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Introduction: International Relations in a Globalized World

On September 11, 2001, why did nineteen men affiliated with the terrorist group al-Qaeda hijack four planes and attack the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., and attempt to crash the fourth one perhaps into the White House or the Capitol? Who were these men, and what were their motives? What did they hope to gain from this attack, and did they achieve their ends?

Almost ten years later, in May 2011, U.S. Navy special forces (SEALs) attacked a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, killing Osama bin Laden. Abbottabad is home to a large Pakistani military base and a military academy of the Pakistani army. Pakistan, a supposed ally of the United States in the fight against al-Qaeda, was not informed of the raid in advance. Furthermore, following the raid, serious questions emerged about what the Pakistani military did—or did not—know about who lived in that compound. If Pakistan was aware of bin Laden's whereabouts in the country, shouldn't they have notified the United States, an ally? How could bin Laden, a wanted criminal, have lived within a mile of Pakistani military forces for so long undetected? Should the United States have notified its alleged ally prior to the raid? And did President Obama make the correct decision in authorizing the raid and then bin Laden's burial at sea immediately after? Who else was involved in these decisions?

Here is another set of questions to ponder that might strike a little closer to home. How does Wal-Mart, one of the largest corporations in the world,

influence policy not only in the United States but in the countries in which it has factories? What is the trade-off between allowing you, the consumer, to purchase goods at a relatively low price if that possibly comes at the cost of exploiting the laborers who produce those goods? Or looking at this another way, is the labor really exploited when working for Wal-Mart in a factory in Bangladesh is the difference between a worker being able to put food on the table or starving? How can a company, which exists outside the bounds of government, have so much power?

These are all examples of questions that we ponder and study in the field of international relations.

WHY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IS IMPORTANT

International relations (IR) as a field of study deals with decisions that are made within a country that have implications for relationships outside the borders of that country. But it also asks a number of other important questions: Who makes those decisions? Why? How are they made? Who is affected by them? And what are the likely responses to those decisions? But what makes the study of international relations especially complex is the range of actors who could be involved with answering any and all aspects of those questions.

One of the really important questions to ask is: What does IR have to do with me personally? These seem like really big questions that are removed from most of us. But the reality is that they are not. Every time a country decides to go to war, it has implications for what happens not only to the people in that country but in other countries as well. For example, when President George W. Bush authorized the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 in retaliation for the September 11 attacks, he committed U.S. forces to fight. That meant ensuring that there were enough U.S. military forces available to fight that war. But it also meant supplying the military for that invasion, which resulted in more money being required for the Defense Department. Tax money spent for the military cannot be spent for other things, such as education; this is known as ''guns versus butter.'' So directly or indirectly, that decision affected you.

Other countries are also affected by terrorist attacks and therefore have a vested interest in confronting al-Qaeda. So it became necessary to round up allies to work with the United States in Afghanistan so that the United States did not have to bear that burden alone. That is the role of *alliances*, specifically bringing in other countries to work together in pursuit of common

goals. So other countries, and the people within them, were affected by the decision made by President Bush. And clearly, so were the people of Afghanistan.

Let's look at another case. The economic instability in Europe in 2011 and 2012 and the decision of the euro zone to bail out Greece and Spain might seem irrelevant to you. But in a world in which countries are interdependent, economic instability in Europe can affect the U.S. economic system. Entities in the United States own European debt just as China owns U.S. debt. The possibility that there could be a default on that debt in Europe could panic the people in the United States who own the debt, which in turn could lead to more economic uncertainty in this country. Similarly, there are some in the United States who are concerned about how much U.S. debt China owns. Does that mean that China "owns" parts of the United States? These questions are all a function of an interdependent globalized world that, in some ways, brings countries closer together. But it also illustrates the dangers of that close relationship, where uncertainty in one country or region (in the case of the euro zone) can have a marked impact on another.

The bottom line is that these are very difficult issues that generate complex questions, and if we are ever going to attempt to answer them, we need to find a way to simplify the reality so that we can focus on one aspect of the problem at a time. For example, in the case of September 11, if we want to know more about the hijackers, we can focus on the men who acted together as part of a terrorist group that sought to inflict damage on the United States. Or put into IR terms, we are looking at the impact that a nonstate actor (al-Qaeda) had on a major international actor (the United States) in order to influence U.S. policy in some way.

Or we can look at it another way that also would provide some explanation for the actions of 9/11. In this case we can start by identifying the nineteen men as individual actors who were part of a larger group and agreed to engage in a suicide mission. If we were to take that approach, our focus would be on the men as the actors and on what motivated them to act as they did. This would be a smaller or more microlevel response.

Or we can approach it in yet another way: We can ask why Osama bin Laden, as the leader of al-Qaeda, wanted to inflict damage on the United States, which he saw as the ideological enemy of all that he believed in. In that case, our focus would be on an individual leader who made decisions

that had an impact on many other people. This is an even smaller or more micro level—that of a single individual.

No one of these approaches is a right or wrong way to begin to understand the complexity of the 9/11 attacks. But if we take them apart, we can focus on different aspects of the attacks that allow us to begin to answer some of these questions. When we put them together, we can get a more complete picture of the various actors involved (bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the nineteen hijackers), what the motives of each of them were, the decisions that each made, and the outcome of their decisions.

Conversely, we can look at the same event from the perspective of the United States, the country that was attacked. We can focus on the options available to then president George W. Bush as the primary decision maker, and what he ultimately decided to do (the micro or *individual* level). We can concentrate on the Congress and the support that the Congress gave to President Bush when he asked for authorization to use military force (*government* level). We can focus on the role of the American public as it (as a whole) tried to understand what happened and why (level of *American society*). And we can look at the United States acting as if it were a single entity, which weighed options and then responded. That response committed the United States to a course of action. The focus on the United States as a whole is the largest and most macrolevel response, that of a country (or *nation-state*, in IR terms). Again, as in the above case, each of these approaches allows us to focus on some aspect of the U.S. response to the attack; taken together, they give us a more complete picture of who made the decisions, how they were made, and what they meant for the United States.

