, but now there is one for almost every activity – both governmental and non-governmental
 - United Nations Charter was signed in October 1945, 51 states signed it. In the first decade of twenty-first century the UN grew between 189 and 192 member states
 - Interdependence implies that people, businesses and organizations rely on each other (and their rivals)
- International relations and politics are necessary for all states, but political power is not centralized and unequal. That is why power, coercion and bargaining still hold sway

1.3. The Nature and Evolution of International Relations

- The rise of the sovereign state in medieval Europe consisted of a complicated pattern of overlapping jurisdictions and loyalties:
 - Life and political power was local
 - there was an enormous diversity of political entities:
 - feudal lords
 - cities made up of independent merchants
 - states ruled by clerics and smaller political entities such as principalities and duchies
- In medieval Europe there were two institutions with pretensions to power over the continent as a whole:

1. the (Catholic) Church

- the spiritual authority, with its centre in Rome

- the influence of the Church spread far and penetrated deeply into people's lives
- occupied a crucial role in the **cultural and intellectual** life of the Middle Ages

Empire

- known as the **Holy Roman Empire**
- established in the tenth century **in central, predominantly German-speaking, Europe**
- derived legitimacy from the Roman Empire, but **had none of its political power**
- It is best compared to a **loosely structured federation of many hundreds of separate political units**
- The **political system of medieval Europe** was thus a **curious combination of the local and the universal**
 - Yet, from the **fourteenth century onward** this system was greatly simplified as the **state** emerged as a **political entity located at an intermediate level between the local and the universal**
 - new **states** simultaneously set themselves in **opposition to popes and emperors on the universal level**
- This is **how the state came to make itself independent and self-governing**:
 - The process started in **Italy**: began playing the **pope against the emperor**, eventually making themselves independent of both
 - in **Germany**, the **pope struggled with the emperor** over the issue of who of the two should have the right to appoint bishops
 - While the two were fighting it out, the **constituent members of the Holy Roman Empire took the opportunity to assert their independence**
 - the **kings of France and England** began acting more independently, **defying the pope's orders**
 - Between 1309 and 1377, the **French even forced the pope to move to Avignon**, in southern France

- In England, meanwhile, the king repealed the pope's right to levy taxes on the people
- With the Reformation in the sixteenth century the notion of a unified Europe broke down completely as the Church began to split apart:
 - followers of Martin Luther and John Calvin had formed their own religious denominations which did not take orders from Rome
 - the new churches aligned themselves with the new states
 - various kings, such as Henry VIII in England or Gustav Vasa in Sweden, took advantage of the religious strife in order to further their own political agendas
 - All over northern Europe, the new "Protestant" churches became state-run and church lands became property of the state
- the increasingly self-assertive states were not only picking fights with universal institutions but also with local ones
 - In order to establish themselves securely in their new positions of power, the kings rejected the traditional claims of all local authorities
 - It led to extended wars in next to all European countries
 - Peasants rose up in protest against taxes and the burdens imposed by repeated wars
 - There were massive peasant revolts in Germany in the 1520s
 - In the latter part of the sixteenth century, there were major peasant uprisings in Sweden, Croatia, England and Switzerland
 - In France, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the nobility rose up in defense of its traditional rights and in rebellion against the encroachments of the king
- From the sixteenth century onwards the states established the rudiments of an administrative system and raised armies
 - fight their own peasants and in order to defend themselves against other states
- The early modern state was more than anything an institutional machinery designed to develop and extract resources from society
 - state-building was expensive, the search for money became a constant concern

- In return for their taxes, the state provided ordinary people with defense and a rudimentary system of justice
- military confrontation of the era
 - in early modern Europe it was no longer the competing claims of local and universal authorities that had to be combated but instead the competing claims of other states
 - The Thirty Years' War, 1618–1648
 - was the bloodiest
 - As a result of the war Germany's population was reduced by around a third, Swedish troops destroyed
 - It was often called a religious conflict since Catholic states confronted Protestants
 - Yet, Protestant and Catholic countries sometimes fought on the same side
 - the war concerned which state should have hegemony (or dominance) over Europe
 - The main protagonists were two Catholic states, France and Austria
 - Sweden – a Protestant country – intervened on France's side and in the end no dominant power emerged
 - The Treaty of Westphalia, 1648
 - concluded the 30 years of warfare
 - symbolize the new way of organizing international politics
 - From this point onwards
 - international politics was a matter of relations between states and no other political units
 - All states were sovereign:
 - they laid claims to the exclusive right to rule their own territories and to act, in relation to other states, as they themselves saw fit
 - All states were formally equal and they had the same rights and obligations
 - 7states interacted with each other in a system in which there was no overarching power

