



POLI 150: International Relations and Global Politics

Steven Saroka

POLI 150

21 August 2023



Today's Class

- Introductions
- Syllabus and Expectations
- Why Study IR?



Introduction

- Instructor: Steven Saroka
- Email: ssaroka@ad.unc.edu
- Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30-4 PM. [Sign up link.](#)



Course Structure: Meeting and Readings

- Meeting: Monday and Wednesday 3:35-4:50 PM, Hanes Hall 130.
- Most classes have readings assigned, listed in syllabus. These are to be completed before the lectures for which they are assigned.
- Textbook: Frieden, Lake, and Schultz's *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions* 4th edition.
 - **Not 5th edition**
 - **Rent, buy used, or find on your own...**
- All other readings are posted on Canvas under "Files" & "Readings"



Course Structure: Assignments

Your final grade is composed of:

- 2 midterms worth 15% each.
 - 15-20 multiple choice; open note and book; non-cumulative.
- 10 short reflection papers worth 5% each.
 - One page, single- or double-spaced.
 - Turn in 10 out of 14 prompts; posted on Canvas.
- Final: 20%
 - 15-20 multiple choice; open note and book; cumulative.



Assignment Important Dates

- Reflection papers: generally due 1 week after their associated topic at 11:59 PM. Submit on Canvas.
- Exams: Oct. 16 and Nov. 15. Final available from Dec. 6 to Dec. 14 at 11:59 PM.



Expectations for Papers

- Maximum length of one page.
- Submitted as Word document.
- Double- or single-spaced, 12-point font.
- Citations not required unless directly quoting an outside source.
- Use of AI must follow policy in syllabus.



General Expectations

- Contacting me: email or office hours
- Classroom civility
- Attendance and excused absences
- ARS accommodations: please contact me privately via email



What is International Relations (IR)?

- Understanding the interactions between political units in world politics
- What is a “political unit” anyway?
 - Example from American politics: Congress, Presidency, Supreme Court
- Abstract up to the level of international relations, and it's no longer so simple...



What is IR?

- IR has traditionally focused on the most obvious political units in world politics: countries (“states” in most IR literature).
- States are entities that have:
 - A central authority
 - with the ability to make laws, rules, and decisions
 - and enforce them via a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence
 - within a specified territory
 - recognized as sovereign by other states
- IR has traditionally examined relationships between states: wars, alliances, trade, commerce, cooperation on global issues (environment, human rights), etc.



What is IR?

Today the field of IR involves the relationships between states but also the study of many more interactions, including:

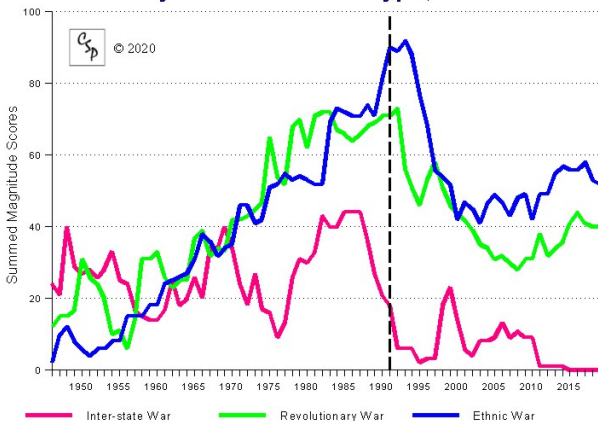
- States and rebel groups
- States and international institutions like the UN
- Multinational corporations and the states they operate in
- Terrorist groups and states
- Interactions of these actors absent states

Still: States remain the foundational actor in most analysis.