By breaking the attack into these smaller pieces, it is possible to answer questions about the event that might seem way too large to answer as a whole. In other words, we are breaking a complex event into its component pieces while holding the other parts aside, so we can arrive at some answers that will help us understand the event as a whole.

Similarly, we can look at different aspects of the events to determine the primary actor or actors who made the decisions. This can range from an individual (e.g., bin Laden or Bush) to the government (Congress and/or the executive branch in the United States), the public as a whole, or even the nation. This levels-of-analysis approach, then, allows us to pick the pieces apart in order to analyze one at a time.

And we can do this with virtually all of the examples given above, or almost any other example you can think of. For example, in the case of the attack on the bin Laden compound, we can focus on an individual—President Obama as the primary decision maker, and his national security team—to try to understand the processes that led to the decisions not only to attack but also to leave Pakistan uninformed. This will help us understand the inputs or factors that led to the decision that ultimately was made. We can focus on the nation-state level and the interaction between the United States and Pakistan, as a way to understand more about this alliance and its weaknesses. And we can focus on the perceptions of the American public as they reacted to the news of bin Laden's death.

Or in the Wal-Mart case noted above, we can study and try to understand the impact of this corporation from the point of view of the American consumer (individual or culture/society), the workers who produce the goods (individual), or the corporation itself and its relationship to the nations in which it is based (nation-state). Or we can look at the role that Wal-Mart plays in influencing or affecting the economies of the various countries in which it has a role (global or international level). Focusing on each of these levels of actors/analysis gives a different picture of the question; when taken together, they allow us to understand the whole.

We will describe the levels of analysis in more detail later. But this short overview should help you understand how we approach some of these big questions in IR—and how we can answer them!

Why Study IR?

Traditionally, international relations is the most macro level of all the subfields of political science, as the international system and the actors that make up that system are the basic units of analysis. Rather than looking at the specific political processes within nation-states (such as the study of American government) or across different political systems (which is comparative politics), IR looks at the ways in which decisions made within a country affect that country's relationships with other countries or nation-states. The focus remains on the interaction between countries or among countries and other actors in the international system, including nonstate actors such as multinational corporations (MNCs), international organizations (IOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It also looks at the impact of these macrolevel decisions on the various actors who exist within the nation-state

and how they, in turn, affect these major decisions. Hence, IR looks at who makes the decisions (from the role of the government to the individual decision maker) and how those decisions then affect the people, society, culture, or even individuals within the nation-state or other nation-states. In short, IR looks at "big picture" questions.

We live in a world today in which nation-states are not only interrelated and interdependent, but in which nonstate actors have also emerged as major players, as noted in the example above. Clearly, terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda have affected the behavior of states, not only as a response to actions that al-Qaeda actually has perpetrated, but in anticipation of what the group *might* do. If you have gotten on a plane recently and at the airport had to take your shoes off for security and put your resealable plastic bag with shampoo and toothpaste in it through the X-ray machine, you have seen the increased security designed to prevent a terrorist action. In other words, policy is made not just based on what did happen but on what *might* happen.

The presence of nonstate actors has tossed on their head many of the questions that have guided traditional IR. Nowhere is this seen more dramatically than in the case of al-Qaeda, a terrorist group that crosses a number of state borders, is clearly tied to an ideology and culture, has taken actions against a number of nation-states, and has in turn evoked a response from those nation-states. Yet whom are these countries fighting? Is it possible to "declare war," traditionally the purview of the nation-state, on a nonstate actor? If so, doesn't that require violating the sanctity of a nation-state in order to attack a group that exists within its borders?

In addition to terrorist groups, other nonstate actors play a critical role in affecting or influencing the decisions made by various actors in the international system. Multinational corporations (MNCs) have become major players in the international system, and because they straddle the boundaries of many countries, they have some influence on them as well as on the international system as a whole. Again, going back to the example used above, where and how does the levels-of-analysis approach account for the role of an MNC, such as Wal-Mart? Understanding this, and the impact that a major MNC like Wal-Mart has on the policies of various countries with which it does or has business, will help us see more clearly the impact of globalization.

A series of Pulitzer Prize–winning articles published in the *Los Angeles Times* in November 2003 clearly describes the impact that MNCs such as Wal-Mart can have on a nation-state, society, culture, and even individuals

as consumers—but also on the people who produce the goods that Wal-Mart sells.[1] Rather than taking a position or making a judgment, articles such as these point out the power that an MNC can have and the dangers that come with corporations that seem to exist outside the boundaries of traditional and established international law. The main point is that in a world in which economic power equals political power, corporations like Wal-Mart, Exxon Mobil, Shell Oil, and Bank of America all have power. Yet in many ways, they exist outside the reach of any single nation-state, and it can be difficult to hold them accountable. Questions and issues surrounding the role of MNCs, which are an integral part of international relations today, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

International organizations are also important actors. In addition to the United Nations, regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) take on power internationally that is far greater than the power that any single member country would wield. But the integration and desire to create a single foreign, defense, and/or monetary policy for the group that comes with organizations such as the EU also brings with it a challenge to the very notion of sovereignty that is central to the essence of any nation-state. The recent crisis in the euro zone also illustrates clearly the dangers that instability in one country could easily spread to others, especially when a single policy affects all of them.

Understanding how to reconcile the apparently contradictory conflicts of integration and sovereignty is another aspect of international relations. But it is even more important to understand the role that international organizations in general play in a globalized world. We will discuss all these concepts in more detail later in this book.

