

Lecture 2 Notes

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1. Concepts in IR are shaped by historical circumstances. The state, nation, sovereignty, power, balance of power, and many others are ideas rooted in the European experience
2. Thucydides
 - (a) His *History of the Peloponnesian War* discusses the causes of the war between Athens and Sparta. His conclusion was that changing distributions of power lead to war
3. Plato
 - (a) His *Republic* describes the “perfect state”, where people who govern are those who are superior in the ways of philosophy and war. He introduced two important ideas to IR: class analysis and dialectical reasoning
4. Aristotle
 - (a) He is the first to use the comparative method to look at similarities and differences among states. He concluded that states rise and fall due to internal factors — a conclusion still debated in the 21st century
5. The Roman Empire
 - (a) Originates the concept of imperialism, and develops the practice of expanding territorial reach. The empire itself is united through law and language, while allowing some local identity
6. The early-to-mid Middle Ages
 - (a) During this period, three civilizations emerge from Rome — Arabic, Byzantine, and European. Since European civilization was in a state of disorder, some scholars believe that feudalism arose as a response to disorder

- (b) The preeminent institution during this period was the church. Thus, a centralization of religious authority and a decentralization in political and economic life characterizes the era.

7. The late Middle Ages

- (a) A period of rapid economic expansion and exploration. A new group emerges — the business community, whose interests extend beyond their immediate locales and who conflict with the church
- (b) This is the era of Machiavelli. In *The Prince*, he points out the necessary qualities of a leader required to maintain the strength and security of the state

8. The Emergence of the Westphalian System

- (a) Begins upon completion of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), one of the worst wars (religious in character) in human history with battles that ravaged much of the civilian population
- (b) The treaty that followed (Treaty of Westphalia) impacted IR in 3 ways:
 - i. It created the concept of sovereignty, or the “authority of the state, based on recognition by other states and non-state actors, to govern matters within its own borders that affect its people, economy, security, and form of government.”
 - ii. It saw the formation of national armies which further centralized control
 - iii. It established a core group of states that dominated the world until the beginning of the 19th century (Austria, Russia, Prussia, England, France, and the United Provinces)

9. The 19th Century in Europe

- (a) Dominated by 2 revolutions, the American (1776) and French (1789), from which 2 core principles emerged:
 - i. Legitimacy — Absolutist rule is subject to limits imposed by man
 - ii. Nationalism — The masses identify with their common past, language, customs, and practices as a natural outgrowth of the state
- (b) The Concert of Europe (1815–1854) was a period of relative peace in the international system, even though great political changes were occurring. This was due to:
 - i. Solidarity due to their shared European, Christian, “civilized” and “white” background, which differentiated between “them” and the “other”
 - ii. European elites united in their fear of revolution from the masses
 - iii. Industrialization and focus on colonialism
 - iv. The Balance of Power concept — with each relatively equal in power, they feared emergence of any predominant state (hegemon) among them

10. World War I — The Breakdown of Balance of Power

- (a) The end of the war denotes critical changes in international relations
- (b) Three European empires die — Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Ottoman
- (c) Germany emerges as even more dissatisfied
- (d) Enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles was given to the League of Nations. It fails (no power, no legal instruments, no legitimacy). The US refuses to join, which creates a unilateralist foreign policy.
- (e) The rise of fascism — German, Italian, Japanese, and the resurgence of nationalisms
- (f) The combination of a world economic decline, along with fascism, liberalism, and communism clashing leads to World War II

11. World War II and The Cold War

- (a) The most important outcome of World War II was the emergence of two superpowers — The US and the Soviet Union, and the decline of Europe as the center of international politics
- (b) Related to the first outcome was the recognition of the fundamental incompatibilities between these two superpowers in national interest and ideology, particularly the ideologies of capitalism and socialism
- (c) The third outcome was the realization that, because of nuclear power, the differences between the US and USSR would be played out indirectly, on third-party stages, rather than direct confrontation. It was through this “globalized” conflict that international relations became truly international

12. The Cold War as the “Long Peace”

- (a) Just as general war was avoided in 19th century Europe, it has also been avoided since World War II. Gaddis suggests 5 factors:
 - i. Nuclear “deterrence”
 - ii. Bipolarity (equality of power)
 - iii. Hegemonic economic power of the US
 - iv. Pluralism/liberalism/transnationalism
 - v. Historical cycles (global wars every 100-150 years)

13. Key Developments in the post-Cold War Era

- (a) Changes in Russian foreign policy
- (b) Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and multilateral response unites former Cold War adversaries
- (c) Disintegration of former Yugoslavia into independent states; civil wars in Bosnia; NATO action in Serbia
- (d) September 11, 2001 and the global “War on Terror”