



# **actor analysis iii:** **states &** **international actors**

# common mistakes in international relations

- over-relying on real world knowledge to build a precedent for certain behaviour **without** any analysis
- **underframing** what the actor's relevant interests are and relevant political context
- not proving why a specific action is the only or **uniquely** effective way to achieve certain impacts
  - this is specifically a problem in IR when loads of actors typically want the same thing but there are millions of ways they could get it (e.g. regional influence, clout, military superiority)





# what is IR **actually** about

- of course, just like any actor debate, teams should identify the **incentives** of actors and limitations that limit how they can pursue those incentives
- but one can take IR quite far, you can actually characterise the '**national identity**' of states (e.g. the US and China)
  - how do they perceive their role in the world
  - what threats do they perceive to be the most prominent etc.
    - these all shape not only their incentives and capacities to act, but also how they pursue those incentives when give **multiple options**, and the extent to which they project themselves on the international stage (e.g. Russia)

# how to debate IR

- your ability to debate IR to a very high level is **severely capped** if you do not know anything about the actors involved
  - read with the intention of understanding the **identity** of a state, not necessarily every single detail about their history
  - e.g. if I read about China, I'm not looking to understand the Qing Dynasty until the modern era. I'm trying to understand:
    - how do Chinese people feel about their own history? What are the parts of it that are integral to their **modern national identity**?
    - how do Chinese people interact with their own state? What is their relationship built upon?
    - what are the Chinese state's **ambitions** shaped by?
    - + relevant **current affairs**: One Belt One Road, the South China Sea dispute, Japan-China relations etc.





# types of IR motions

- **international organisations** attempting to increase their efficacy or control over their membership in one way or another
  - THBT NATO should expel members that do not meet the organisations defence spending targets
- a state proactively or reactively **intervening** in another state to secure some interests
  - TH, as Saudi Arabia, W provide funding and support to Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and encourage their aggression against the Ethiopian federal government
- economics, social justice or politics debates with a **hint** of IR
  - THW Introduce a system of tradable quotas for asylum seekers in the European Union
  - TH supports BRICS\* countries creating alternatives to the current international economic institutions (i.e. the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation) \* Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa



# international organisations

- the crux of all international organisation debates (EU, NATO, UN etc.)
- **questions to ask:**
  - what is the main problem that threatens the organisations survival? Is it policies that are flopped in the past? Is it a reputation of being elitist/disconnected? Is it inaction etc.
  - consider the **diversity** of member states. How do they all individually interact with the organisation's goals?
    - try to segregate the member states into similar groups that you can analyse as a bloc - e.g. relatively wealthy Western European states vs poorer Eastern European states in the EU
  - which member states are the **most important**? For example, who provides its funding, and control its agenda-setting etc.
- by asking all these questions, you can build a compelling picture of the status quo, and characterise different member states which are the building blocks to a strong argument

**exercise:** THBT it is in the interest of the EU to impose punitive measures on the UK in the Brexit negotiations

**breakout room 1**

gov

**breakout room 2**

opp



# theocracies



- theocracies extract their legitimacy from a **religious mandate**. This means that a lot of actions are taken in order to cement themselves as a proxy of religious scripture
  - their power comes from people being devoted to that state, as well as afraid of **religious consequences** (e.g. the afterlife, expelled from a religious community, religious law etc.)
- remember that religion is incredibly fluid. Most states will subscribe to a highly **specific interpretation** of religion to justify its structure (e.g. if it's male-dominated, socially conservative etc.). Its ability to successfully perpetuate itself is based on:
  - having a religiously recognised leader (e.g. the Ayatollah)
  - enforcing religious scripture and converting people
  - protecting religious rights and freedoms, or setting up religious institutions
  - having religious sites located inside your state
  - reforming religious norms to adapt to current socio-political demands

# (semi-)authoritarian regimes

- semi-authoritarian regimes are those that have some electoral mechanisms which are mostly **symbolic** or non-functional. However, public pressure still acts as a destabilising force due to protests, opposition movements, secession etc.
  - in these regimes, the party in power must justify itself somehow:
    - economic growth and prosperity
    - protecting national identity
    - fighting internal or external threats
    - heritage and dynasty
  - remember, semi-authoritarian states (like theocracies) are structured in a specific way (e.g. one party, strong military presence etc.). The narrative it uses to justify itself must be one that justifies how its structured.
    - e.g. China justifies one-party systems using its track record of providing economic prosperity. One-party systems are also more able to pass long-term economic plans and ambitious economic projects.



# dictatorships



- dictatorships have power that is centralized to a **single core party** or even a single individual with very little tolerance for pluralism
  - dictatorships tend to rely on **strong military support** and propaganda in order to stabilise themselves
    - maintaining strong military support means that a lot of funding needs to go into the military to buy their support (and often military figures make up key parts of government).
    - since dictatorships tend not to be centres of prosperity, they highly rely upon **allies** for economic support. Such allies can exert large amounts of influence
    - dictatorships can fall due to a significant fraction of the military turning against them, foreign intervention that cuts off military/economic supplies or simply invade them
      - popular protests, unlike in semi-authoritarian regimes, are **unlikely** to be successful on their own unless these other conditions are met



# democracies

- democracies (especially full ones) are highly impacted by the sentiment of citizens in elections. Local sentiment is one of the largest determinants in foreign policy (e.g. Iraq War, Brexit)
  - government in democracies will always be **populist** to some extent. What form of populism is successful is highly dependent on the context of that state
  - e.g. In the early 2000s, highly interventionist US policy was very popular because it played into the idea of American exceptionalism. Now, populists seem to place more emphasis on Americans-first, i.e. that the US should only intervene when it directly benefits American citizens
    - **introverted** vs **extroverted**: Are we a trend setter or a trend follower?
    - **us** vs **them**: Who do we owe loyalties to? Who is to blame for problems?
    - **foreign intervention**: how willing are we to sacrifice resources and people?
    - **international organisations**: do we feel a sense of shared identity with other states? Does this international organisation benefit us?