Many of these examples point out one of the flaws of the traditional levels-of-analysis approach to international relations. Specifically, the field of international relations is premised on the idea that the nation-state is the primary actor, meaning that it is state-centered or *state-centric*. But the contemporary international system has seen the emergence of a host of nonstate actors, all of which play a role in what happens in international relations. Yet they exist outside the traditional levels of analysis that guide most international relations theory. Therefore, one of the dilemmas facing those of us who study IR is how to account for those nonstate actors; more specifically, what framework can we use that incorporates them as major players in the international

system? Doing so will allow us to answer an expanded range of questions about what is going on in the world today.

Just as there has been a growth of nonstate actors that have called into question some of the basic approaches to IR, the newer theoretical frameworks seek to account for the role of these actors and the changing nature of the international system. For example, *constructivists* argue for the need to take variables such as identity and other socially constructed realities into account in order to better explain the decisions made in the contemporary international system. *Feminist IR theorists* also discount the centrality of the traditional patriarchal/hierarchal assumptions about decision making in order to focus on the role of women and other actors who not only play a role in the decisions that are made (albeit often an indirect one), but without whose presence the decisions would not be implemented successfully. Could a country go to war to protect the "mother country" without the symbolism of women? In thinking about broad IR decisions, feminist writers in the field also tell us about the need to study those within the country who are most affected by the decisions that are made. Women and children are the ones most removed from foreign policy decision making, and yet they are often directly affected by the results of those decisions.

These are all prominent and real questions that have been prompted by recent events, and yet, technically, international relations has no set framework for responding to these questions. Or when it does, the framework often is limited and inadequate. This does not in any way suggest that the traditional approaches can or should be rejected. Rather, starting with and trying to understand the present and the complexity of the world as it currently exists will give you some relevant and current examples to grapple with as you try to define a framework appropriate for dealing with these questions.

While the levels-of-analysis framework provides the guiding structure for this short volume, grappling with the need for the emergence of a new theoretical framework or even a paradigm shift that addresses the role of nonstate actors and a globalized world in which nation-states and nonstate actors interact regularly is not a trivial exercise. Just as IR scholar and realist theorist Hans Morgenthau[2] proposed in 1948 to recast our understanding of international relations so that it is focused on power, so too, we now need to rethink the larger international system and broaden our understanding of how to address nonstate actors and the role that they play in a globalized world.

Doing so will illustrate the importance of having a theoretical framework that is appropriate for the realities of the twenty-first century.

IR as a Field of Study

The main point made thus far is that by simplifying an otherwise complex situation, we can start finding answers to our often complex questions. That is why the study of international relations is such an important part of understanding our world today. It provides a theoretical framework that allows us to break the component pieces apart, identify the relevant actors, understand their approaches, and draw conclusions that help us answer these questions. And it also helps us understand what assumptions we need to make about the behavior of individuals/groups/nations in order to answer those questions.

As you will see, there are advantages to the theoretical approaches outlined in the field of IR, but also disadvantages. The field itself emerged after World War I, when sovereign nation-states eclipsed monarchies and empires as the primary actors.[3] Thus, the field tends to be very state-centric, assuming that the traditional nation-state is—and will be—the primary actor. But as the examples of al-Qaeda and Wal-Mart show, nonstate actors have emerged as major players in the international system in the twentieth and certainly the twenty-first century. To some extent, the emergence of nonstate actors has changed the field. The traditional model has little room for other than nation-states, the societies that make up those states, and the people and governments who lead them. Does that mean that we need to throw out the old models? Absolutely not! They can still help guide our approaches both to asking questions and answering them. But now we need to do so with an awareness of the limitations of those same theoretical approaches and models.

Understanding international relations is an important part of an undergraduate student's education, whether as a staple of a political science program, an introductory course in an international relations/international studies track, a class on globalization, or simply to better understand the world in which he or she lives. While international relations theory still relies heavily on the basic theoretical paradigms (realism, liberalism, and constructivism, for example, to be explored in more detail in the next chapter), there has been a proliferation of other theoretical approaches. These all have some merit, although they might appear to be bit esoteric to someone who is trying to understand basic questions, such as why there is so much war and conflict,

or why there is a global economic crisis. In fact, one of the hardest parts of studying international relations is drawing the distinction between learning the way things are supposed to operate in theory and using that theory to understand how they actually do operate. For example, why do countries behave as they do? Why do some societies rise up against a leader, as was the case in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt early in 2011, and why are others quiet, even in the face of tyranny? Why did a leader make the decision that he or she did, and who helped the leader make that decision? Thus, the real dilemma for the student trying to understand international relations comes in trying to apply all that theory to real-world questions.

In order to be able to do this—that is, to apply the theory to an understanding of real-world issues or problems—it is necessary to have not only a basic grounding in the theory but also an approach that will help guide us through the complexity of the real world. That is what this book will help define.

The Levels-of-Analysis Framework

Levels of analysis will become the overarching framework as we begin to understand international relations. Levels of analysis "presumes that decisions are made at different and distinct levels, that is, from a fairly micro-level, such as the role of an individual decision maker (who is usually male), to society and culture, and then becoming more macro-level, moving to the nation and finally the international system."[4] Another underlying assumption is that each level exists fairly independently, with little interaction between or across levels.[5] However, the reality belies that assumption. Events that take place at one given level of analysis have the potential to impact other levels. For example, a president or prime minister can move a nation to war, which in turn has an impact on the society and the individuals within it. And while the levels of analysis can provide an important guiding framework, the limitations of the approach must also be noted; we have alluded to them already and will discuss them in more detail in the next chapter.

Briefly, though, because of its emphasis on the nation-state, the framework does not really have a place for nonstate actors or even supranational organizations such as the United Nations. Rather, it assumes that all actors within the international system are nation-states, with a defined leader/decision maker who heads a government, and that decisions are tied to the values and goals of the culture and the society. Collectively, all of these make up the

nation-state. As seen above, the Wal-Mart and al-Qaeda examples point out quickly the flaws in this approach. Even with its limitations, though, levels of analysis provides a clean, unifying model for approaching international relations and is a useful tool—as long as we remain clear about its weaknesses.