Sovereignty and formal equality led to the problem of anarchy

- The practices of diplomacy

- relations had become vastly more complicated
- In order to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts, the different rulers began dispatching ambassadors to each other's courts
- This diplomatic network provided
 - a means of gathering information, of spying
 - also a way of keeping in touch with one another, of carrying out negotiations and concluding deals
- The practices of diplomacy soon expanded to include a number of mutually advantageous provisions:
 - embassies were given extraterritorial rights and legal immunity
 - diplomatic dispatches were regarded as inviolable
 - ambassadors had the right to worship the god of their choice
- Diplomatic practices were never powerful enough to prevent war, indeed wars continued to be common
- it was the European model of statehood and the European way of organizing international relations that eventually came to organize all of world politics
- It was only in the nineteenth century that relations between Europe and the rest of the world were irrevocably transformed

Reason was economic changes taking place in Europe itself

- As a result of this so called “industrial revolution” the Europeans could produce many more things and do it far more efficiently
- As cheap, mass-produced goods flooded European markets, the Europeans began looking for new markets overseas
- Towards the end of the nineteenth century, other European countries joined in this scramble for colonies, not least in Africa
 - Colonial possessions became a symbol of “great power” status
 - by the time of the First World War in 1914, most parts of the world were in European hands
 - There were some exceptions to this rule – China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Ethiopia and Nepal, among others – but even in these ostensibly

independent countries the Europeans had a strong presence

- But this was not how the European state and the European way of organizing international relations
 - came to spread to the rest of the world, at least not directly
- a colonized country is the very opposite of a sovereign state
 - the colonized peoples had no nation-states and enjoyed no self-determination
 - Since the Europeans only would grant sovereignty to states that were similar to their own To create such Europe-like states was thus the project in which all non-European political leaders engaged
- Once they finally made themselves independent in the decades after the Second World War, as an international climate of decolonization took hold, all new states had a familiar form
 - They had their respective territories and fortified borders
 - their own capitals, armies, foreign ministries, flags, national anthems
 - and all the other paraphernalia of European statehood
 - Whether there were alternative, non-European, ways of organizing a state and its foreign relations was never discussed

1.4. Actors in International Relations

- International Relations (IR) traditionally focused on interactions between states
 - However, this conventional view has been broadened over the years to include relationships between all sorts of political entities (polities) including:
 - international organizations
 - multinational corporations
 - societies citizens
- IR captures a vast array of themes

1.4.1. State Actors

- there are no fewer than 195 states

- they have a territorial extension
- Are surrounded by borders which tell us where one state ends and another begins
- all states have their own capitals, armies, foreign ministries, flags and national anthems
- All states call themselves “**sovereign**”, meaning:
 - they claim the **exclusive right to govern** their respective territories in their own fashion
- According to a time-honoured metaphor, we can talk about international politics as a “world stage” on which the states are the leading actors
- international politics come to be defined in terms of interactions between states
- “international” is structurally differentiated from the “domestic” according to “realist” perspective
 - **international** – anarchical
 - **domestic** – hierarchical
- **State sovereignty** comes to be the defining element in the study of international relations, even where other perspectives challenge the primacy of the state

1.4.2. Non-State Actors

- Includes: **global firms, international governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations**
- **multinational corporations** (MNCs)
 - often with headquarters in one state and operational capability in a range of others
- **trans-governmental organizations**
 - relations between players are not controlled by the central foreign policy of the state
 - such as the **exchange rate of a state's currency** being determined by the **money markets**
 - However, despite all the challenges and many new theories of international politics/relations the **state remains, for many, the**

