

Introduction to International Relations

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International Relations: Concepts and Theories¹

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Figure 1.1 In an attempt to expand its presence in the South China Sea, China is beginning to construct artificial islands, which are being used as a base for Chinese military operations. Their proximity to US allies such as the Philippines creates some concern about the role China wishes to play in asserting its control over what goes on in Southeast Asia. (credit: “One of the militarized islands by China off the coast of Philippines” by Tony Peters/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Introduction

The study of international relations is a subfield of political science that focuses on the ways that different states interact with one another. The main goal of all relationships among states is to work toward making the international system one of peace—friendly, nonviolent relations among states—and balance—an equal distribution of the chance for any country to take the lead in setting the course for the international system. As with all things related to politics, who

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has the means to exert their power to guide the action of members of the political community determines who gets to set the terms of “peace” and be in charge of what “balance” looks like. Power can best be defined as the ability to establish and enforce the rules to which all other actors in a system must adhere. This chapter looks at the different players in the international system and how they interact. It examines the principles that guide the establishment of the political, social, and economic environment in which these interactions take place.

Key Concepts in International Relations²

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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1.1 What Is Power, and How Do We Measure It?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define *power* as it applies to international relations.
- Describe the different types of power political actors may possess.

Simply defined, in international relations, power is the ability of a state to prompt its preferred outcome in a given situation. States aim to protect their sovereignty—their authority to govern themselves—and guard against attacks from other countries. Growing and projecting their strength is the means through which they achieve this goal.

The way a state sees its place within the larger system based on the worldview its policy makers adhere to serves as the foundation for the state’s power. The theories discussed in this chapter will help illuminate the role power plays in international interactions. They describe the different methods states use to exert their power and how the application of the levers of state power can lead to an increase in a state’s ability to chart its own course and to induce other states to support its attainment of its preferred outcomes. At the same time, the theories describe how other states characterize the state’s actions and determine their responses to those actions. A state’s power includes its military, political, economic, and soft power. The more states attend to and invest in the development of each of these elements of the power they wield, the greater their potential to have an impact on the international stage.

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Military Power

States that function with a general sense of self-preservation and a broad mistrust of other members of the international community see the military as the most important means for the projection of their power. The application of military power can be active, in the form of an outright attack or an invasion, or it can be passive, as when a state illustrates its ability to prevail in a military confrontation without actually engaging in one.

Traditionally, states have launched military offensives against selected targets to secure state power. A more passive way states can exert their power is through **deterrence**, the buildup of military might to such a level that an adversary state or states reconsider the use of their own military against the primary state. If state A thinks it has a military advantage over state B, state A may be motivated to attack state B, especially if an important resource or other key objective is at stake. Should state B begin to expand its military power, state A might be motivated to reconsider its course of action.

North Korea is an example of a modern state that leans on deterrence through military means. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un chooses to divert a substantial portion¹ of the country's relatively meager GDP toward the military to throw off any plans that any other country might have of attacking it. He does this even at the expense of much-needed domestic spending on things like food and social services.



Figure 1.2 As this propaganda poster photographed in Pyongyang in 2011 shows, in North Korea the military is the first priority. (credit: "Propaganda" by Michael Day/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

A state can also obtain military protection by entering into a security pact, an agreement among multiple states to support each other in case of a military attack, such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact. (For more on NATO, see the discussion of collective security in [1.5: The Realist Worldview](#) and [Chapter 15: International Law and International Organizations](#).)

Economic Power

A state can have both internal economic power, with a strong domestic economy marked by increasing gross domestic product (GDP) and/or a currency that allows the state to purchase goods and services at a relatively low cost, and external economic power, with leverage in international economic relationships. Externally, a state can project its economic power to the rest of the world in its international trade relationships and its participation in international economic organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

States can also increase their economic power relative to other states by controlling more of the basic factors of production. There are four basic factors of production, that is, four levels of economic development: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. The primary level of economic development focuses on agriculture, the secondary focuses on manufacturing, the tertiary focuses on the service industry, and the quaternary focuses on research and development. When one state controls more of the basic factors of production and can create a particular good or service in a more cost-effective manner than a second state, the first state is said to have a comparative advantage in the production of that good or service. Comparative advantage allows a country to strategically invest in the factors of production—land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship—within its borders in order to develop goods or services that make it a preferred resource for consumers versus other countries.

Consider one classic example of comparative advantage. If England needs the same amount of resources to create five yards of cloth as it does for the country to produce one barrel of wine, and with the same resources Portugal can create five barrels of wine but only one yard of cloth, then we can say that Portugal has a comparative advantage over England in making wine and England has a comparative advantage over Portugal in making cloth. Therefore, it would be better for England to focus on cloth production and for Portugal to focus on wine production, with each country trading for the goods it needs that the other country can produce more efficiently.

China provides a contemporary example of a state that uses its place in the international economic system to extend its power. The Chinese government has taken care to ensure its position as the preeminent global resource for manufacturing.² With a large, educated labor force and a government that has a tight control over businesses and their functions, China has the ability to turn out large amounts of goods at a relatively low cost to consumers.³ In manufacturing, it has a comparative advantage over other states.

Internally, a state can use the levers of monetary policy to alter the value of its currency to encourage domestic consumer spending and make its exports relatively more attractive. By creating economic linkages between states through trade, countries are able to expand the reach of their goods and their money, increasing their country's economic strength relative to other countries.

A state can use its economic power to build a relative economic advantage, creating an environment in which other states seek to join the state in mutually beneficial trade relationships. As a state creates more economic relationships with other states, it solidifies its position as an economic power and is able to use access to other states' factors of production or comparative advantage to further cement its own place in the larger system.

Political Power

States can try to manipulate the political institutions of other countries to enlarge their sphere of influence and to pressure other states to implement their preferred policy outcomes. A state can use both overt and subversive means to influence another state or a non-state actor in order to gain more power for itself. For example, a state can influence the outcome of an election, supporting the candidacy of a leader who is friendly to the state's preferences. In 1911 and 1912, the United States did not hide its efforts to influence elections in Nicaragua.⁴ In 1953 the United States played a role in the coup in Iran that removed that country's prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who, in nationalizing the Iranian oil industry, had threatened Britain's longstanding control over oil in the region. After the ouster of Mossadegh, the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, with whom the United States believed it had a beneficial relationship, returned to power.⁵ Some states have denied prominent accusations of interfering in other country's elections, as Russia has in response to accusations that it interfered in the 2016 election in the United States.⁶ When states have a sense of power, within the system or within a region, they will do what they can to create an environment that safeguards and even expands that power.

The next section discusses in greater depth how and why it is important to a state that other states recognize its state sovereignty. Using its power of recognition, a state can welcome into the international system and its institutions another state that it believes will support its desired goals, thereby increasing the likelihood that the norms of the international system will align with its preferences. By the same token, a state can withhold its recognition of another state in order to maintain better relations with other members of the international community. In the case of Taiwan, the United States walks a fine line in terms of recognition and interstate relations.⁷ China views Taiwan as an extension of China and expects all other countries to treat Taiwan as such.⁸ This puts the United States in a tricky position; the United States, for economic, military, and diplomatic reasons, seeks to maintain a positive relationship with China, but its broader goal is to support countries as they attempt to democratize. Taiwan, in recent years, has taken many steps to assert its autonomy in relation to China and to implement a more democratic system. China sees these moves as a direct threat to its own position of power and does everything it can to maintain firm control over the Taiwanese governmental system in Taiwan. China views any US actions that may be supportive of

Taiwanese independence or even of its increased autonomy from China in a negative light. The United States must tread carefully, supporting a state that is trying to move toward democracy without angering a key economic and diplomatic ally.

Above all else, states must act to protect their sovereignty. In all things, states find themselves most reliant on their own strength and abilities. In an environment in which there is no central governing body to set and enforce rules, countries must strategize to protect themselves at all costs.

Soft Power

Whereas hard power involves coercion, soft power involves more friendly interactions that seek to win over a state or states rather than force them to comply with the wishes of one or more other states. Diplomacy, in either a bilateral (engagement between two countries) or multilateral (engagement between more than two countries) setting, allows states to create mutually beneficial agreements to protect themselves and the international system at large. The idea that all recognized countries find themselves on equal relational footing and should be treated as such in any sort of engagement, a concept referred to as reciprocity, is the foundational element of any diplomatic relationship.

An example of a reciprocal arrangement would be that of states exchanging ambassadors. When a diplomatic relationship exists, the leaders of states pay official visits to one another and are entertained in a manner that shows deference to their status and prestige in the international system. Allowing for state visits is one way that a state might use the guise of entertainment as a means of persuading a state to take steps that meet its preferences. The principle of reciprocity allows for states to enter into any negotiation on a level playing field; it intones a mutual level of respect between the states.

The cultural identity of a state is still another way that a state can expand its sphere of influence. Globalization has allowed for the spread of goods that are clearly identifiable as part of the culture of a specific country. As cultural identifiers spread throughout the world on the back of global commerce, so do the values that typify the originating country's political and social systems. For example, the global spread of clearly identified American brands such as Levi's, McDonalds, and Coca-Cola serves to spread American values of choice and product competition.⁹ In addition to increasing the amount of revenue American companies see from the sale of their products, the spread of American brands spreads American ideals.¹⁰



Figure 1.3 This McDonald's in New Delhi, India, is an example of the reach of America's soft power. (credit: "New Delhi McDonald's" by Ryan/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Reciprocal diplomatic relationships that involve entertaining foreign officials and the spreading of cultural values to exert dominance are examples of the exercise of soft power—that is, using attraction and persuasion rather than coercion to achieve goals.

1.2 Understanding the Different Types of Actors in the International System

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the major actors in the contemporary international system.
- Discuss the four characteristics of a state.
- Differentiate a state and a nation.
- Discuss the relationship between international organizations and powerful states.
- Identify the capabilities of a nongovernmental organization.