The levels-of-analysis framework allows us to ask who or what we will be focusing on as we try to get answers to some of our questions. In many ways, the approach is somewhat circular. The questions we ask will determine the appropriate level of analysis that will be our focal point. But it does allow us to focus on one level at a time while holding the others constant, thereby allowing us to simplify the approach we are taking.

Broad Theoretical Perspectives

From a theoretical perspective, *realism* (both classical and neostructural/structural) is the bread and butter of basic IR theory. It puts the state firmly at the center of our analysis, and it then puts states' actions into terms of power and balance of power. This is fairly easy to understand intuitively, and there are numerous examples of applications of the theory. Furthermore, this approach is grounded in history. But again, it is very state-centered, which raises questions when we try to apply it to the world today.

Since the end of the Cold War especially, a plethora of new theoretical approaches have either emerged or gained prominence in order to explain what is and what has been taking place in the international system. *Liberalism* and *constructivism* are two such approaches, both of which focus on different levels of analysis in order to better describe and explain the behavior of the international system. Where constructivist theorists focus on social structures both within and outside the states and the impact that these have on states' behaviors, liberal theorists make other assumptions about what drives a state's behavior that are more normative (or what "should be") in approach. Note that in this case, *liberal* does not refer to ideological perspective (versus *conservative*) but to a particular theoretical approach.

Growing from the desire to integrate women—their roles in the international system and the impact on women of political decisions made at various levels—another approach was born; feminist international relations theory not only provides a critique of the existing theoretical approaches but also offers an alternative that looks at international relations through gender-sensitive lenses.[6] As you will see, feminist theory is featured prominently

throughout this book. I am not trying to proselytize; rather, my own research has highlighted the importance of looking at IR, and some of the basic questions in the field, with gender-sensitive lenses in order to get at more complete answers to the questions. In fact, feminist IR theorists argue that unless you look at all the actors who are involved with or are affected by a decision, it is impossible to get the complete picture. This is a very different way to approach the study of international relations. While I try not to privilege one theoretical approach over another, I do believe that the feminist perspective is valuable for posing different questions and positing answers regarding international relations and therefore deserves to be included in our study of IR theories.

It is important to note that, although the theories included here are often depicted as competing with one another to offer the "best" explanation of why countries behave as they do, an alternative model would be to look at them as offering complementary explanations depending on the questions asked and the level of focus. Thus, it is not necessary to assume one must take a particular theory as the single guiding framework. Rather, it is possible and sometimes beneficial to move between and among theories, depending on the question or focus of the inquiry.

As we continue our discussion of IR theories, it is also important to remember that in this field, a theory cannot be tested as it is in the sciences. We cannot hold one part of the world constant while we test another, as we would do in a laboratory. Rather, in the field of IR our laboratory is the world, and we do our best to approximate the variables so that we can describe, explain, and predict. Some political scientists even in IR use mathematical models as a way to improve our explanatory power. But the main point is that the world we deal with is complex and full of uncertainties, and our job is to try to describe and explain events that occurred and why. Theory can help us do that.

An example can best illustrate what is meant by all of this. The first Persian Gulf War in 1991 was an example of a coalition of the willing, which involved a group of countries coming together to use military force against Saddam Hussein. Iraq had invaded Kuwait, an ally of the United States, and the first President Bush (George H. W. Bush) worked with the United Nations and a group of countries to apply political pressure, and later the use of military force, to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. From a *realist* perspective, this is an example of a group of countries uniting to use their

collective power (military and political) to counter the actions of a single state, Iraq. From that perspective, power triumphed and helps us explain the event.

But this same case can be examined from other theoretical perspectives. For example, *liberal* theorists might argue that this is a case of countries working together to achieve a common goal. They worked first within the framework of the United Nations to try to bring about a peaceful settlement of the issue through negotiation. When that failed, countries cooperated to achieve a particular end, which was to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. From that theoretical point of view, the important thing to consider is the idea of cooperation, rather than conflict or power as we saw in the realist approach. Here the emphasis is on how countries could and did work together to achieve a common goal, rather than the assertion of military power.

The *constructivists* would focus more on the individual leaders, as well as the social and cultural constructs of the states and societies involved. So a constructivist might ask what Saddam Hussein wanted to accomplish given his role, the countries with which he interacted, and the political structure of Iraq—and then, given all that, try to understand the responses of the coalition partners. Or from the other side, a constructivist might ask how President Bush's perceptions helped him determine what responses to take in this case. The constructivists do not ignore the central role of the state but rather put the state and the leaders into the broader social and political constructs that led to the particular processes and decisions that we are studying.

Each of these theoretical examples also relies on a different set of assumptions and focuses on a different level of analysis. When viewed separately, they will allow us to explain some portion of the event in great detail; taken together, they can give us a more complete picture of the entire event.

Clearly, it is important that students of IR understand the role of theory and how theory and the basic paradigms that exist in the field guide our understanding of international relations. Similarly, it is important to understand circumstances under which the existing theories don't explain events adequately, let alone predict what might happen in the future. The role of the major theories will be woven throughout each of the chapters in this book and will provide an important unifying theme throughout the narrative. Each of the major theories offers some explanation as to why countries behave as they do. In addition, all rely heavily on the notion of levels of analysis to help frame the approach.