primary actor in international politics

- the term “international relations” has for centuries inferred a particular concern with relations between nations, it does not have to remain so confined
 - Thus, contrary to the narrow traditionalist realist view of international relations and foreign policy/relations, which focuses on the physical security and protection of the territory of the state and its people, one needs to look wider
- the traditional conception of the state as the main framework of political interaction and the main point of reference for both society and the individuals within it has lost a lot of its meaning and importance
 - If we look at the world around us, state borders do not seem to accurately delimitate global affairs
 - majority of global interactions – be they related to global finance, production, education, personal and professional travel, labor migration or terrorism – no longer occur via state channels the way they once did
- the increased focus on non-state actors and cross-border issues has marked a close-to-revolutionary turn in IR
 - could be interpreted as a shift away from the “international” (between-states) to the “trans-national” (across/beyond-states and their borders)
 - In today’s world, few societal and political issues, challenges and problems are neatly confined by the borders of individual states or even groups of states
 - Thinking about world affairs in “trans-national” rather than in purely “inter-national” terms therefore seems more of an analytical necessity than just a choice
- The following dramatically altered the general dynamics in politics and global affairs
 - Individuals and groups interact across borders
 - International commercial aviation and the rapid spread of information technologies
 - increased people’s mobility and the rate at which interactions occur across and beyond state borders

- ability for common people to store, transfer and distribute large amounts of information
- possibility for **data to travel across** the world in virtually no time
- increasing availability of **high-speed internet**
- **Social media**
 - provide accessible **platforms of communication**
 - allow for the **projection and promotion of ideas across borders at virtually no cost** to the individual or group generating and advocating them
 - Various political agendas – be they **progressive, revolutionary or outright dangerous** can **unfold in a relatively uncontrolled and unregulated way**
 - **posing real challenges to governmental agencies and the political leaders** that try to improve and direct them
 - **Random individuals can potentially start a revolution from their homes, bypassing any conventional conceptions of power and transcending spatial and material boundaries** to the point where **political activity and even confrontation become weightless** and immaterial altogether IR and you

1.5. Levels of Analysis in International Relations

- traditional or conventional IR was not concerned with any potential distinctions between different levels of analysis or theoretical perspectives
- **J. David Singer**: highlights another value in **thinking of IR as something that can be studied from different and distinctive perspectives**
 - Being clear about our level of analysis can prevent us from indulging in analytical “cherry-picking”, that is to say, from randomly gathering evidence across different levels in pursuit of an answer to our research questions
- the analytical consequences of drifting between levels: that **our search for evidence will need to be comprehensive** and that we might have to look at a different set of data or material for each additional aspect

- From the 1950s onwards, more and more IR scholars endeavored to specify the focus of their analysis more clearly
 - Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (1959) which introduced an analytical framework for the study of IR that distinguished between what he referred to as different "images" of an issue:
 - the individual
 - the state
 - the international system

1.5.1. The individual level

- we would look at the behaviors, motivations, beliefs and orientation of the individual in affecting a particular international phenomenon
- the psychology and emotions behind people's actions and decisions
 - their fears
 - their visions
 - their access to information
 - their capacity to make a difference
- Psychological factors are also an important factor in the analysis of foreign policy
 - particular mindsets and perceptions of political leaders and key actors might influence their decisions and behavior
- Focusing on the individual level and, say, particular actions of specific personalities in the public realm—be they politicians, diplomats or bankers – would lead us to drawing different conclusions again about the causes and consequences that phenomenon

1.5.2. The group level

- break the analysis down into certain kinds of groups, how they relate to the state level and where they position themselves with respect to the global dimension of the issues they are dealing with
- A group-level analysis focusing on foreign policy would look, for example, at the role of lobbying groups and the way they influence national

decision-making on an issue

- A group-level analysis could be interested in activist/pressure groups like “Anonymous” that seek to influence the global debate about the winners and losers of globalization and capitalism, and so forth

1.5.3. The state level

- the main focus remains on the state as the dominant unit of analysis
- This enduring focus on the state, and therefore, on the state level of analysis, is referred to as the relative “state-centrism” of the discipline
- IR scholars conceive of the state as a point of reference for other types of actors
- the state acts as the arena in which state officials, politicians and decision-makers operate
- The state is seen as the framework that encapsulates society and as the main point of reference for the individual
- an assumption IR scholars have made about the state also being the main location of power within the international sphere
 - state is where power is primarily concentrated and located
- today's political life remains managed in the state framework, based on issues like national security, domestic cohesion or internal stability
- States form the primary kind of actor in major international organizations such as UN
- states still hold monopoly on violence – the exclusive right to the legitimate use of physical force
- A state level analysis might be interested to look at any one of the following:
 - consider states as actors in their own right
 - how states interact with each other to deal with the crisis/ their foreign policy
 - how they build off each other's suggestions and react to international developments and trends
 - how they cooperate
 - how we look at them as competitors and antagonists