A variety of different actors, each with its own characteristics, preferences, and methods of working, populate the international system. These actors are distinct in what they want, what motivates them, how much and what kinds of power they can wield, and how they interact with each other. Achieving the goals of the international system requires the concerted effort of all of these members.

States

The term state is used interchangeably with the word *country*. All states have four characteristics:¹¹

- Land with boundaries
- A government or a system of rule
- A population that willingly gives its allegiance to that government
- Recognition as an equal partner among states

This last piece is perhaps the most important and can be the hardest to achieve. Recognition as a state within the international system of states is an essential norm—a generally accepted rule, institution, or behavior—that forms the foundation of international relations. Recognition ensures that a state has a seat at the table; it confers both legitimacy and equality in the eyes of the international community.

Changes in political power in a state, such as the election of new heads of government or a change in the majority party in the legislative branch, do not usually affect state recognition, but in cases where there are complete changes to leadership or institutions in a government, concerns arise about whether recognition will continue. With the recent changes to governmental leadership in Afghanistan, for example, the reinstated Taliban regime will need to take steps to make sure that they are seen as the legitimate source of power in the territory. This recognition is important to the ability of the Taliban to negotiate with other members of the international community for the things the country needs. The international community, for its part, can use the promise of recognition to extract concessions from the Taliban. To be recognized as a member of the international community means being held to the same standards of behavior to which other countries are held.

States are a vital part of the international system and serve as leaders in charting the path of the system as a whole. Of all the different parts of the international system, recognition might not seem adequate to give a state all the rights and privileges that come with statehood, but it is a necessary element of membership in the international system.



Figure 1.4 Taliban fighters ride a captured Humvee after the fall of Kabul. (credit: “Taliban Humvee in Kabul, August 2021 (cropped)” by Voice of America News/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

There is a subtle difference between the term *state* and the idea of a nation. A nation is an identity gleaned from a common culture or ethnicity; a state is an institutional infrastructure that allows a society to function. In terms of an ethnic identity, a nation can span states, or a state can be a nation-state, as is the case in Japan, where the government of the state takes extra care to protect the shared national identity of the people who make up the state.¹² There is a broader conversation¹³ around what a nation, a state, and a nation-state are and how to think about these distinctions in the modern world. Some scholars argue that the concept of the nation-state is no longer viable because of the state boundary lines created by the colonial powers. As European countries expanded their reach and control to areas far from their shores, they entered areas populated by people for whom the idea of the state, in the European sense, was incompatible with their historical identity, as seen in Iraq, Sudan, and Nigeria. The placement of arbitrarily drawn borders, to the economic benefit of the European colonial powers and with a clear disregard for the traditional geographic locations of the people, form the basis for the current conversation about whether the idea of a nation-state has a place in the modern international system.¹⁴

Nations can also be considered stateless. In some cases, the historical home of a nation is absorbed into a recognized state, leaving the people of the nation with the choice to either accept the citizenship of the recognized state or remain stateless. Stateless nations find

themselves at an intense disadvantage because they typically have limited involvement in international organizations, which prevents them from having a seat at the table on par with other states and nations of the world. Nations such as the Kurds, Bretons, Catalans, and Basques are limited in their ability to govern their people with any sense of autonomy and have been consistently sidelined and subjected to violence for their wish to have their unique national identity be celebrated and validated.

Intergovernmental Organizations

Institutions made up of multiple state actors who work within a specific set of rules to enact solutions to problems common among multiple states are known as intergovernmental organizations. Intergovernmental organizations¹⁵ are the best way to understand the reach and impact of a state's power to structure the environment in which it functions. States with more hard power—that is, with larger economies or militaries—are able to leverage their position among other states to put in place institutional norms that more closely align with their preferences; in short, intergovernmental institutions are a great way for powerful states to become even more powerful. Under the best of circumstances, as in the case of the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations can create a unified sense of pressure to prompt a state to make positive changes or to band states together to support a state that is under attack. In the worst case, international organizations can strong-arm weaker states to agree to the preferences of one state to the detriment of other states or of the system at large.



Figure 1.5 The Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (credit: “The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C. (April 19, 1999)” by International Monetary Fund, Public Domain)

For example, the major world economies have partnered to form the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an intergovernmental organization known as a lender of last resort,¹⁶ where a

country turns only after it has exhausted all of its options for funding,¹⁷ that can be counted on to support countries in the direst of economic circumstances. The member states that make up the Board of Governors of the IMF base their offer of support on the role that the struggling country plays in the larger economic system. Other members of the international community have criticized IMF loan decisions for attaching terms to IMF loans that limit the ability of borrower countries to move toward economic stability. As with most intergovernmental organizations, the IMF has been characterized as an extension of the policy preferences of its governing members. This means that the decisions the IMF makes are sometimes seen as a tool powerful states use to set the rules of international borrowing to support countries they consider allies and to punish countries that they see as opposition.

Nongovernmental Organizations

Non-state actors focused on solving problems or filling policy gaps states can't or won't handle themselves are known as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Traditionally speaking, a nongovernmental organization is a nonaligned, third-party group that does not have the same motivations that a state might have. Nongovernmental organizations are part of a system that works to benefit people rather than states. NGOs can propose solutions to a state or fill a need that a state might have, usually without being seen as attempting to attack the sovereignty of that state. For example, most states accept medical aid from NGOs like the Red Cross or the Red Crescent.

1.3 Sovereignty and Anarchy

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain why sovereignty is an essential element of states in the international system.
- Define anarchy in the context of the international system.
- Explain the relationship between sovereignty and anarchy.

Statehood is of vital importance to a nation because it confers sovereignty. Sovereignty is the ability of a state to run its institutions without fear of interference from other states or entities. Sovereignty allows states to enforce their own laws, for better or for worse, allowing a state to exert its power within its own borders and in situations where the state must work to protect its interests.

While states' claims to sovereignty allow them to protect their cultural identity, beliefs, norms, and institutions, they can also prevent other states from stepping in to protect the innocent when a state acts in a manner that is counter to the basic norms of human rights and human dignity enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹⁸ The actions a state takes to intervene on behalf of people subjected to violence at the hands of their own government could be seen as acts of aggression. In this case, the state that is perpetrating the violence would be within their rights to take action against the intervening state. In cases of crimes against humanity, such as the genocide in the Balkans¹⁹ and the civil war in Rwanda,²⁰ both in the 1990s, sovereignty allows a state to function as it sees fit, even when it means some

citizens of that country will die. States have used the cover of sovereignty to prevent nongovernmental organizations from providing aid. For example, the Assad regime in Syria has diverted humanitarian aid intended for civilians caught in the middle of the violence in that country's ongoing civil war, using the aid to fund its own atrocities.²¹ At times, states have used the cover of sovereignty to block NGOs from gathering information on atrocities happening within the country or to decline to participate in negotiations when other states tried to broker peace.

A system made up of actors focused on protecting their own interests naturally results in anarchy,²² where there is no overarching governing authority. In the case of the international system, *anarchy* refers to a lack of a general sense of order in the international system. Anarchy in the international system is directly linked to this lack of enforcement mechanisms as well as a lack of a broad global government. Sovereignty is the most important part of a state's identity. The willingness of states to make sure that their sovereignty is protected for as long as possible ensures that the system will remain anarchic.

While each state has the right to govern itself, there is still a need for a means through which different states can gather—some ordered structure in the system that allows states to work through common issues. Intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, provide the forums through which states can attempt to exert pressure on one another to cause one or more states to change a behavior, to provide options other than violence for conflict resolution, or to adhere to already established norms that provide some semblance of order in the otherwise anarchic system. However, there are no true enforcement bodies that have the authority and the capability to impose comprehensive consequences on a state that violates an international agreement or takes actions that fly in the face of generally accepted norms. Intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations provide useful avenues for states to solve problems that impact them at a systemic level, but it is still impossible to say with 100 percent confidence that a state can be made to behave in a certain way.

Foreign aid and sanctions are options available to members of the international community to help move a state into alignment with generally accepted expectations for behavior. Like all types of international actions, the ability of these options to be effective requires the participation of as many members of the international community as possible and the willingness of those states and organizations to close any loopholes so that the target state feels the consequences in a meaningful way. There is no mechanism to force a state to behave a certain way. Foreign aid and sanctions, along with treaties and the actions of international organizations, provide options international actors can use to help order the environment in which a state makes its choices about how it relates to other countries.

States can work cooperatively through institutions to enact strategies aimed at coercing a state to change its behavior; however, there is no surefire way to guarantee a state will do so or that it will continue to uphold that change. For example, the United States led a series of negotiations beginning in 2015 to work to curb Iran's development of nuclear weapons. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, more commonly referred to as the Iran Nuclear Deal, was an agreement signed between Iran and the UK, France, Germany, Russia, and China, under the

leadership of the United States. Negotiated by the Obama administration, the agreement allowed Iran to re-engage in trade, particularly of their oil, to take some of the pressure off their own economy, and in return, Iran would work to dismantle the nuclear facilities that presented security concerns to the world. Because of the domestic political situation in the United States, the US never recognized the Iran Nuclear Deal as a ratified treaty, opting instead to enter into an “executive agreement.”²³ The terms of the treaty would have been binding, but without a formal treaty, the enforcement mechanisms included in the agreement did not ever become reality. When President Obama left office in 2016, the newly elected President Donald Trump began to pull back from the agreement. Trump chose to work separately from the parties to the agreement, reinstating sanctions on Iran, including penalties for entities that continued to trade with Iran. When one key party to an agreement pulls back, other members of the negotiating body are effectively unable to uphold their side of the agreement, and that agreement is weakened.²⁴



Figure 1.6 In July 2015, representatives of China, France, Germany, the EU, Iran, the UK, and the United States posed for a photo during the meetings in Vienna that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action known as the Iran Nuclear Deal. (credit: “Iran Talks” by Bundesministeriums für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

It may seem counterintuitive to think about anarchy and order going hand in hand when talking about the international system, but the modern system relies on the assumption that states within the system want to maintain control over everything within their own borders and work for their own benefit while at the same time being unwilling to submit to an established order in the environment around them. The tension created in the fight between order and anarchy that exists in all states, no matter how powerful they are, is what underscores and motivates international relations.

