





IS 101

Global Challenges of the 21st Century: An Introduction to International
Studies

⋮	Please note that you were not required to have done any reading for today. These sources are just to give you an idea of what sources I have used to compile my introductory lecture.	✓	⋮
⋮	Topics: 'problems without passports', global governance, global citizenship, and the 'international community'	✓	⋮
⋮	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carvalho, Benjamin de, Leira, Halvard and Hobson, John M. "The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths that Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919", Millenium: Journal of International Studies, No, 39, Vol. 3 (2011): pp. 735-758. 	✓	⋮
⋮	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kofi Annan, "Problems without Passports", Foreign Policy, No. 132, 2002, pp. 30-31.  	✓	⋮
⋮	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shawn Smallman & Kimberly Brown, "History", chapter 2 in Introduction to International and Global Affairs, 2nd edition, (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), pp. 11-32. (Note: if you search for this book in the SFU library catalogue, be sure to click on the third edition, published in 2015.)  	✓	⋮
⋮	 National identities in the world today are based on an idea or concept and are not literal, actually existing facts 	✓	⋮
⋮	Tutorial plan: Introductions. Questions you will be asked in addition to introductions (a) what sources of information have you used to get information about international affairs? (b) Do you consider yourself to be "international"? Explain. (c) Can you relate the answers that you just heard your peers discuss in (a) and (b) to the concept of "mythical origins" discussed in the lecture?	✓	⋮

- **Tutorial discussion (in-class discussion for today)**

Introductions. Questions you will be asked in addition to introducing yourselves

(a) Who is the figure you chose? Do you agree with the position Forbes gave them? Justify your answer.

(b) What sources of information have you used to understand international affairs? (your answers can range from YouTube and TikTok to specific newspapers).

(c) If I was to have asked you to introduce yourself beginning with when your great grandfather was born would that have been a weird question? Why?

Main idea 1: Where we begin a story, determines what we think of the story.

For instance, if I was to begin with talking about the first organisms on earth, you would wonder if you have accidentally walked into a class on evolution.

Your brain was primed for the story to begin elsewhere. What primed your brain to do this? Our brains are constantly filtering out information depending on what we think is relevant or irrelevant.



The origins of life on Earth

So let us move to an example that is relevant.

Where should we begin the story of International Studies?

Should we look at when the first countries, or “states” came into existence?

How would we know how far back to go?

Scholars have an answer, but they do not all agree.

Why is 1648 important as a founding moment for the origins of the International Relations system?

It was when a long period of warfare in Europe was brought to an end. The peace that was negotiated at this time was called “The Peace of Westphalia”

Some scholars feel that this was moment that laid the foundations for the modern nation-state (what you and I call countries today) and that it was after this point that the idea of state “sovereignty” was worked out in the world system.

What is the problem with this assumption?