- A state-level study would also require **careful consideration of what kinds of states we are looking at**
 - how they are **ordered politically**
 - their **geographical position**
 - their **historical ties and experiences**
 - their **economic standing**
- It would likely also look at the foreign policy of states, **Key indicators of the foreign policy of states:**
 - **policies** proposed and decided by governments
 - **statements of top-level politicians**
 - **role and behavior of diplomats** and their adjoining **bureaucratic structures**

1.5.4. The system level

- conceive the **global system** as the structure or context within which states cooperate, compete and confront each other over issues of national interest
- It is a **level above the state**
- the **distribution of power amongst states** is
 - **unipolarity** – is one main concentration of power
 - **bipolarity** – two
 - **multipolarity** – several
- **global circumstances** are seen to condition the ability and opportunity of individual states and groups of states to pursue their interests in cooperative or competitive ways
- international system is “anarchic” – lacks a central government (or international sovereign) that regulates and controls what happens to states in their dealings with each other
- international system can be conceived of as made up of **states, groups of states, organizations, societies or individuals** within and across those societies
- IR generally distinguishes between three levels of analysis:
 - the system, the state, the individual
 - but the group level is also important to consider as a fourth

- A system-level study would need to consider
 - global linkages that go beyond single interactions between states
 - balance of power between states and how that determines what happens in global politics
 - include developments that are even outside the immediate control of any particular state or group of states, such as
 - global economy
 - transnational terrorism
 - the internet
- A global level would give us the big picture and help us to grasp wide ranging dynamics that emerge from the global economic system to affect its various components, states, national economies, societies, and individuals

1.6. The Structure of International System

- political power is usually distributed into three main types of systems
- they reflect the number of powerful states competing for power and their hierarchical relationship

1. uni-polar system

- there is one state with the greatest political, economic, cultural and military power and hence the ability to totally control other states

in both bipolar and multipolar systems there is no one single state with a preponderant power and hence ability to control other states

states in such systems are forced to balance each other's power

2. bipolar system

- there are two dominant states (super powers)
- less powerful states join either sides through alliance and counter alliance formations

- problem with bipolar system is that it is vulnerable for zero-sum game politics because when one superpower gains the other would inevitably lose
- Example: the world was under bipolar system is the cold war period

3. multipolar system

- the most common throughout history
- reflects various equally powerful states competing for power
- In such system, it is possible to bring change without gaining or losing power
- Example: During the period around World War I

Power

- It is the currency of international politics. As money is for economics
- It determines the relative influence of actors and it shapes the structure of the international system
- international relations is essentially about actors' power relations in the supra-national domain
- Hans Morgenthau, a famous thinker of realism theory in IR, argues that International politics, like all other politics, is a struggle for power
- power is the blood line of international relations
- Power can be defined in terms of both relations and material (capability) aspects
 - relational definition of power:
 - formulated by Robert Dahl
 - understands power as "A's" ability to get "B" to do something it would not otherwise do
 - wherever capabilities are equal, power tends to vanish totally
 - However, a small rise in the capabilities of one of the two nations could translate into a major advantage in terms of power balance
 - historical example: The United States and Soviet Union
 - United States emerged as more powerful than Russia and in consequence managed to exercise power over Russia- meaning the USA owned the ability to get Russia to do what Russia would not otherwise do

Anarchy

- a situation where there is absence of authority (government) be it in national or international/global level systems
 - Within a country “anarchy” refers to a breakdown of law and order
 - In relations between states “anarchy” refers to a system where power is decentralized and there are no shared institutions with the right to enforce common rules
- anarchical world is a world where everyone looks after themselves and no one looks after the system as a whole
 - states had to rely on their own resources or to form alliances through which the power of one alliance of states could be balanced against the power of another alliance
 - such power balances were precarious, easily subverted, and given the value attached to territorial acquisitions, states had an incentive to engage in aggressive wars
 - As a result, the new international system was characterized by constant tensions and threats of war