1.4 Using Levels of Analysis to Understand Conflict

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the different levels of analysis and show how they can be used to explain interstate conflict.
- Describe the relationship between levels of analysis and state policy.
- Identify the two purposes levels of analysis serve.
- Identify the hallmarks of each level of analysis.

For 13 days in October 1962, the world watched with bated breath as a shipment of Soviet warheads on their way to Cuba pushed the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. In response to the United States' decision to install nuclear weapons in Turkey, a country on the Soviet Union's southwestern border, the Soviet Union began moving multiple nuclear warheads from Russia to the island of Cuba, approximately 100 miles south of Florida at the southeastern edge of the Gulf of Mexico. The fear that this act inspired in Americans led to nuclear attack drills and the constant presence of the threat of war in the lives of everyone in the United States. How would the United States, then led by President John F. Kennedy, respond to this apparent act of aggression? This 13-day standoff has become known as the Cuban Missile Crisis.²⁵

War or the threat of war draws the attention of the public at large and, more than any other international event, tends to make people sit up and think critically about the decisions states make. Just as you can seek to better understand political science as a whole by breaking your examination down to the levels of individuals, groups, institutions, and states and international relations, one way to understand international relations and the decisions actors make is to use levels of analysis; that is, you can choose to zoom in on a particular aspect of the interaction. To better understand the motivations of the actors in the larger system, it is useful to break down the analysis. In international relations, you can examine the individual, focusing on the actions that leaders in a country take; the state, focusing on the actions of countries; and the global system, focusing on how states interact with international organizations, nongovernmental actors, and multinational corporations. States create policies, such as the decision to go to war or to solve a problem through negotiation and the creation of a treaty with the assistance of an international organization like the United Nations, that focus on either a specific level or the way that the levels interact with one another. Conflict occurs when the policy decisions of one state create consequences for another state that change the environment, harming the second state or complicating the decisions it must make.

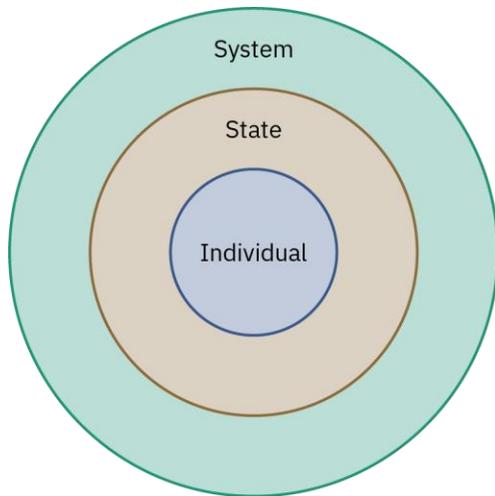


Figure 1.7 We can examine international relations using three levels of analysis: the individual, the state, and the system. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

These levels of analysis serve two purposes: they provide a foundation for understanding the different problems states face, and they help one think about how a state's policies can affect the international community. The characteristics and players of each level of analysis give a more holistic way to describe conflict.

Individual Level

The individual level of analysis focuses on the decision makers within a state and how the constraints the state places on them affect their chosen courses of action. The rules associated with their positions limit what leaders can do; for example, the president of the United States has the ability to move troops but cannot formally enter a war with another country without the consent of Congress.²⁶ This limits the possible policy responses US presidents have to choose from should they feel that the United States is being threatened. Decision makers reliably support policies that solve problems in ways that allow them to claim credit for solutions when they are called to account for their actions. Leaders like to be able to tout their accomplishments in re-election campaigns. They tend to prefer policy solutions that help them gain and keep power. In the case of the individual level of analysis, power is defined as an individual's ability to steer policy to create outcomes that align with that individual's personal beliefs and preferences.

State Level

The state level of analysis focuses on the actions of states in relation to one another. State-to-state relations occur in the context of intergovernmental organizations and in treaties and alliances. A state's policy choice menu is defined by where the state sees itself and where the state wants to go in relation to other states. When theories of state behavior are discussed later in the chapter, you'll see how theory helps explain the policy choices states make.

In the same way that individual political actors must play by certain rules, both the people who live in a state and the international community expect states to uphold norms of behavior and to meet the expectations of the power behind their institutions.

In a democracy like the United States, the state derives its legitimacy from the consent of the people. If a state begins to act in a way that goes against what the people say they want, the people can hold individual actors responsible and vote them out of office. The relationship between voters and elected officials is one way to see the relationship between the individual and state levels of analysis. In democracies, voters and those they elect form a feedback loop in which the preferences of the voters are made tangible through the policies that elected officials work to enact in the laws they make.



Figure 1.8 This World War II–era poster emphasizes the role the individual plays in directing the state. (credit: “Your right to vote is your opportunity to protect, over here the freedoms for which Americans fight over there” by Chester Raymond Miller/Posters: Artist Posters/Library of Congress, Public Domain)

In an autocracy like North Korea, institutions are propped up by the ability of the autocrat to hold the allegiance of the selectors needed to solidify their power. Selectors are the people that a leader in any type of government relies on to legitimize their power and position. In a democracy, selectors are the part of the population who can and do vote. In an autocracy, the selectors are the people who support the leader while at the same time controlling the parts of the country that a leader needs to legitimize their position, such as the military or the lucrative natural resources that the state may control.

Global Level

The global—or systemic—level of analysis considers how cooperation and conflict among states intersects with the environments in individual states to evoke change. The hallmark of this level of analysis is the number of variables that need to be considered when trying to understand the reasoning behind policy shifts and the ripple effect these shifts have on other countries. For example, though India and Pakistan are not permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and therefore, according to the terms of the United Nations Charter,²⁷ are not permitted to possess nuclear weapons,²⁸ both countries have been developing and maintaining nuclear weapons stockpiles as a high-level deterrent against the possibility that the other country will take overtly aggressive actions. These growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons set the stage for a situation not unlike that between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War—one of mutually assured destruction. The usual expectation of the international community would be that states who are not supposed to be in possession of nuclear weapons would be secretive in their development and even more secretive in their use. Instead, India and Pakistan have chosen not to hide their nuclear stockpiles, and both countries are fully aware of the level of conflict they must avoid to ensure they do not provoke the other country to use its arsenal. The international community has reacted to the nuclear buildup in India and Pakistan in a way that is markedly different from the reaction to the nuclear buildup in North Korea.²⁹ Because North Korea projects a general sense of distrust and aggression toward most of the members of the international community and because its tests of its nuclear stockpile are in express contravention to the wishes of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the countries of the world see North Korea’s actions as a blatant challenge to the international system’s fine line between anarchy and order. While India and Pakistan have made it clear that their nuclear arsenal is a tool of last resort, North Korea does not seem to have that same level of restraint. North Korea has promised to use its weapons whenever it feels threatened but has provided no guidelines regarding what it perceives as a threat.³⁰ Though India, Pakistan, and North Korea are all violating international law to varying degrees, in choosing to place sanctions on North Korea but not on India or Pakistan, the global community is choosing to punish a state that, in what the international community perceives to be an irrational manner, seeks to threaten any and all states.

In a way, the global level of analysis is one of responsiveness rather than one of agency. A state must first take an action, such as testifying before the United Nations Security Council, before an international organization can respond. The anarchic nature of the international system means that intergovernmental organizations are not able to take meaningful preventive action to head off a state's decision. Due to the anarchic nature of the international system, this level of analysis is the most unpredictable. Its value lies in the way it allows a broad view of any trends in the way events affect different states.

The Link between Policy and the Levels of Analysis

Levels of analysis can be used to understand how institutions make decisions. Think about each level of analysis as a lens through which policy makers view the possible consequences of implementing a particular solution to a problem they face. Governments can also use levels of analysis to view how a particular situation might affect their country; each level of analysis represents a different group of people with different wants and needs. Governments have to work to balance the preferences and needs of each member of each level of analysis when they craft and implement a policy.

The Cuban Missile Crisis is a classic example of how each of the three levels of analysis plays a role in complex potential or realized international conflicts.

At the individual level of analysis, President Kennedy had to consider both his own preferences and how his advisors would want to handle the situation. President Kennedy's immediate circle of advisors,³¹ known as ExComm, embodied the facets of the individual level of analysis when they provided the president with their assessment of the crisis and offered possible solutions. Military leaders within ExComm strove to balance their own preferences for how the United States should project strength, favoring large shows of force and more aggressive response measures, with their understanding of who the president was and how he perceived the world around him. In order to get the president to support their plan over any other offered solution, they needed to play to the president's desire to avoid long-term engagement or escalation. It was important to some members of ExComm to persuade the president that a more aggressive response would lead to a more decisive American victory that would send a strong message to Soviet leaders. These members believed that taking a strong stance would dissuade the Soviets from taking further actions against the United States.³²



Figure 1.9 ExComm meets during the Cuban Missile Crisis. (credit: “National Security Council Executive Committee” by White House Photographs/John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Public Domain)

At the state level, President Kennedy had to consider the actions of the Soviets in terms of the preferences of their state—that is, their government institutions, which could override what Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev might want—in order to understand what message they hoped the movement of missiles to Cuba would send. The United States had to be careful about what escalation of conflict could mean in terms of potential danger to people in the United States and in the Soviet Union. Such escalation could also set a precedent for what other states would choose to do if placed in the same situation.