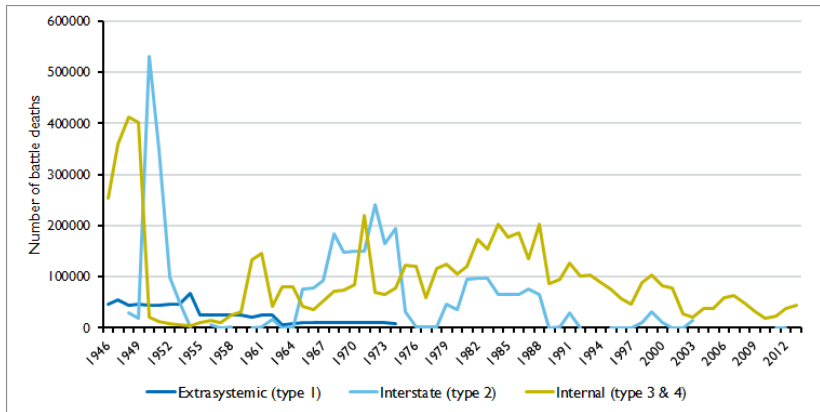
Some class topics

Trends by Armed Conflict Type, 1946-2019





Some class topics





Some class topics

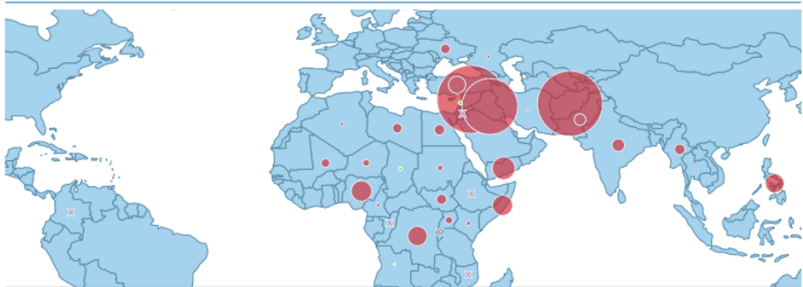
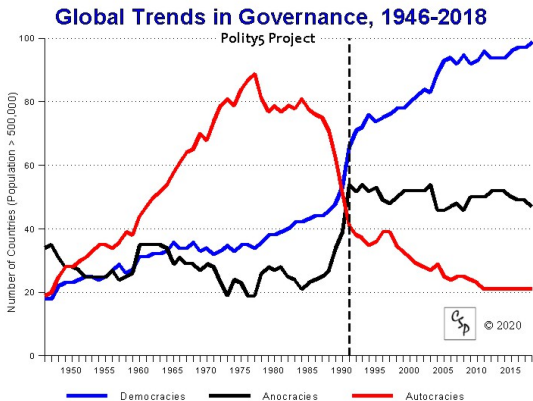


Figure 4: Bubble map of battle deaths in 2017



Some class topics



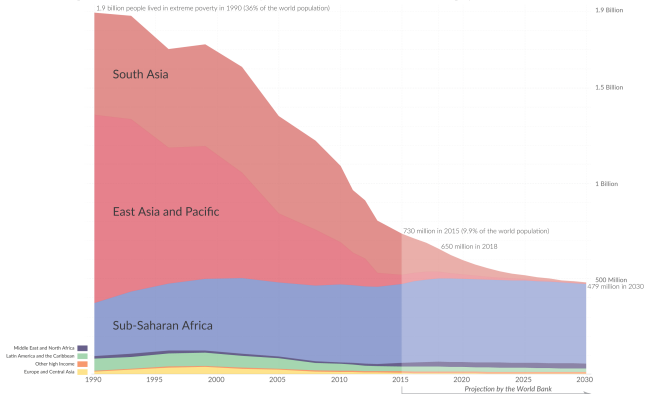


Some class topics

The number of people in extreme poverty – including projections to 2030

Extreme poverty is defined by the 'international poverty line' as living on less than \$1.90/day. This is measured by adjusting for price changes over time and for price differences between countries (PPP adjustment). From 2015 to 2030 the World Bank's projections are shown.

Our World
in Data



Data source: World Bank data from 1990 to 2015. The projections from 2015 to 2030 are published in the World Bank report *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018*.

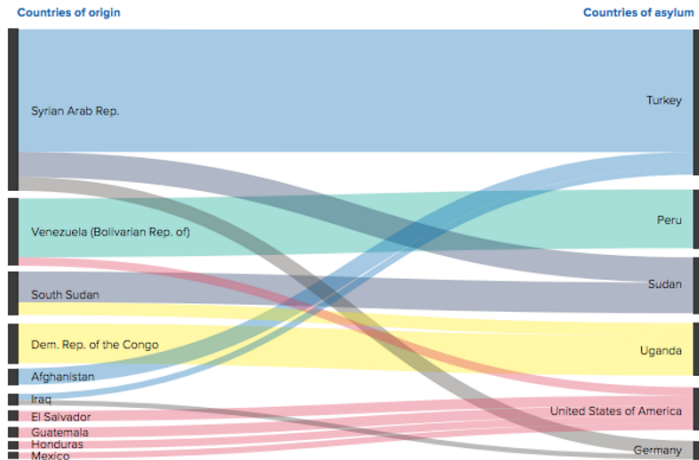
This is a visualization from OurWorldInData.org, where you find data and research on how the world is changing.

Licensed under CC-BY by the author Max Roser.



Some class topics

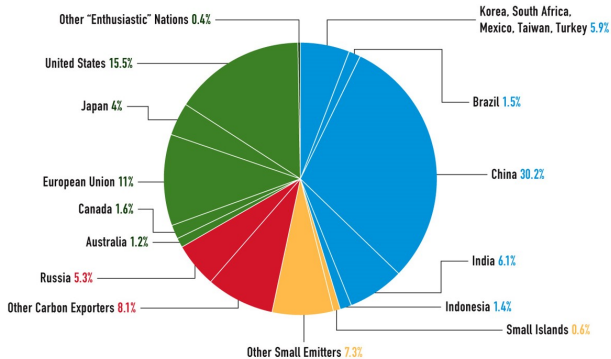
Figure 4 | Key flows of newly registered refugees and new asylum-seekers in 2018





Some class topics

FIGURE 13.1 *National Interests and Carbon Emissions, 2013*



Source: David G. Victor, *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 10. Figure based on the 2013 data provided by David G. Victor.



How do we study these topics?

- We look at events, historical and current, and find something puzzling about them — a phenomenon that needs to be explained.



Puzzle: Appeasement





Puzzle: Risk of Nuclear War





How do we study IR?

- We look at events, historical and current, and find something **puzzling** about them — a phenomenon that needs to be explained.
- We think **theoretically** about these phenomena — we form models of human decision-making that can help us understand and explain puzzling behavior.
- We test our theory using available information to find **generalizable explanations** — using evidence from case studies, cross-national data, experiments.
- Ultimately, by providing clear explanations of cause, we hope to both explain phenomena and/or provide guidance to policymakers.
- That being said, our explanations are still **probabilistic**.