Sovereignty

- it can be defined as
 - internal sovereignty – a state’s ultimate authority within its territorial entity
 - external sovereignty – state’s involvement in the international community
- sovereignty denotes double claim of states from the international system
 - autonomy in foreign policy And
 - independence/freedom in its domestic affairs

1.7. Theories of International Relations

- politics of global interactions is more accessible now in the present age than it ever has been in the past
- Relationships which take place across state boundaries seem, therefore, to include interactions involving not only the diplomatic core or

representatives of our individual states, but the business community, the media, charitable organizations and so on

- Theories of international relations allow us to understand and try to make sense of the world around us through various lenses, each of which represents a different theoretical perspective

1.7.1. Idealism/Liberalism

- was referred to as a “utopian” theory
- view human beings as innately good and believe peace and harmony between nations is not only achievable, but desirable
- Immanuel Kant developed the idea:
 - states that shared **liberal values** should have no reason for going to war against one another
 - the **more liberal states there were in the world, the more peaceful it would become**
 - since liberal states are ruled by their citizens and citizens are rarely disposed to desire war
 - His ideas have resonated and continue to be developed by modern liberals, most notably in the **democratic peace theory**, which posits that democracies do not go to war with each other, for the very reasons Kant outlined
- liberals have faith in the idea that the permanent cessation of war is an attainable goal**
- US President Woodrow Wilson addressed his famous “Fourteen Points” to the US Congress; the last of his points was to create a general association of nations, which became the **League of Nations**
 - It was created largely for the purpose of overseeing affairs between states and implementing, as well as maintaining, international peace

liberal internationalism

- from 1919 to the 1930s, the discipline was dominated by what is conventionally referred to as liberal internationalism
- primary concern of this approach was that:
 - conditions which had led to the outbreak of the First World War and the devastation which followed should not be allowed to occur in the future**

- It suggested that the prospects for the elimination of war lay with a preference for:
 - **democracy** over **aristocracy**
 - **free trade** over **autarky**
 - **collective security** over the **balance of power** system
- The two interrelated ideas that emerge from Kant's reflections on a perpetual peace centered on
 - democratic governance and
 - institutionalized law-governed relations of cooperation between states
- two formative **pillars of liberal internationalism**
 - **democracy**
 - **free trade**
- A system of “**collective security**” was advocated to replace antagonistic alliance systems with an international order based on the rule of law and collective responsibility

the League of nations collapse

- When the League collapse due to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, its failure became difficult for liberals to comprehend, as events seemed to contradict their theories
- liberalism failed to retain a strong hold and a new theory emerged to explain the continuing presence of war

international law

- It refers to the body of customary and conventional rules which are binding on civilized states in their intercourse with each other
- Liberals argue that international law offers a mechanism by which cooperation among states is made possible
- It provides the normative framework for political discourse among members of the international system
- the purpose of international law is thus to regulate the conducts of governments and the behaviors of individuals within states

- states are the subjects of international law in the sense that they are in principle obliged to implement the decisions of international tribunals or courts
- international law provides the normative framework for political discourse among members of the international system
 - The framework does not guarantee consensus, but it does foster the discourse and participation needed to provide conceptual clarity in developing legal obligations and gaining their acceptance
- international law performs two different functions:
 - **provide mechanisms for cross-border interactions**
 - It is “**operating system**” of international law
 - **to shape the values and goals** these interactions are pursuing
 - It is “**normative system**” of international law
- the legal standing of international law is a contentious issue among scholars. There are **three competing views on this matter**
 - **international law is not a law at all but a branch of international morality**
 - **it is a law in all senses of the term**
 - **it is a matter of definition**
- As a result, the operating system of international law functions in some ways as a constitution does in a domestic legal system and not as law proper – i.e
 - it does nothing beyond setting out the consensus of its constituent actors on distribution of authority, rights and responsibilities for governance within the international system

1.7.2. Realism

- international law and diplomatic history, was transformed to an intellectual agenda which **placed power and self-interest at the forefront of concern**