At the international, systemic level, the United States and the Soviet Union were involved in back-channel unofficial negotiations with then Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant.³³ International law and norms limit what actions countries are willing to allow states to take, and this is especially true when the potential of nuclear conflict threatens the safety of not only the nations involved in a standoff, but also of the entire world. Secretary General Thant appealed to the United States and the Soviet Union to think as rationally as possible and to provide each other with the space in which to make decisions.

Beyond levels of analysis, political scientists use a variety of frameworks to help make sense of the way states respond to the actions of other states. The chapter now turns to those frameworks.

Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism

1.5 The Realist Worldview³

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how theories and worldviews can be used to understand international relations.
- Explain the realist worldview, including fundamental concepts and possible limitations or critiques.
- Identify and differentiate among various branches of realist theory.
- Apply principles of game theory to explain a state's decision-making process.
- Explain the types of polarity in an anarchic system.
- Discuss the role of comparative advantage in a unipolar system.
- Analyze the ways tensions can escalate, destabilizing the system, in a realist worldview.

Several key theories have emerged to explain the different ways states see the world and their place in it and to understand the decisions they make and the courses of action they choose based on those views. The primary theories come from three major groups of worldviews: the realist worldview, liberal and social worldviews, and critical worldviews. This section discusses realism and its variants.

Realism

In popular culture, international relations is usually presented through the filter of the basic tenets of realism. Whether it's Jack Ryan working with the FBI, risking his life to rescue soldiers held by drug cartels, or Jason Bourne running from his past involvement with clandestine operations as a former CIA assassin, representatives of states are shown as engaging in actions focused on self-preservation, no matter the cost.

Realism is distinctly characterized by marked self-interest. According to realism, states embark on policy initiatives with a go-it-alone attitude that aims solely to preserve their own safety and

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security. In a realist's mind set, the state is the primary actor of the international system. According to realists, self-interested states do what they can to gain more power to increase their ability to structure the rules of the system to their advantage.

Realism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States are at the center of the system.• The main goal of the state is to protect itself and ensure its power.

As a general rule, realists believe that states see it as being to their benefit to withhold some of the details about their goals and aspirations in a given situation. The thinking is that if a state is completely transparent about its capabilities and how far it is willing to go to get what it wants, it makes itself vulnerable to other states that might try to take advantage of it.³⁴ This air of distrust underlies the thinking of a realist state. Because a state cannot trust other states, realists consider diplomacy and negotiations unreliable methods of self-preservation. Instead, realists try to implement policies that send a clear, strong message about the ability of a state to protect itself.

Game theory is a way of conceptualizing what motivates a political actor in terms of the steps the actor takes to reach what they deem to be the optimal outcome for themselves. The general discussion of political behavior in [Chapter 2: Political Behavior Is Human Behavior](#) briefly introduces the idea of game theory. Based on the idea that all the actions players take in a specific game or situation have a certain probability of being taken, game theory helps illustrate a realist view of state strategy in international relations. Have you ever played a game of strategy, such as Risk or Settlers of Catan? In these types of games, you, the player, focus on amassing the most land and resources you can, relative to the other players, to win. You try to anticipate and consider all the information you have about the current situation and what other players might do when calculating what actions you should take to achieve your goals. In the realist view, states have the same mindset in their interactions with each other.

For states, every decision-making process is part of a complicated equation, the result of which is an action the state will take. States weigh the risks and rewards of possible courses of action, seeking the greatest net benefit for their purposes. States can only base their strategic decision-making on the information they have—for example, intelligence information about another state's true motivations—and if that information is faulty, a state's chosen course of action may not achieve the desired results. By accounting for the weight of all the probable variables a state considers in calculating what course it will take versus the benefit a state expects an action to yield, one can calculate the likelihood, or probability, that a state will make a decision or implement a policy in response to another state's actions.



Figure 1.10 Game theory can be applied to many situations, such as labor negotiations to end a workers' strike, in which opposing sides strategize to optimize the chances of achieving their desired outcomes. (credit: "picket line" by Susan Jane Golding/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Realism characterizes states as rational actors, meaning that all the actions they take or policies they implement are a function of what they see as the outcome of a situation. Realists see the international system as a zero-sum game grounded in the idea that all facets of the system are finite. In a zero-sum game, a state seeks to take something, whether it be power or a physical resource, away from another state; in essence, if I win, then you lose, and there can only be one winner. When all aspects of a system are finite, one state can control all of a particular resource, preventing another state or states from having that resource. You can apply this idea to your everyday life. Suppose you and your friend are hungry for a snack and there is only one bag of chips that is readily available. If this situation were a zero-sum game, whoever got to the bag of chips first would have all the chips, and the other person would have none.

The balance of power is a classic realist way of seeing the structure of the international system. Realists see the world as populated by states in a race to set the rules of the system to work for their own benefit. Because the system is inherently anarchic, poles, or centers of power, form within the system around the states that have the capacity, in whatever the system deems to be the currency of power, to gather other states to their side. Three different types of polarity emerge in an anarchic system: unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar.

In a unipolar system, one country, the hegemon, sets itself up as the main player who decides the rules of the international system. By virtue of having the strongest economy, largest military, or most stable political and social institutions, the hegemon is able to use its position to extend its power. A hegemon might simply use its military might to extend its power, or it might employ less aggressive means. When a hegemon expands the institutions that benefit it to other countries, it encourages those countries to be like the hegemon. In doing so, the hegemon expands its sphere of influence with the underlying premise that states that are similar in culture, economy, and political structure are less likely to fight one another. While these states share a number of similarities, they have differing abilities to allocate the skills and resources necessary to create certain goods or services. When a hegemon expands its sphere of influence, it expands its access to resources, goods, and services in areas where it lacks a comparative advantage. An imbalance in comparative advantage is what drives a country to trade for a good or service that it needs.

In a bipolar system, two states with equal relative power but different underlying institutional characteristics vie to create opposing spheres of influence. This creates two groups of allied countries that allow the states at the center of the poles to expand their power with the support of other actors in the system, giving those two states similar strength as if each were a hegemon. In a multipolar world, multiple states form many smaller spheres of influence, creating a pared-down version of a unipolar or bipolar system. A multipolar system, where three or more states have equal or relative power, is pared down even further.

While anarchy is inherent in the international system, from the realist's view, a state is motivated to create an environment, and therefore a balance of power, that protects the state. Rational actors prefer order. Order allows actors to have a greater sense of what is coming next. Essentially, states—especially the bigger, stronger, more powerful ones—see anarchy as an opportunity to create order in a way that favors their interests and fits their long-term goals. The balance of power between states is a way to understand who succeeds in creating a world that benefits them the most.

The relationship between the United States and Russia from World War II to the present is perhaps the most accessible way to see shifts in polarity in the international system. Before World War II, colonial European powers had divided up the world, and the United States and Russia were doing what they could, in smaller ways, to expand their own reach. After World War II, the United States and Russia emerged as the two major powers at opposite ends of the economic ideological spectrum, pitted against each other for supremacy, thus creating a bipolar world. The interaction between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War provides a glimpse of the best and worst of decisions states have made. The Cold War represents a period in world history in which there was a slowly simmering conflict³⁵ on multiple fronts between the Soviet Union and the United States, who had emerged from World War II as the states with the economic strength and political stability to exert their influence and preferences on other states in the international community.

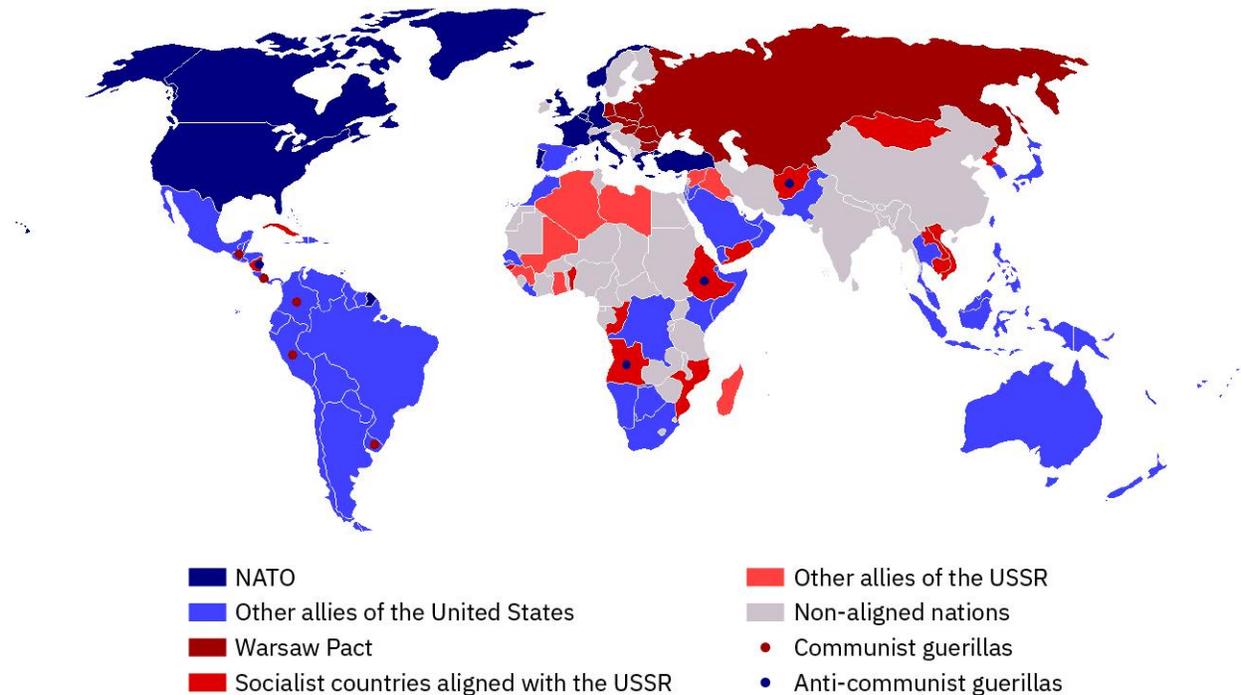


Figure 1.11 This map of Cold War allies illustrates the spheres of influence in a bipolar world. (credit: “Map Of The Cold War” by The1994JMan/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The intense competition between these two major world powers for global supremacy spilled into all parts of society, from the propaganda and policies of the United States focused on weeding out suspected communists in all aspects of society and government to the race to see who could make the greatest advancements in space exploration, which spurred a steep increase in scientific and technological development. In the context of foreign relations, the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States was more tangible and mired in a number of proxy wars, conflicts in which each of the warring parties is supported and funded by two larger parties who have a vested interest in the outcome of the conflict. The Vietnam War,³⁶ in which the democratically elected Vietnamese government fought the insurgent Viet Cong, who had the support of the Soviet Union, and the conflict in Afghanistan, where the United States supported Afghans as they fought to keep the communist forces of the Soviet Union from taking over their country, are two examples of Cold War–era proxy wars.