This concise text takes as its starting point a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that are the foundation of current international relations. The book draws on and explicates the traditional international relations theories, but it also makes a place for understanding the areas that lie outside of or cannot be explained by those approaches. Although levels of analysis will be the primary unifying force, one of the strengths of the book is addressing the weakness of this approach in understanding the contemporary international system—that is, a globalized world. Integrated throughout the text are applications of the theories, so that students like you can understand that learning the theories will actually help you better understand the "real world." That in turn will help you make informed decisions about issues pertaining to current international events.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

In this chapter, we begin with a very broad overview of what studying international relations means in a world that is globalized. In contrast to the world of nation-states, upon which most of IR was premised, globalization offers challenges that come with understanding a world in which those states and even nonstate actors are interconnected. But before we can begin to address globalization, we need to define the fundamental actor in the international system: the nation-state. (This idea will be developed in even more detail in chapter 3, where the focus is on the nation-state level of analysis.)

The Concept of the Nation-State

This concept is two-pronged: the *nation,* which is a group of people with similar background, culture, ethnicity, and language, who share common values; and the *state*, which is an entity with a defined border under the rule of a government that is accepted by the people. The concept of the nation-state originated in Europe and can be traced to the Treaty of Westphalia (or Peace of Westphalia), which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648.[7] Along with the emergence of the nation-state, the Treaty of Westphalia also specified a governmental order *within* each of the new states, as well as the relationship among them. Paramount among the concepts that emerged is that of *sovereignty*, which means that within a given territory, the government is the single legitimate authority and no external power has the right to intervene in actions that take place within national borders. Within the past few

decades, since the Cold War ended, some governments seem to have abrogated their right to protect their own peoples—for example, either committing or permitting acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing to take place. These actions have called into question the concept of sovereignty, as other countries' governments have debated whether it is appropriate to intervene to protect basic human rights even if it means violating a state's sovereignty. We are going to explore these concepts in more detail in a later chapter, but until then, it is important to get the fundamentals.

Forces of Integration, Disintegration, and Self-Determination

Until the end of the Cold War, which fostered the era of globalization,[8] most of international relations was based on and/or tied to relationships between and among nation-states and the assumption that each state is a sovereign entity. However, that changed after 1991, when the prevailing patterns of international relations shifted. No longer were relations between and among countries tied to the United States and the Soviet Union—"West" versus "East." In fact, without the dynamics of the two superpowers, relations between and among countries became far more fluid. Rather than a world of discrete nation-states competing with one another for power, which was the old order, the globalized world that we see today is characterized by the integration of nation-states into larger regional blocs, such as the European Union (EU), that are developing common policies not only on economic issues but increasingly on issues of foreign policy and security. While this does not suggest that the era of sovereign nation-states is over, it does suggest that countries believe that they can benefit from cooperating rather than competing with one another. In terms of IR theory, this might suggest acknowledging the primacy of liberal thought at the expense of realism.

Similarly, while some countries have been working together to pursue common policies, others have been dividing into component pieces, as the various "nations" within the states seek self-determination—the desire to be recognized as a nation and to be able to govern themselves. Thus, we see the peaceful breakup of Czechoslovakia into two component pieces (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) and the bloodier disintegration of Yugoslavia into six republics, each of which has become an independent country. In contrast, the Palestinians are a stateless people, who seek to create their own state with defined borders and a government that is sovereign. The Kurds, a distinct ethnic group who possess their own language, traditions, and lifestyle and

account for substantial communities in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, seek to create a country of "Kurdistan" that will guarantee them their sovereignty free from the strictures of another state. More recently, we have seen the country of Sudan divided into two parts, Sudan and South Sudan, following a referendum after a peace treaty ended a decades-long civil war. The implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the creation of fifteen countries, all of which had been "constituent republics" of the larger group. (See map 1.1.) While the initial breakup was relatively peaceful, conflicts remain, leading to bloody wars and terrorist attacks regarding the status of Chechnya and subsequently the status of other areas of the Caucasus. Thus, as recent history has shown, it is not that easy to create a new nation-state. In other words, being a nation does not necessarily mean that there is justification for a state or that the outside world will recognize that state.

Many would argue that none of these changes—forces of integration and disintegration, desire for self-determination, and so on—would have been possible were it not for the end of the Cold War. In fact, the Cold War, which dominated international relations from the end of World War II until the unification of Germany (1990) and the breakup of the Soviet Union (1991), can be seen as critical to providing a stabilizing framework for nations' interactions. The ongoing threat of nuclear war and the fears that came with it helped keep countries in check. Many governments were afraid to appear too aggressive out of concern that if they did so, either the United States or the Soviet Union would intervene, which would inevitably provoke a military response by the other country. In order to avoid any direct military confrontation, the United States and the Soviet Union interacted through what became known as proxy wars, where battles were fought indirectly through their allies. This meant that the United States would sometimes take the side of repressive regimes, rather than allowing a communist government (which would appear to be loyal to the Soviet Union) to take control of a country. For example, when the left-leaning Sandinista government took control of Nicaragua in 1984, deposing the U.S.-backed Somoza family, hostility toward the United States caused the new government to turn to the Soviet Union and Cuba for support. This set the stage for a U.S.-backed counterrevolution, with the United States arming the opposition forces, or the Contras. Thus, although the United States and the Soviet Union did not directly confront one another, they were involved through their respective allies.

MAP 1.1
The USSR in 1991

During the Cold War, it was also important that the respective allies remain firmly within the Eastern or Western bloc. For example, when the government of Czechoslovakia, one of the Eastern bloc countries, got out of hand in 1968, the Soviet Union came in and forcibly suppressed the nascent rebellion. The Soviet Union did not want any dissension or rebellion that could upset the delicate balance of power that existed. What happened in 1968 stands in contrast to what happened in 1993, following the end of the Soviet Union, when Czechoslovakia peacefully split.

This introductory overview is designed to stress a few main points as we begin the study of IR: that the nation-state has always been seen as the fundamental actor in international relations; that the concept of nation-state has a number of component parts, many of which can now be questioned; that the nature of the international system is and has been changing, and no doubt will continue to; and that the old world of "balance of power," whether as it existed traditionally or as seen through the Cold War, has now ended and has been replaced by a globalized world in which nonstate actors (actors other than the traditional nation-states) are playing an increasingly major role.