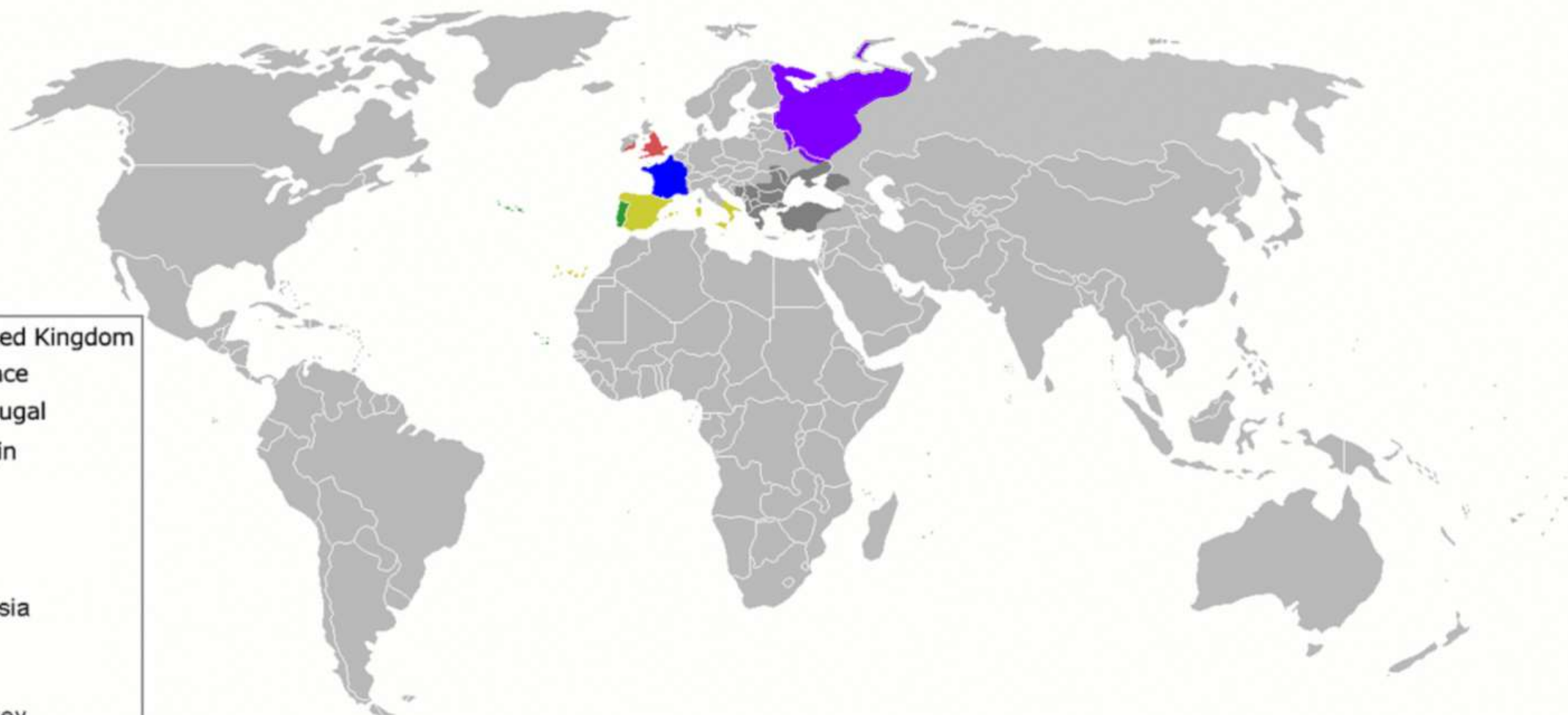
Your reading for today argues

1. This assumption is the “myth of 1648”. It assumes that the basic unit which we use to understand the world (the nation-state) is a given. It exists *tabula rasa*. This is not true. It is both modern and its power and its sovereignty was worked out differently in different parts of the world (an example of this is the 5th slide on colonial expansion).
2. The other “myth” (according to the reading) is the “myth of 1919”.

Location of Westphalia



1492



Now we will watch one of the most viewed Tedx talks of all time that makes a similar point in the first 11 minutes.

Main idea 2: There is no one story of the world and its challenges. However, some stories are more visible or louder than others.

International Studies can be understood via multiple disciplines (history, anthropology, political science and even environmental science). **Each of these yields a different “story” of the world and how to study it.**

Some stories are more powerful than others. We hear them all the time. So much so that they become a part of our assumptions. Things we think are true without even being critical about them.

Let us think of an example of this.

Main idea 3: Not all countries, people and stories are equal.

In other words, understanding global inequality is very important to understand the global challenges in our world.

However, it is not always straightforward to do so. This is because:

- (a) The world is always changing and with it, the power people has also changes. Let us look at the famous writer Chinua Achebe. In this example, he talks about how his passport changed as the world changed.**
- (b) We cannot just understand power in the world by looking at a list. Is power and inequality based on who has money? Is it based on who has the most influence? Let us look at the example of Forbes list

Chinua Achebe, “Home and Exile”



What happened to make his passport label him first as a “British Protected Person” and later as a Citizen of Nigeria”?

- [Previously my passport] had defined me as a “British Protected Person.” ...Now my passport call me a “Citizen of Nigeria”. My transition from British Protected Person to Nigerian Citizen is one man’s participation in a monumental ritual by millions and millions to appease a long and troubled history...to answer “present” at the rebirth of the world...









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Are they on this list because they are the richest people in the world?

	#1	Xi Jinping	China		#6	Pope Francis	Roman Catholic Church	87
	#2	Vladimir Putin	Russia		#7	Bill Gates	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	68
	#3	Donald Trump	United States		#8	Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud	Saudi Arabia	38
	#4	Angela Merkel	Germany		#9	Narendra Modi	India	73
	#5	Jeff Bezos	Amazon.com		#10	Larry Page	Alphabet	51

Let us compare with the Times list of the most influential. In this excerpt (below) Times magazine is explaining how they chose their 2024 list...

Influence, we know, is complex: it can be for better and for worse, it can span generations, categories, and perspectives. There are 12 climate and sustainability leaders on this year's TIME100, including Brazilian government Minister Marina Silva, Chinese automaker Wang Chuanfu, and researcher Suzanne Simard. In a year of change in medicine, we recognize health care executive Dave Ricks and scientists Dan Drucker, Joel Habener, and Svetlana Mojsov. The Hamas attacks on Israel on Oct. 7 and subsequent Israeli assault on Gaza have transformed the region and the lives of millions. The TIME100 includes negotiators William Burns and Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Palestinian photographer Motaz Azaiza, and Rachel Goldberg-Polin, the mother of an Israeli hostage. Each of their stories has shifted our world.

So is it money or influence? How do we determine who is powerful and who is not in the world?


Let's look at the way Forbes magazine calculates its list of powerful countries. Is there anything missing? Is there any hidden story here?

Methodology for ranking powerful countries in the world 2024

The power sub-ranking from US News is based upon an 'equally weighted average of scores' from five particular attributes that denote a country's power, which are:

1. A leader,
2. Economical influence,
3. Political influence,
4. Strong international alliances, and
5. A strong military.

In conclusion global inequality is complex and understanding it involves paying attention to multiple stories and their multiple starting points.



In a world that is extremely unequal, we are also connected and interdependent. This excerpt (below) from the Kofi Annan text in your canvas, says precisely this. Does this sound like a good thing or a bad thing to you?

“We are all consumers in the same global economy. We are all influenced by the same tides of political, social, and technological change. Pollution, organized crime, and the proliferation of deadly weapons likewise show little regard for the niceties of borders; they are problems without passports and, as such, our common enemy. We are connected, wired, interdependent.”