The 1990s brought an end to the Cold War, with the United States emerging as the hegemon, but that came with its own challenges. In the era immediately following the Cold War, newly independent former Soviet states looked to the United States for monetary, political, and military support. This is the burden of the hegemon; when you are the victor in a conflict you may be seen as the only stable, strong power, and with that status comes a sense of obligation to help less powerful, less stable states.

The security dilemma is the byproduct of a system in which states are motivated to act in their own interest. As states implement security policies that aim to either expand or solidify their position in the system, other states may perceive those actions as provocations. The state or

states implementing those policies face a security dilemma, where those changes in their policies related to their own safety and security, because they appear aggressive to other states, may lead those other states to preemptively respond in the interests of their own security, potentially ratcheting up tensions between two or more states.

This highlights the implications of a system based on a fundamental mistrust of all actors that views any action as a signal. The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War is a direct long-term example of the consequences of two states existing in the midst of a security dilemma. States that see the actions of another state as an offensive provocation seek to respond in as proportional a manner as possible, but in some cases, as in the hypothetical situation of nuclear war, the response can have consequences that negatively—and in the case of nuclear war, catastrophically—impact the entire international community.

Neorealism

The lack of institutions in the international system that can hold states accountable for their actions or provide consistent, altruistic help to states in need perpetuates the mentality of states that see themselves as lone actors within the international system. In the contemporary international community, realists view states as having a go-it-alone attitude in order to best safeguard their own interests.

A more recent offshoot of the realist school of thought, neorealism (also known as structural realism), speaks to states that take a middle path to international relations.³⁷ Like classical realists, neorealists see the state as the main actor in an anarchic system. Unlike classical realists, they contend that it is the structure of the system rather than the people who lead the state that drives the system forward. States that implement policies that align with neorealist ideas attempt to work through international institutions, such as multinational security pacts like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to get what they want.

Neorealism (Structural Realism)

- The system is anarchic.
- Institutions are structured to maintain the anarchy in the system.

Neorealism that advocates for transparency in order to avoid conflict and maintain the status quo is known as defensive realism.³⁸ In the minds of defensive realists, the constant distrust between states, and the resultant policies, create an environment of instability that drives states into conflict with one another. As such, these theorists believe that it is to the benefit of all states to maintain the status quo, that is, to maintain the current balance between the states in the system as it exists at that moment. Defensive realists see conflict as a destabilizing force that upsets the status quo and should be avoided. They encourage states to make transparent policy choices meant to give clear signals to other states that they see themselves as a part of and clearly support the anarchy inherent in the system and that they will not do anything to challenge it.

Offensive realism takes the opposite view. According to offensive realism, overt actions states take in order to grow and project their power lead to interstate conflict.³⁹ These theorists argue that there is an inherent benefit in conflict and in taking self-serving action. States, they say, are intrinsically motivated to seek out power and will do so only by establishing a sense of supremacy over other states, particularly those with characteristics similar to their own. According to offensive realists, states use aggressive actions—whether military, economic, social, or political—to secure their place in the system.

1.6 The Liberal and Social Worldview

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the liberal worldview, including fundamental concepts and possible limitations or critiques.
- Discuss complex interdependence.
- Explain the constructivist worldview, including fundamental concepts and possible limitations or critiques.

Liberalism as a worldview differs from liberalism as a political ideology. Ideology is the lens through which an individual makes choices and, if that individual is in a place of governmental power, through which they view policy options with regard to whether they align with their values. Worldviews, such as the ones listed in this chapter, serve as the basis for how states see the political environment around them and their place in it.

Liberalism

In contrast to the realist school of thought, those who adhere to liberalism see investment in the system as a whole, by working within institutions and their constraints to carve out a secure space, as the best way for a state to ensure its protection. Like other theories, liberalism sees states as the primary actors in the international system,⁴⁰ but liberalism contends that their domestic rules and institutions constrain their actions. As such, states must consider constantly changing factors, both internal and external, when deciding on a course of action. Above all, liberalism views states as motivated by what they see as being in the best interest of the international system.

Liberalism
• States use international institutions to impact the system to their benefit.

Collective Security

One branch of liberalism, institutionalism, sees international institutions in which states take part as essential to the functioning of the international system.⁴¹ In creating international institutions, whose mere existence seems counter to the expectations of a system described as anarchic, states look to each other to form a web of allies that they can count on for support in

times of need. Collective security,⁴² wherein states form alliances to strengthen the security of each member within the alliance, entrenches the idea that no one state can act independently in all instances and emerge victorious. These arrangements are especially beneficial for states with limited resources to put toward their own protection. NATO is one real-world example of an institution designed to promote collective security.



Figure 1.12 Flags of many countries fly outside NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. (credit: “170517-D-SW162-3038” by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff/DoD Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. James K. McCann/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Smaller states such as North Macedonia and Bulgaria have limited abilities to divert their country’s GDP for investment in modern military armaments. In joining NATO, these smaller countries agree to allow more formidable powers, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, to install military personnel and weapons in their countries and to use them as a base of military operations in exchange for the promise that the more formidable military power will provide the smaller country with protection should the need arise. In the case of a joint military engagement, the smaller country contributes personnel and financial resources. With the promise of support from more powerful countries, smaller states can deter other states from taking actions against them. All states within the pact, however large or small, are obligated to take part in joint actions, and because all the states in the pact see an attack on one member as an attack on all members, smaller states are assured of protection. Thus, NATO is a true example of liberal international theory in practice. (For more on NATO, see [Chapter 15: International Law and International Organizations](#).)

Complex Interdependence

Complex interdependence⁴³ attempts to cut a middle path between liberal and realist theories. Acknowledging the intricacies of the international system, where all parts of the system—states, individuals, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, and nonstate actors—have competing interests, complex interdependence posits

that networks of actors form to meet common goals. Complex interdependence has three principal tenets:

- There are many pathways actors can take to achieve their desired ends. These pathways are differentiated based on the abilities of each of the actors.
- All issues are of relatively equal importance to states.
- States see the use of force as relatively more costly than any gain it might achieve and so may be inclined to chart paths of cooperation and the use of more stable institutional solutions.⁴⁴

Consider the relationship between the United States and China⁴⁵ as a real-world modern example of complex interdependence in action. The economic linkages between the US and China cannot be overstated. Those linkages keep the two countries locked in a long-standing, deeply complicated relationship. The United States relies heavily on the highly developed, highly efficient Chinese manufacturing sector, and the Chinese financial system buys up American government debt to back Chinese currencies. The international community relies on China to keep North Korea in line. However, these interdependencies do not stop China from choosing to engage in cyberwarfare against the United States, nor do they prevent the United States from filing complaints against China for human rights violations, as the United States diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Summer Olympic Games⁴⁶ in Beijing illustrates. That China and the United States are a part of similar international organizations, such as the United Nations, where both countries hold veto power on the Security Council, does not prevent either country from using military might and prowess to signal its strength to the other country.

Constructivism

The international system is both fragile and highly changeable. The anarchic nature of the system means that there is no centralized enforcement mechanism that can coerce states to act in a generally accepted manner. So, what keeps state actions within the boundaries of appropriate behavior? How do states even know what behavior is appropriate?

Constructivism⁴⁷ posits that shared conceptions of the world, how the world works, what constitutes power, and who holds that power result in shared norms—expected patterns of behavior that align with the expectations and behavior patterns of others. For constructivists, these shared conceptions and resultant norms are the glue that holds the international system together. At its core, constructivism is about the interaction of many different actors within the system, each aiming to hold the others in line. According to constructivists, the perceptions states share about the world and the consequences that it is generally accepted a state might suffer should other states view it in a negative light are what keeps state actions within the boundaries of appropriate behavior.

For constructivists, how the world works and how it is perceived are not static. According to constructivism, the commonly accepted view of the world determines who has the most power to convey norms and to influence changes in norms and in ideas about how the international system should work. How the world is and how it works influence how actors choose to act,

and this creates the norms and perceptions that will shape the world to come—what can be thought of as “the new normal.”

One useful way to better understand the constructivist view is to use levels of analysis. At the individual level, leaders might try to use their own personal power and charm to shape the perceptions of other actors in the system. In order to change the behavior of other states to benefit their own purposes, leaders of states who are focused on projecting their own strength, such as Vladimir Putin or Kim Jong Un, seek to carefully craft what other leaders think of them.

According to constructivists, states work to establish norms by modeling behavior and pressuring other states to emulate that behavior. For example, changes in a country’s domestic law become part of that country’s national identity; if a state chooses to enact a social safety net program, such as providing open access to education for all children, it can then pressure other states to enact a similar policy. States that enact similar policies sow relationships that can serve as a foundation on which other interactions or agreements can be built.

At the systemic level, constructivism again prioritizes the importance of norms and the tendency of political actors to seek to align with those norms. The way states identify and place value judgments on “democratic” countries or “rogue states” can motivate an individual state to change its behavior. International organizations can establish specific rules or expectations of state behavior, placing further pressure on states to align their behavior with the rest of the world—especially if being in the out group means that a state has fewer resources to support their own economic, political, or social standing.