What does all this mean for understanding international relations? In order to understand the changes to the international system, it will be important to understand the fundamental building blocks: the nation-state, the concept of sovereignty, and the notion of power, to name but a few. But it also means that we really need to step back and look at the world today, and at what it means to be living in a world that is globalized. The very nature of globalization, with the interconnections among countries that help define the concept, has changed the nature and understanding of international relations.

GLOBALIZATION

We are beginning our study of international relations by asking a number of very macrolevel questions, which means that we are looking at the questions that affect the international system as a whole. In order to do this, we need to know what assumptions we are making and to define some basic terms and concepts. In this section, we will focus on issues of political stability and economic equality, what they mean, and why they are important when we consider the international system.

We are going to start with the international system as it exists today. To look at the international system in the twenty-first century is to look at a world that is interdependent—that is, what happens in one state directly affects what happens in others. Why is this the case and when and why did this happen?

What Is Globalization?

We are going to begin by asking a very basic and important question: What do we mean by *globalization*? This is a term that we hear all the time, and it is one that can generate a great many negative feelings. For example, recent meetings of the Group of Seven (now Eight) industrialized countries, and meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have been disrupted by protestors. These protestors wanted to point out what they saw as inequities in the global economic system and especially the role of those major economic powers that are seen as the ones who make the rules. But can protests really change what has become a global reality? Can anyone stop or reverse the process of globalization? A more realistic set of questions might be: What do we mean by the current international economic system? How did it get here? And can it change?

Globalization as Historical Phenomenon

In order to answer these questions, we need to look at the concept of globalization not as a current phenomenon but as a historical one. For example, Thomas Friedman, columnist for the *New York Times*, describes three periods of globalization. In his estimation, the first lasted from 1492 (the voyage of Columbus) until around 1800. According to him, this phase of globalization "shrank the world from a size large to a size medium. . . . [It] was about countries and muscles." In his estimation,

> the key agent of change, the dynamic force driving the process of global integration, was how much brawn—how much muscle, how much horsepower, wind power, or, later, steam power—your country had and how creatively you could deploy it. In this era, countries and governments (often inspired by religion or imperialism or a combination of both) led the way in breaking down walls and knitting the world together, driving global integration.

Again, according to Friedman, the primary questions asked during this phase were "Where does my country fit into global competition and opportunities? How can I go global and collaborate with others through my country?"[9]

Friedman looks at the second era of globalization as lasting from around 1800 to 2000, interrupted by major events such as the two World Wars and the Great Depression, during which the world shrank still further. In this era of globalization, "the key agent of change, the dynamic force driving global integration, was multinational companies. These multinationals went global for markets and labor, spearheaded first by the expansion of the Dutch and English joint-stock companies and the Industrial Revolution."[10] Friedman also notes that it was during this period that we really see the birth of a global economy. What he is also telling us is that the international system changed in nature to include countries and companies working in collaboration. With this, we start seeing the impact of nonstate actors. All this was made possible by changes in technology that helped encourage more rapid movement of goods and information, as well as increasing the means of production.

He then identifies what he calls the third era of globalization, which he sees as beginning in 2000, and he says it

> is shrinking the world from a size small to a size tiny and flattening the playing field at the same time. . . . And while the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0—the force that gives it its unique character—is the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally. (emphasis added)[11]

Hence, Friedman tells us that the world/international system in general and the economic system in particular is changing, that it is getting smaller, that individuals and multinational corporations now make more of a difference, and that all this has happened relatively recently.