E.H. Carr

- Carr’s “Twenty Years’ Crisis”, published in 1939
- Carr called for a “science” of international relations, one which would move away from what he saw as the wishful thinking of liberal internationalism
- Carr’s text called for a move away from utopian doctrine which, he suggested, was based on an unrealistic negation of power and its impact

on international politics

- Realists argue that **values are context bound**, that **morality is determined by interest**, and that the **conditions of the present are determined by historical processes**
- The formative assumptions of realism as a school of thought centre on the view that **the international system is “anarchic”** in the sense that it is devoid of an all-encompassing authority
 - **inter-national law are non-binding and ultimately ineffectual** in the regulation of relations between states
- realism locates its roots further back, citing Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes as its founding voices

Hans Morgenthau

- asserts that “realism” assumes that its key concept of interest defined as
 - **power is an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all**
- international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power
- the realism expressed by Morgenthau purports to be scientific and explanatory
- Theories of international relations must be consistent with the facts and it is these which must be the ultimate test of the validity of theoretical statements
 - like other realists, hence assumes a clear separation of fact and value, of theory and practice

Hedley Bull

- criticized Morganthau’s approaches. His concern was that relations between states could not be reduced to measurable attributes of power or models of decision making
- Bull’s, “The Anarchical Society” first published in 1977, came to represent what subsequently has been referred to as the “English School”, demarcated from the United States-dominated realist and scientific perspective mainly through its normative approach to the subject
- By the late 1950s and into the 1960s we see a discipline dominated by realist conceptions of international relations

- Realism gained momentum during the Second World War when it appeared to offer a convincing account for how and why the worst conflict in known history originated after a period of supposed peace and optimism
- As its name suggests, advocates of realism purport it reflects the “reality” of the world and more effectively accounts for change in international politics
- Thomas Hobbes
 - He described human beings as living in an order-less state of nature that he perceived as a war of all against all
 - To remedy this, he proposed that a “social contract” was required between a ruler and the people of a state to maintain relative order
- Kenneth Waltz
 - define a neo-realist agenda and absolutely dominated the discipline and some would argue do so to the present day
 - Waltz focuses on the international system itself and seeks to provide a structuralist account of its dynamics and the constraints it imposes on state behavior
 - international system is, for Waltz, anarchical and hence perpetually threatening and conflictual
 - What is of interest to Waltz is the imperatives of the international system and the distribution of capabilities within it
 - This is hence a structural account, but it is an account that markedly differs in approach and substantive content from the neo-Marxist structuralism
 - It has much akin to realism and must therefore be placed within that perspective
- war seems more common than peace to realists indeed they see war as inevitable
- One central area that sets realism and liberalism apart is how they view human nature
 - Realists
 - do not typically believe that human beings are inherently good, or have the potential for good, as liberals do. Instead, they claim individuals act in their own self-interest
 - people are selfish and behave according to their own needs without necessarily taking into account the needs of others

- believe conflict is unavoidable and perpetual and so war is common and inherent to humankind
- For realists
 - politics is primarily about domination as opposed to cooperation between states
 - realist lens magnifies instances of war and conflict and then uses those to paint a certain picture of the world
 - they arrive at a more pessimistic view
 - due to their focus on the centrality of the state and its need for security and survival in an anarchical system where it can only truly rely on itself
 - describe IR as a system where war and conflict is common and periods of peace are merely times when states are preparing for future conflict
- For Liberals
 - Liberals lens blur out areas of domination and instead bring areas of cooperation into focus
 - share an optimistic view of IR
 - believing that world order can be improved, with peace and progress gradually replacing war
- It is important to understand that there is no single liberal or realist theory
 - Scholars in the two groups rarely fully agree with each other, even those who share the same approach
- both realism and liberalism have been updated to more modern versions (neoliberalism and neorealism) that represent a shift in emphasis from their traditional roots
- Both liberalism and realism consider the state to be the dominant actor in IR and typically regarded as possessing ultimate power, although liberalism does add a role for nonstate actors such as international organizations
 - This includes the capacity to enforce decisions, such as declaring war on another nation, or conversely treaties that may bind states to certain agreements
- Liberalism
 - argue that organizations are valuable in assisting states in formulating decisions and helping to formalize cooperation that leads to peaceful outcomes
- Realists

- believe states partake in international organizations only when it is in their self-interest to do so
- Many scholars have begun to reject these traditional theories over the past several decades because of their obsession with the state and the status quo