Consider recent developments in the relationships among China, Russia, and the United States. China and Russia are becoming allies as relations between the United States and these two countries grow more strained. Constructivists contend that how a state views itself—its national identity—affects its goals and how it views and interacts with other states. For decades the United States has been the preeminent power in international relations, setting the tone for interactions. That may be changing. When Russia and China announced a sweeping—if informal—agreement declaring their friendship and opening the door for mutual cooperation, it appeared that the efforts of the United States to keep China neutral on the issue of Russia’s aggressive stance toward Ukraine had failed. Though Russia and China are both powerful autocracies, as economist and former National Security Council official Andrew Weiss notes, they have not always viewed each other as strong allies: “The Russians for the longest time were condescending in their view of China as an uninteresting rural society. Now China looks at Russia and says, ‘What are you good for?’”⁴⁸ Foreign affairs analyst Robin Wright contends that their new alliance “challenges the United States as a global power, NATO as a cornerstone of international security, and liberal democracy as a model for the world.”⁴⁹ In changing their views of each other and joining together to form an alliance, Russia and China seek to change the way they are viewed in the world, and in fact perhaps the way the world order itself has worked for decades.

Where Can I Engage?

International relations and international politics are always changing, so having the most up-to-date information and analysis possible is vital to understanding what is happening in the world.

Podcasts provide a useful resource for up-to-date discussions of international politics. Some good podcasts to explore include:

[Pod Save the World](#) (Crooked Media)

[The Lawfare Podcast](#) (The Lawfare Institute)

[IS: Off the Page](#) (*International Security*)

States must rely on norms to communicate expected behaviors. Norms can be repeated behaviors, such as the use of fiat currency—government-issued, physical currency, the value of which is not linked to some other commodity (such as the gold standard)—in modern economies. They can also be actions required by international law, such as the role the United Nations Security Council plays in dealing with matters of international conflict or the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which prohibits state control over international waters beginning five miles outside of a state’s continental shelf.⁵⁰ Norms provide states with a starting point from which to weigh possible courses of action and determine how best to respond to any situation that may come up during the course of normal state relations.

If members of the international community consider a state’s actions to be in conflict with existing norms, they may not consider that state to be a reliable ally. Once a state loses its standing as a positively regarded member of the international system, it can affect the way other states enter into agreements, whether they be economic or political. In an increasingly interdependent world, a state that is no longer able to enter into beneficial agreements with other states will have difficulty employing its resources in the most efficient way.

Marxism, Feminism, and Post-Colonialism

1.7 Critical Worldviews

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain Marxism, including its fundamental concepts and possible limitations or critiques.
- Explain feminism, including its fundamental concepts and possible limitations or critiques.

Recall that a state’s policy decisions are grounded in the general way it perceives the structure of the world, its place in the larger system, and what it believes would be necessary to secure

and grow its position relative to other states. The perspectives of those in power tend to dominate discussions of international norms and theories of international relations. Those who see the system as fundamentally unjust have developed alternative theories to explain the way states act in the international system.

Marxism

Marxism⁵¹ emerged as a response to the rise of capitalism on the back of the imperial actions of the European powers. Karl Marx asserted that the individuals who controlled the factors of production in a country—the land and physical resources, the labor force, the capital needed for investment in the facilities and processes of an economy, and the entrepreneurship and creativity that drives economic growth and diversification—had too much power over its social norms. According to Marx, over the long term, those in power seek to create institutions that further entrench the stratification of the classes of a population, keeping wealth in the upper classes and leaving the lower classes with significant obstacles to their individual advancement. Marxist states seek to promote equality among all people so that each individual has the same opportunities to further their own wealth and success. These states seek to develop an international system in which societies invest internally to focus on the development of their own power and their own means of production so that the producing state gains the most from those products to the benefit of its own citizens.

Proponents of dependency theory⁵² argue that the stratification of countries in the international system is based around core countries and periphery countries. This view is known as the core-periphery model.⁵³ Core countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom are more developed than most other countries, with more stable political and social institutions and higher-order economic systems. These states rely on developing, or what were once called third-world, countries—periphery countries—that are rich in extractive resources the core countries need to maintain their status. Earlier, the chapter discussed comparative advantage and trade as the basis for international relations; dependency theory suggests that countries that are able to produce higher-order goods and services, such as technologically advanced products like machinery and computers, are better suited to protect their power in the long term. To entrench this advantage, core states have an incentive to keep periphery countries in positions of political and social unrest so that the core countries may extract the needed resources with minimal costs.

At its core, dependency theory rests on Marxist views that those who control the factors of production have the ability to exploit workers. Marxism argues that the pursuit of equality is more assured if the control of society is given to those doing the work to bring about societal progress.

Feminism

Feminist theory promotes equality among all people, regardless of biological sex or sociological gender. According to feminist theory, traditional views of international relations consider the state to be the main actor in the international system,⁵⁴ and the feminist tradition views the state as an inherently masculine institution in that it is and has been dominated by men and the

male point of view since its inception. As such, according to feminist theory, international relations has traditionally focused on “hard policy” issues, such as conflict and security, and has concentrated primarily on the actions of men. It has relegated to second-class status issues related to development and access to social programs. The end of the Second World War saw a huge shift in the role of women in society in general, ushering in a corresponding shift in the priorities of state policies toward the inclusion of more social programs. Since that time, the number of women in positions of power within governments has steadily increased. Women such as Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, the first woman to be elected a prime minister, have introduced policies in their countries focusing on the health, safety, and welfare of women and children alongside issues of national security and military engagement, leading to an increased focus on these policies in the international arena.



Figure 1.13 When she was elected in 1960, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka became the first women prime minister in the world. (credit: “Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon and member of the Sri Lanka (Freedom) Party, head-and shoulders portrait, seated at desk, facing left” by United Press International (UPI)/Library of Congress, Public Domain)

Issues like poverty, infant and maternal mortality, access to education, and violence against women have become a more central part of the conversation in organizations like the United Nations. As more women become part of the policy-making process, the areas that were once relegated to “women’s issues” are being recognized as issues that affect everyone and that must be dealt with to help support vibrant, growing, prosperous societies.

It is worth noting that the scholarship of international relations as a whole has followed the slow track of progress to include women in the field. Especially in the case of scholarship related to conflict and security issues, women have been left out of the conversation, and the overwhelming perspective of work has been that of the heteronormative White male. This lack of diversity in the contributors to the scholarship has led to a lack of objectivity in the scope and process of the study of international relations. As the body of international relations scholars has incrementally, albeit marginally, diversified, the breadth and depth of the scholarship of the field has followed. As the people working in the field of international relations diversifies, a diversity of new perspectives will emerge that can help the field as a whole meet the challenges of the modern system. Scholars such as University of Wisconsin—Green Bay professor Alise Coen⁵⁵ and Harvard University professor Maya Sen are bringing their unique perspectives to the study of refugee rights and its associated policies and war, respectively.

1.8 Post-colonialism by Sheila Nair⁴

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Postcolonialism examines how societies, governments, and peoples in the formerly colonised regions of the world experience international relations. The use of 'post' by postcolonial scholars by no means suggests that the effects or impacts of colonial rule are now long gone. Rather, it highlights the impact that colonial and imperial histories still have in shaping a colonial way of thinking about the world and how Western forms of knowledge and power marginalise the non-Western world. Postcolonialism is not only interested in understanding the world as it is, but also as it ought to be. It is concerned with the disparities in global power and wealth accumulation and why some states and groups exercise so much power over others. By raising issues such as this, postcolonialism asks different questions to the other theories of IR and allows for not just alternative readings of history but also alternative perspectives on contemporary events and issues.

The basics of postcolonialism

Postcolonialism has specifically drawn attention to IR theory's neglect of the critical intersections of empire, race/ethnicity, gender and class (among other factors) in the workings of global power that reproduce a hierarchical IR. This hierarchy is centered not on striving for a more equal distribution of power among peoples and states but on the concentration of power.

A key theme to postcolonialism is that Western perceptions of the non-West are a result of the legacies of European colonisation and imperialism. Discourses – primarily things that are written or spoken – constructed non-Western states and peoples as 'other' or different to the West, usually in a way that made them appear to be inferior. In doing so, they helped European powers justify their domination over other peoples in the name of bringing civilisation or progress.³⁶

To better understand postcolonialism we can consider the discourses that make certain power relations seem natural or even inevitable. Postcolonialism views key issues in International Relations as constituting discourses of power. This notion of a discourse allows scholars to utilise a frame of reference for thinking about the world and its problems that does not merely reside in the empirically verifiable and 'fact'-based inquiry that drives traditional IR theories such as realism and liberalism. Take, for example, the issue of global inequality. Postcolonialism suggests that in order to better understand how global class relations emerge and are maintained we must address ideas about why these relations appear normal. This approach

⁴ Reused from Nair, Sheila. Chapter 9: Post-Colonialism [International Relations Theory](#). S. McGlinchey, R. Walters, & C. Scheinpflug Eds

points to how characterisations of global poverty are often accompanied by images and narratives of non-Western governments and societies as simultaneously primitive, hyper-masculine, aggressive, childlike and effeminate. In short, postcolonialism argues that addressing and finding solutions to poverty and global inequality come up against representations of the other that make it difficult for Western policymakers to shed their biases and address the underlying global structural factors such as how capital and resources are accumulated and flow around the world generating inequality. For this reason, solutions often focus only on intervening to support a seemingly less developed state, rather than addressing the underlying causes of global inequality.