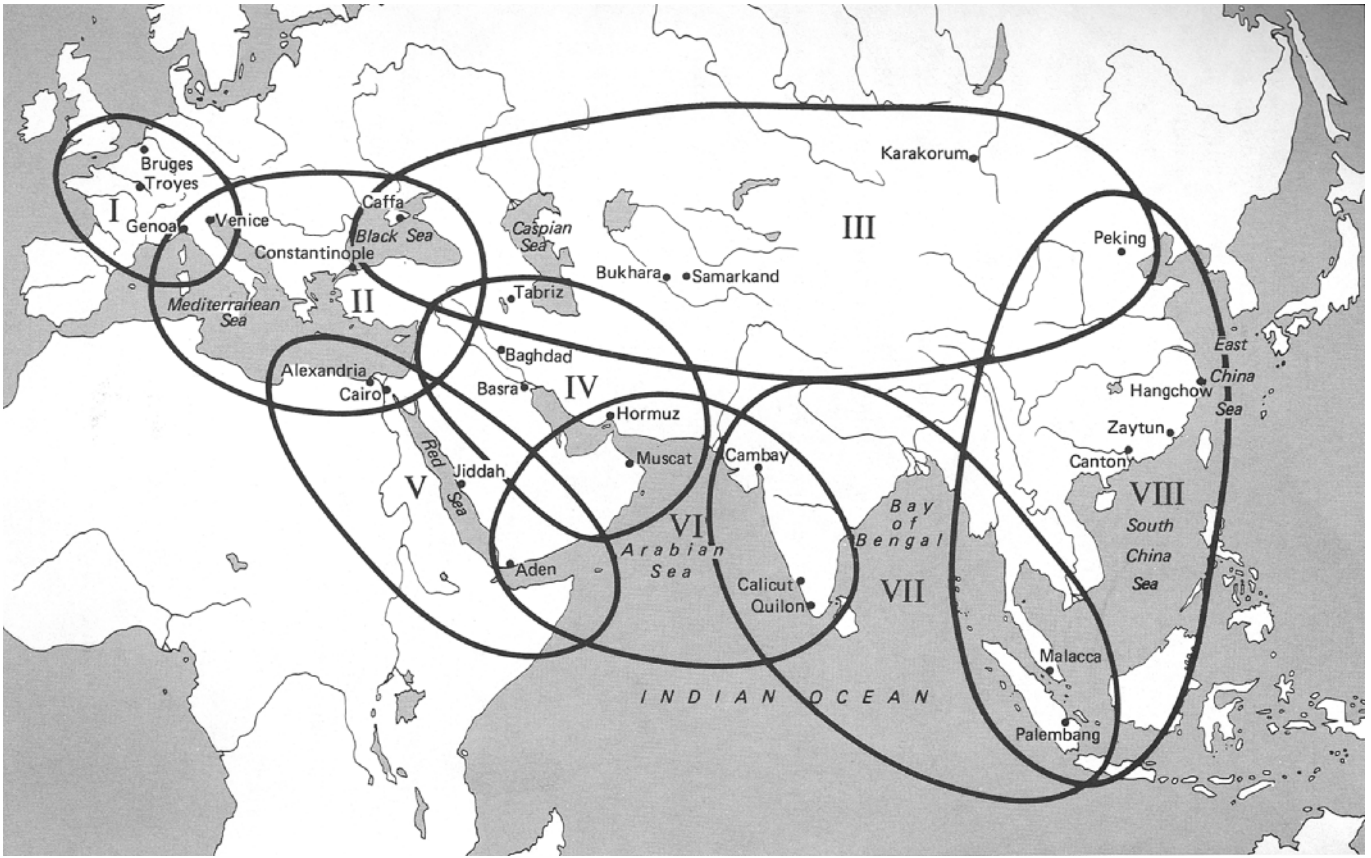
Historian Robert Marks, in his book *Origins of the Modern World*, similarly identifies a number of cycles of globalization that exist in historical context. However, he looks at the first globalization as part of a system of trade among the then nations, or more accurately, empires, going back to the 1200s. He notes the three primary trade routes that linked the major subsystems that existed at that time: East Asia, which linked China and parts of Southeast Asia to India; the Middle East–Mongolian subsystem, which linked Eurasia from the eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia and India; and the European subsystem, which linked Europe to the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. According to Marks, these subsystems "overlapped, with North and

West Africa connected with the European and Middle East subsystems, and East Africa with the Indian Ocean subsystem."[12] Again, what is important about this is that it suggests that there was a very well-developed trade system that linked most of Africa, Europe, and Asia as far back as the thirteenth century. And according to Marks, one of the important things to note when looking at and trying to understand the development of the international system from the perspective of globalization is that, like political scientists, "until quite recently, historians have practiced their craft taking current nation-states as their unit of analysis, rather than adopting a more global approach."[13] Thus, he argues, the international system actually pre-dates modern nation-states, and we need to look at and understand components of the international system and globalization from this very broad historical perspective.

He also takes this approach out of the realm of the realist thinkers, and he claims that the thirteenth-century world system "functioned without a central controlling or dominating force. To those who conceive of the modern world system as growing under the domination of a single state or group of states, the idea that a system could work without a controlling center is somewhat novel." He looks at a world that is *polycentric*—that is, "it contained several regional systems, each with its own densely populated and wealthy 'core,' surrounded by a periphery that provided agricultural and industrial raw materials to the core, and most of which were loosely connected to one another through trade networks." (See map 1.2.) And in his estimation, the world retained this polycentric character until around 1800, with the expansion of European colonization.[14]

If we look at the current international system, Marks traces its origins to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with the solidification of the modern concept of the nation-state system. He claims that the advent of *nationalism*, or the desire for national peoples to have a state, was congruent with the growth of industrialization, which allowed states to grow and expand their territory. But he also notes that along with this expansion came a growing gap between the richest and the poorer nations within the international system. *In theory, globalization and the increased trade that came with it should help diminish this gap or division between countries. In reality, however, this has not been the case.*

In theory, then, the modern concept of globalization is tied to the notion that nation-states are interdependent and that progress in one will help others. Here we see the idea of the "rising tide lifting all boats," to use a cliché.



MAP 1.2
The Eight Circuits of the Thirteenth-Century World System

But Marks and others warn us that that has not been the case, and that the current round of globalization actually exacerbated the differences between and among nations, rather than closing them. He ties much of that to the concept of development, which should equal industrial growth. So as long as a country remained tied to traditional agriculture or resisted industrialization, as was the case with many countries in Africa or even China and India until relatively recently, they would continue to fall at the "poor" end of the international economic system.[15]

But it is also important to remember that many of these countries in Africa and Asia had been colonies of the major European powers. Even after they gained their independence, they remained tied to the colonial powers or were dependent on them for many reasons. This reinforced the patterns of trade tied to export of raw materials from the colony to the mother country, and the import of manufactured goods from the colonial power to the colony. This, in turn, led to the emergence of the so-called dependency theory, which posited that the poorer countries of the developing world (also known as the third world) would remain tied to and dependent upon the major developed countries and therefore could not develop or prosper on their own.[16]

Hence one of the goals of the movement toward development among many of these countries in Africa and Asia was to break that cycle of dependency. But that cycle is not easy to break, and it comes at a cost. Often (and we see this with China and India) the push toward development and industrialization comes at the expense of the environment, as countries see this as a necessary trade-off. These are often countries that tend to have agriculture-based economies, and even as they do move forward and develop, the majority of the population still lives on the land and depends upon it for food and sustenance. Peasant or rural economies depend upon a relatively large population—more children are needed to work the land—and so population growth continues without the economic base to sustain it, thereby perpetuating the pattern. Furthermore, the developed countries often had a vested interest in keeping the economic growth of the developing countries in check, lest it upset the entire and often delicate economic balance.