1.7.3. Structuralism/Marxism

- Marxism is an ideology that argues that a capitalist society is divided into two contradictory classes:
 - the business class (the bourgeoisie) and
 - the working class (the proletariat)
 - proletariats are at the mercy of the bourgeoisie who control their wages and therefore their standard of living
- Marx hoped for an eventual end to the class society and overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat
- It concentrated 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”
- the structuralist 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, often with the complicities of elitemgroups within these societies
- As many in this tradition argued, most states were not free they were subjugated by the political, ideological and social consequences of economic forces
- The basis of such manifest inequality was the capitalist structure of the international system which accrued benefits to some while causing, through unequal exchange relations, the impoverishment of the vast majority of others
- pluralism and its liberal associations had viewed networks of economic interdependence as a basis of increasing international cooperation founded on trade and financial interactions
 - neo-Marxist structuralism viewed these processes as the basis of
 - inequality, the debt burden, violence and instability
- Major writers in the structuralist perspective emerged from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, primary among which were Andre Gunter Frank

and Samir Amin, both of whom concentrated on dependency theory

1.7.4. Constructivism

- commonly viewed as a middle ground between mainstream theories and the critical theories
- constructivists highlight the importance of values and shared interests between individuals who interact on the global stage
- Alexander Wendt
 - described the relationship between agents (individuals) and structures (such as the state)
 - His famous phrase “anarchy is what states make of it”
- the core of constructivism, is that the essence of international relations exists in the interactions between people
 - After all, states do not interact; it is agents of those states, such as politicians and diplomats, who interact
- International anarchy could even be replaced with a different system if a critical mass of other individuals (and by proxy the states they represent) accepted the idea
- IR is, then, a never-ending journey of change chronicling the accumulation of the accepted norms of the past and the emerging norms of the future. As such, constructivists seek to study this process

1.7.5. Critical Theories

- refer to a wide spectrum of theories that have been established in response to mainstream approaches in the field, mainly liberalism and realism
- critical theorists share one particular trait – they oppose commonly held assumptions in the field of IR
- Critical theories are valuable because they identify positions that have typically been ignored or overlooked within IR
 - also provide a voice to individuals who have frequently been marginalized, particularly women and those from the Global South
- Critical theorists who take a Marxist angle often argue that the internationalization of the state as the standard operating principle of

international relations has led ordinary people around the globe becoming divided and alienated, instead of recognizing what they all have in common as a global proletariat

Post-colonialism

- It differs from Marxism by focusing on the inequality between nations or regions, as opposed to classes
- effects of colonialism are still felt in many regions of the world
- This approach acknowledges that politics is not limited to one area or region and that it is vital to include the voices of individuals from other parts of the world
- Edward who developed the prominent “Orientalist” critique, said describing how the Middle East and Asia were inaccurately depicted in the West
- more focus within the discipline was placed on including the viewpoints of those from the Global South to ensure that Western scholars no longer spoke on their behalf
- Postcolonial scholars are, therefore, important contributors to the field as they widen the focus of enquiry beyond IR’s traditionally “Western” mindset
- Generally, realists believe that international organizations appear to be successful when they are working in the interests of powerful states. But, if that condition is reversed and an organization becomes an obstacle to national interests, then the equation may change
 - A contemporary example would be the United States invading Iraq in 2003 despite the Security Council declining to authorize it
 - On the other hand, liberals would argue that without the United Nations, international relations would likely be even more chaotic
 - A constructivist would look at the very same example and say that while it is true that the United States ignored the United Nations and invaded Iraq, by doing so it violated the standard practices of international relations
 - Examining the difficulties the United States faced in its international relations following 2003 gives considerable weight to the constructivist and liberal viewpoints
 - Marxists would argue that any international body, including the United Nations, works to promote the interests of the business class

- After all, the United Nations is composed of (and was built by) states who are the chief protagonists in global capitalism – the very thing that Marxism is opposed to
- United Nations can be said to be dominated by imperial (or neo-imperial) powers
 - Imperialism, according to Marxist doctrine, is the highest stage of capitalism
- the United Nations, then, is not an organization that offers any hope of real emancipation for citizens
- post-colonialists would argue that the discourse perpetuated by the United Nations is one based on cultural, national or religious privilege
 - it has no African or Latin American permanent members, the Security Council fails to represent the current state of the world
 - also point to the presence of former colonial powers on the Security Council and how their ability to veto proposals put forward by other countries perpetuates a form of continued indirect colonial exploitation of the Global South

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