In analysing how key concepts such as power, the state and security serve to reproduce the status quo, postcolonialism proposes a more complex view of such concepts than is characteristic of traditional theories. For example, the concept of sovereignty, and with it the contours of the modern state, were imposed on the colonial world by European powers. Yet it is a concept that is usually taken for granted by scholars of realism and liberalism. Postcolonialism also challenges the Marxist perspective that class struggle is at the root of historical change – instead demonstrating how race shapes history. Analyses that focus only on class fail to consider how the identification of the ‘Third World’ (a term developed during the Cold War to describe those states unaligned to the United States or the Soviet Union) as ‘backward’, ‘primitive’ or ‘non-rational’ are linked to persistent economic marginalisation. Similarly, while mainstream IR theories see the international system as an anarchy, postcolonial scholars see it as a hierarchy. Colonialism and imperialism fostered a long process of continued domination of the West over the rest of the world and cultural, economic and political domination still characterise global politics.

Postcolonialism also demonstrates how Western views about Islam and its adherents are a manifestation of the West’s own insecurities. The rise of political Islam across the Muslim world – watermarked by Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979 – not only confronted neo-imperialist interventions but also revealed the impacts of core cultural and social shifts accompanying a more interconnected global economy. In the West, however, the view of this resurgence has been interpreted by prominent policymakers and academics as heralding a ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington 1993) and worse, constituting a direct threat to Western civilization. Edward Said (1997) showed how Western media, film, academia and policy elites rely on a distorted lens or framework used to describe the history and culture of Arab peoples and adherents of Islam. He called it Orientalism because it constructs a particular idea of the so-called ‘Orient’ that is distinct from the West and that in a binary or dualistic way of thinking ascribes to the Orient and its inhabitants characteristics that are essentially the opposite of the West. For instance, people of the Orient may be characterised as being exotic, emotional, feminine, backward, hedonistic, non-rational and so forth. This is in contrast to the more positive attributes usually associated with the West such as rationality, masculinity, civilization and modernity.

Many postcolonial scholars emphasise how orientalist discourses are still visible in Western representations today. Representations and perceptions matter to postcolonial theorists because they dictate what comes to be seen as normal or as making sense.

Postcolonialism owes a significant debt to Edward Said for his work on developing Orientalism. Yet Said himself was influenced by the writing of anticolonial and nationalist thinkers such as Frantz Fanon (1967) and Albert Memmi (1991) whose works discuss the power of ‘othering’. For example, Fanon shows how race shapes the way that the coloniser relates to the colonised and vice versa by capturing how some people under colonial rule began to internalise – that is, identify with – ideas of racial difference that saw ‘others’ as inferior to white Europeans. Fanon explains that the ‘black man’ is made to believe in his inferiority to the ‘white colonisers’ through psychological aspects of colonisation, such as the imposition of the coloniser’s language, culture, religion and education systems. Through such impositions, the colonised come to believe they are a culturally inferior other. This internalisation made it easier for colonisers to justify and maintain their rule. Postcolonialism thus brings into focus how racial binaries – that is, how races are constructed as different, opposite or ‘other’ – continue even after the end of formal colonial rule. It highlights how racialised othering frames not just history, but contemporary debates such as national security, nuclear politics, nationalism, culture, immigration, international aid and the struggle for indigenous rights.

An example of racialised othering can be found in discourses around nuclear non-proliferation. In such discourses, countries and their leaders in the Global South are usually deemed not to be trusted with nuclear weapons. These dominant discourses construct these states as dangerous, unpredictable or unaccountable and as violating basic norms on human rights. One need only look at how North Korea and Iran, two states that have pursued nuclear proliferation, are portrayed as rogue states in US foreign policy discourse. Yet, for decades, the West’s disregard for human rights may be seen in uranium mining that has often taken place on lands that are populated by indigenous peoples around the world – including in the United States – and has caused death, illness and environmental degradation. Most importantly, what is often missing from the nuclear debate is the fact that the United States is the only power to have ever used nuclear weapons (aside from testing), when it dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945, with horrific and devastating loss of life.

Therefore, for postcolonial scholars such as Shampa Biswas (2014), the notion that some states can be trusted with nuclear weapons while others cannot because they are less developed, less mature in their approach to human life or less rational is a racialised discourse. In debates such as these, postcolonialism asks not who can be trusted with such weapons, but rather who determines who can be trusted – and why? Simply looking at the competition between states to accrue nuclear weapons will not tell us enough about the workings of power in international relations – such as how a nuclear arms race is underpinned by the power of some states to construct other states so that they are deemed not capable of having any such weapons at all.

Postcolonialism and the marginalisation of women of colour

As with all theories of IR, there are internal debates among postcolonial scholars and in this case also a significant overlap with feminism – especially ‘third wave’ feminism that became prominent in the 1990s. bell hooks (2000) observed that the so-called ‘second wave’ of feminism of the mid- to late twentieth century had emerged from women in a position of privilege and did not represent African American women such as herself who remain on the

margins of society, politics and the economy. She called for an alternative, critical and distinctive feminist activism and politics.

For example, does a black woman from a poor neighbourhood on Chicago's south side experience sexism in the same way as a white woman from its wealthier suburbs? Women who share the same ethnic identity might experience sexism in different ways because of their class. The same might be true for women of colour and white women from the same social class. Women of colour and white women in the United States experience 'heteropatriarchy' – a societal order marked by white male heterosexual domination – differently even if they come from the same social class. An illustration of how this works may be found in the video of Beyoncé's 'Lemonade' which not only draws on how sexism is filtered through this patriarchal order but also explores how race, gender, class and sexuality are intimately intertwined in the history of black women.

The fact that some black women may be more privileged in relation to class may not take away from their experience of racism. For this reason (and others), feminist postcolonial scholars (see Chowdhry and Nair 2002) call for more attention to the intersections of race and/or ethnicity, nationality, class and gender. By doing so they address the ways that different aspects of one's identity, such as race, gender, class, sexuality and so forth, intersect to create multiple and distinct forms of oppression so that no one aspect can be privileged over another in understanding oppression. Instead, various identities must all be understood as intersecting in producing one's experience of oppression. This idea of 'intersectionality' is central to third-wave feminist approaches.

Postcolonial feminists share a desire to go beyond simply analysing the impacts of patriarchy, gender inequality and sexual exploitation. Instead, they highlight the need to fight not only patriarchy (broadly understood as the power of men over women) but also the classism and racism that privileges white women over women of colour. They question the idea of universal solidarity in women's movements, arguing that the struggle against patriarchy as well as social inequality must be situated in relation to racial, ethnic and sexual privilege. For example, while Western feminism has often portrayed the veil as a symbol of oppression of women, many Algerian women adopted the veil, standing alongside men, when protesting French rule. To them, it was a symbol of opposition to white, colonial patriarchy. In many other parts of the colonised world, women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in nationalist movements to overthrow colonial rule, showing that women in different cultural, social and political contexts experience oppression in very different ways. Postcolonial feminists are committed to an intersectional approach that uncovers the deeper implications of how and why systemic violence evident in war, conflict, terror, poverty, social inequality and so forth has taken root. Understanding power thus requires paying attention to these intersections and how they are embedded in the issue at hand.

Postcolonial feminism asserts that women of colour are triply oppressed due to their (1) race/ethnicity, (2) class status and (3) gender. An example can be found in the employment conditions of the many women in the Global South who work in factories producing textiles, semi-conductors, and sporting and consumer goods for export to the West. In one such factory

in Thailand, the Kader Toy Factory, a fire in 1993 killed 220 female factory workers and seriously injured over 500 more. The doors to the building were locked at the time of the fire. The tragedy revealed the exploitation and deplorable working conditions of these women, who were employed by local contractors of American companies to make toys and stuffed animals for sale in Western markets. Despite decades of such abuses, there was little attention given to the conditions in these factories, or to the tragedy of the fire, in the mainstream Western media. One opinion piece captured the shocking disregard for these women's lives,

These executives know that their profits come from the toil of the young and the wretched in the Far East; they can live with that – live well, in fact. But they do not want to talk about dead women and girls stacked in the factory yard like so much rubbish, their bodies eventually to be carted away like any other industrial debris (Herbert 1994).

In another tragedy, the Rana Plaza – a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh – collapsed, killing 1,135 garment workers, mostly women. It threw a spotlight on the workings of the global garment industry. Popular Western clothing lines profit from low wages, exploitation and sweatshop conditions by producing their clothes in countries with lax building codes and regulations and nonexistent (or inadequate) labour standards. The clothing lines do not then hold the factories to account for working conditions or safety. Postcolonial scholars argue that the deeply exploitative conditions and the disregard for the safety of these workers show that lesser value is ascribed to brown bodies compared to white ones.

While there was much more coverage of this industrial accident in the Western media and the brands whose clothing was being made at the Rana Plaza did suffer some momentary bad publicity, there has been little sustained effort to right the wrongs in the operations of multinational firms. The quest for the highest possible profit margins forces developing countries into a 'race to the bottom' in which they compete to have the cheapest labour and production costs in order to attract investment from multinational corporations.

The results are low wages, exploitation and low safety standards. Postcolonial scholarship explains the failure to change these conditions by exposing how race, class and gender come together to obscure the plight of these workers, meaning that the factory overseers, like the owners of the Rana Plaza and Kader operations, are not held accountable until tragedy strikes. Even when they are held accountable, the punishment does not extend to the Western corporations further up the chain who sub-contract the task of exploiting workers – and ultimately killing some of them in these cases. It is almost impossible to imagine that a tragedy of a similar scale in a Western state would prompt so little action against those responsible or allow the conditions that caused it to continue virtually unchecked.