But what we are also seeing in a globalized world is how the impact of natural resources, such as oil, uranium, diamonds, or other precious substances, can alter that balance. For example, with the growing importance of and need for oil, some of the lesser developed countries started to become more prominent, both politically and economically. Thus, otherwise poor

countries, such as Venezuela and Nigeria, have been able to exert relative power in the international system because of their possession of oil. This too has altered the balance of power within the international system and changed the perspective of "developed" and "developing."

When we look at the international system today, we see the emergence of a global free market that has allowed for the growth and prominence of countries like China, India, and Brazil, as well as the increasing role of countries such as Nigeria, Venezuela, and some of the countries of the Middle East, such as Iran. No one country can control the international economic system, any more than it can now control the international political system. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent emergence of more states and also more conflict has shown us that. While this also suggests that the theory is correct and that more countries are becoming economically strong, what the theories underlying globalization do not account for is the unequal distribution of wealth *within* any of those countries. So while some people within countries such as India or Nigeria are growing wealthy, others remain in a cycle of poverty that is virtually impossible to break. It is that aspect of globalization that has elicited protests.

As might be expected, those who take a more feminist approach to international relations have a different take on globalization and what it means. According to political scientist J. Ann Tickner,

> feminists call our attention to the fact that while women's positions vary according to race, class, and geographical location, women are disproportionately situated at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale in all societies; drawing on gender analysis, they point to the devaluation of women's work and the dichotomy between productive and reproductive labor as explanations of the relatively disadvantaged position of women and the growing feminization of poverty. . . . Globalization involves more than economic forces; it has also led to the spread of Western-centered definitions of human rights and democracy. Feminist scholars are questioning whether these definitions are gender biased.[17]

Thus, feminist theorists encourage us to explore all aspects of questions in IR, even areas that we might assume to be beneficial to all, such as human rights and democracy. For example, in her work, Tickner asks whether democracies really are friendly toward women, as feminists see the traditionally Western model of democracy and nation-states tied to a system that is patriarchal and traditional, which favored and privileged men's interests over

women's. But she makes another important point that "since women have traditionally had less access to formal political institutions, the focus on state institutions by scholars of democratization may miss ways in which women are participating in politics—outside formal political channels at the grassroots level."[18] In other words, Tickner directs us to look at the changes that have taken place at the level of the international system as a whole to see the impact they have had on women in general, and she admonishes us to look *within* the state to determine whether the spread of values such as democracy or even human rights has worked against women or has minimized the role that they play as actors in the international system.

The work of Friedman, Marks, and Tickner, among others, all suggest that the advent of globalization forces us to look at the international system in a new and different way. That means moving beyond the traditional theories and levels of analysis, as well as looking at the role played by primary actors other than the nation-state.

WHAT DOES GLOBALIZATION MEAN FOR THE STUDY OF IR?

In beginning our study of international relations by looking at globalization and the changes it has brought to the international system, we are moving beyond the traditional paradigms and approaches to the study of the field. What we are suggesting here is that in order to really understand international relations in the twenty-first century, we need to begin by understanding what the international system looks like *today*, if we are to understand all its component parts and how they have changed. That does not mean that we can ignore the traditional framework upon which the study of international relations is based. Quite the contrary. The theories, actors, and framework that have guided the study of international relations since it emerged as a discipline remain the building blocks for understanding the international system. Only by understanding those as our starting points can the contrasts with the world today really have meaning.

However, understanding IR in a globalized world also means going beyond the traditional state-centered approach that the field has often had. We need to be able to see the limits of that approach, and to expand our understanding and definitions in order to incorporate the roles of nonstate actors. But it is also important to remember that it is not possible to critique the theoretical perspectives or to offer new ones unless or until we have a good solid grounding in the fundamentals. Through the remainder of this book,

our goal will be to provide those fundamentals so that we can, in turn, understand the weaknesses and look for alternative explanations and approaches.

With that introduction, we will now turn to the theories and framework that we will use to approach the field of international relations. After we have looked at these—theories, actors, and framework—we will return to our starting point of globalization and macrolevel questions in order to pull all the pieces together.

FURTHER READINGS

These additional readings are worth exploring and elaborate on some of the points raised in this chapter. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but only illustrative.

Nancy Cleeland et al. "The Wal-Mart Effect." *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 24, and 25, 2003 (available online).

J. David Singer. "The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations." *World Politics* 14, no. 1 (October 1961): 77–92.

J. Ann Tickner. "You Just Don't Understand." *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (December 1997): 612.

"Treaty of Westphalia," at http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/westphal.htm.

NOTES

1. See Nancy Cleeland et al., "The Wal-Mart Effect," *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 24, and 25, 2003.

2. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, originally published in 1948. There are many more recent and abridged editions that have come out since that time.

3. As you will see later, the concept of the sovereign nation-state actually grew from the Treaty of Westphalia (also known as the Peace of Westphalia), which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648. But it was after World War I that the map of Europe as we generally know it now was redrawn, with the emergence of new sovereign states. That process continued after World War II, as many then colonies were granted independence.

4. Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams, *Women, the State, and War: A Comparative Perspective on Citizenship and Nationalism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 12–13.

5. J. David Singer, "The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, no. 1 (October 1961): 77–92.

6. J. Ann Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (December 1997): 612.

7. "Treaty of Westphalia," at http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/westphal.htm.

8. Some have argued that globalization is not a new concept, but that it actually dates back to the age of exploration in the fifteenth century or even earlier, a point that will be explored later in this chapter. See, for example, Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005), and Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

9. Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 9.

10. Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 9.

11. Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 10.

12. Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, 33.

13. Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, 33.

14. Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, 35.

15. See Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, especially "Introduction: The Rise of the West" and chapter 6, "The Great Departure," for more development of this idea.

16. For a concise definition of dependency theory, see J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 68. See also Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*.

17. Tickner, *Gendering World Politics*, 7.

18. Tickner, *Gendering World Politics*, 7.