Conclusion

Postcolonialism interrogates a world order dominated by major state actors and their domineering interests and ways of looking at the world. It challenges notions that have taken hold about the way states act or behave and what motivates them. It forces us to ask tough questions about how and why a hierarchical international order has emerged and it further

challenges mainstream IR's core assumptions about concepts such as power and how it operates. Postcolonialism forces us to reckon with the everyday injustices and oppressions that can reveal themselves in the starkest terms through a particular moment of crisis. Whether it has to do with the threat of nuclear weapons or the deaths of workers in factories churning out goods for Western markets, postcolonialism asks us to analyse these issues from the perspectives of those who lack power. While postcolonialism shares some common ground with other critical theories in this regard, it also offers a distinctive approach. It brings together a deep concern with histories of colonialism and imperialism, how these are carried through to the present – and how inequalities and oppressions embedded in race, class and gender relations on a global scale matter for our understanding of international relations. By paying close attention to how these aspects of the global play out in specific contexts, postcolonialism gives us an important and alternative conceptual lens that provides us with a different set of theoretical tools to unpack the complexities of this world.

Unit 2: Political Violence⁵

by Masahiro Omae, Ph.D. and Dino Bozonelos, Ph.D.

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2.1: What is Political Violence?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify what is political violence
- Explain how political violence differs from criminal violence
- Understand the differences between different forms of political violence
- Differentiate between the two categories of political violence

Political violence is a difficult term to define. The main question that arises is “when is violence considered political?” Before we can answer that, we first must define the concept of **violence**. Kalyvas (2006) states that “[a]t the basic level, violence is the deliberate infliction of harm on people”. Although some scholars have rightly considered non-physical aspects, such as social or economic oppression, as a form of oppression (i.e., “structural” violence), we will primarily focus on the physical variety in this chapter. So, while harm can come in many types, political violence exclusively focuses on physical violence. **Physical violence** includes the use of physical force to exert power. Examples include the use of weapons by criminal gangs to mark their territory, kidnappings, mass shootings, and torture. And while many of these examples can also be considered as political violence, the simple act of violence itself does not make it political. There is another step that makes violence become political.

Political violence occurs when the use of physical harm is motivated by political intentions. For example, when violence is used to destroy a social order, but also to preserve a social order, we can consider this political violence. Thus, political violence can be used by those seeking to challenge the socio-political status quo. And it could involve those who want to defend that same status quo.

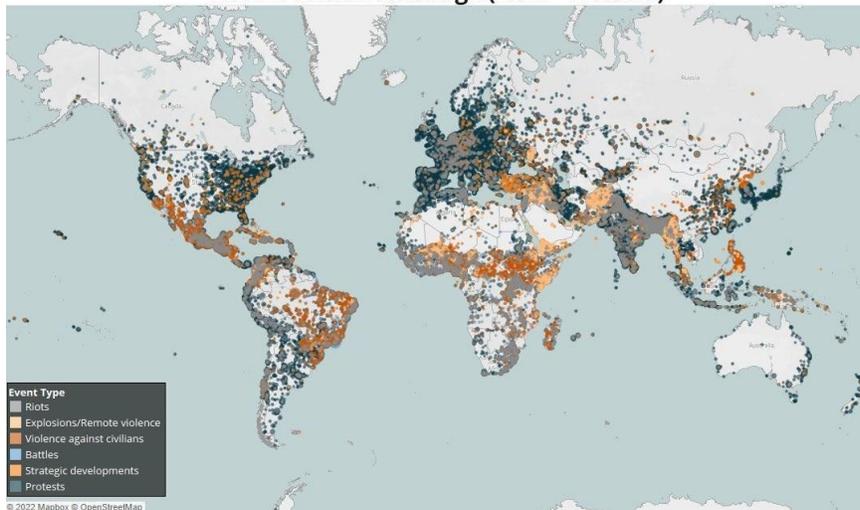
⁵ Reused from “Chapter 12: Political Violence” by Masahiro Omae, Ph.D. and Dino Bozonelos, Ph.D. in *Introduction To Comparative Government and Politics* <https://introcp.com/> under CC-BY-NC license

Differentiating when an act of violence is simply criminal or should be considered political violence can be tricky. For example, many scholars contend that the actions taken by the drug cartels in the Gulf of Mexico should be described as political violence. The cartels often target law enforcement, kidnap the loved ones of government officials and threaten the government itself. Thus, by targeting the official capacity of the government, some say that the Mexican drug trafficking groups are politically violent. However, we have to ask what are the intentions of these narco groups? Their primary interests are financial, the continued flow of narcotics from Central and South America to the U.S. border. They are overwhelmingly not interested in challenging the socio-political order. They have little interest in regime change, or in elections. The drug cartels tend to get involved only when their interests are threatened. As long as the Mexican government stays out of their way, they will respond in kind.

What are some forms of political violence? Are interstate wars, or wars between two or more countries, considered political violence? The answer generally is no. Even though our definition above does not necessarily preclude international wars, the vast majority of political violence transpires within a state. **Intrastate political violence** is defined as political violence that wholly or largely occurs within a state or country. While individuals are being subjugated to political violence in the context of an international war, such a war still is a contestation between two or more sovereign entities where individuals are “participating” as a member of a sovereign state (see the definition and more details on state in chapter XX). So, we need to think about who is using violence against who when we are trying to classify different forms of political violence. Generally speaking, at least one of the parties involved in a case of political violence is a nonstate actor. A **non-state actor** is any political actor that is not associated with a government. It is further defined as “an individual or organization that has significant political influence but is not allied to any particular country or state” (Lexico, n.d.).

Non-state actors include a wide range of organizations and individuals. Many non-state actors are charities or have peaceful intentions. This includes non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and trade unions. They can also include individual political actors as well (a deeper discussion of non-state actors occurs in Chapter 12). Non-state actors that engage in political violence traditionally involve insurgents, guerilla groups and terrorists. Each one of the groups will be discussed at length in this chapter. Finally, political violence can include a wide range of activities: terrorism, assassinations, coups, battles, riots, explosions, and protests.

ACLED Global Coverage (2021 - Present)



(Source: Author's Creation using the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#); [Terms of Use & Attribution Policy](#))

A more difficult differentiation occurs when non-state actors have a transnational presence. **Transnationalism** is defined as “events, activities, ideas, trends, processes and phenomena that appear across national boundaries and cultural regions” (Juergensmeyer, 2013). Thus, **transnational political violence** is defined as political violence that occurs across different countries or crosses state borders. By their nature, insurgents and guerilla groups tend not to be transnational, as their focus is on overthrowing a government within a specific country or succeeding in the secession of a region or province. **Secession** is defined as the act of formal withdrawal or separation from a political entity, usually a state. The goals of secessionist movements are often the creation of a new state or leaving to join another state.

This is not the case with terrorism, however. Since the 1990s, terrorism has become transnational, with the rise of groups such as al-Qaeda and their affiliates and offspring. Transnational actors blur the line between comparative politics and international relations. As countries have allied to combat transnational terrorist activity, their responses could be understood through international relations theory. In addition, international governmental organizations, such as the United Nations have also worked with individual member-states on counterterrorism strategies. Still, terrorism is often researched by comparative scholars as the targets of their political violence are civilians. Given that these attacks happen within a country, comparative methodology can help in analyzing and/or assessing terrorist acts and their responses.

Given the above discussion, we can present several categories of political violence. The first category involves state-sponsored political violence. This form of political violence occurs when a government uses violence, either against its own citizens, referred to as **internal sponsored political violence**; or against foreign citizens, usually in neighboring countries, referred to as **external sponsored political violence**. The second category involves non-state sponsored

political violence. Forms of non-state sponsored political violence involves insurgencies, civil wars, revolutions, and terrorism. Each one of these categories, both state-sponsored and nonstate sponsored forms will be discussed at length below.

2.2: State-Sponsored Political Violence

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between internal and external state-sponsored political violence
- Understand different repressive policies (domestic terrorism)
- Evaluate different models of state-sponsored terrorism

A major characteristic of a state is their '**monopoly on the use of violence**'. By this we mean that only the state and its institutions, such as the police or the military, have the authority to use violence, *when necessary*. The last part has been italicized for a reason. If the government of a country enjoys this monopoly, then the leaders, elected or not, are also responsible for when violence is used. Rules and regulations must exist for states when violence is employed by authorities. For example, all police authorities worldwide are expected to undergo formal training, background checks. In addition, most law enforcement officers are expected to be actively licensed, with periodic reviews of their performance. Unfortunately, those with the ability to wield such power, often through small arms and/or other weaponry, have too often abused this authority. We see many instances of protestors on global TV stations being beaten in the streets, or images of villages being looted or burned. When this occurs, it often leads the people of that country to believe that their government has transgressed their responsibility. At this stage, we can say that this state has engaged in state-sponsored political violence.

State-sponsored political violence can be characterized as “official government support for policies of violence, repression, and intimidation” (Martin, 2020, pg. 66). Officially, a government can sanction violence against people or organizations that are deemed to be a threat to the state. Who exactly gets to decide who is a threat, and in turn define them as an enemy is left to debate. Many times, state-sponsored political violence is often referred to as government terrorism, or state-sponsored terrorism. The word terrorism itself is often used to describe many different violent actions. Political leaders often use the word to describe actions taken by their political opposition. Similarly, people also apply the word terrorism to unpopular decisions made by leaders that have had harmful repercussions.

However, in political science terrorism has a specific meaning. **Terrorism** is defined as a violent act that generally targets noncombatants for political purposes. Some go even further and define terrorism as violence carried out by *nonstate actors* that targets noncombatants for political reasons. We tend to disagree and believe that such actions carried out by governments can rightfully also be labeled as terrorism. This is because terrorism is better understood as a tactic. The goal in terrorism is to use violence to disruption and fear among the general

population as away to put pressure on government leaders. Terrorists hope that this pressure will lead to changes in government policy that they find favorable. Let's look at how different governments approach the use of political violence.

In democratic regimes, these decisions are often left up to the executive branches of a government. For example, in parliamentary systems, the Prime Minister's cabinet will often make that call, often in consultation with the country's intelligence agencies. In presidential systems, this decision often falls to the President, who usually consults with a national defense council. These councils often include the country's defense minister, national security advisor and other relevant officials, such as the foreign minister. Either way, the decisions to determine who is a threat are eventually scrutinized by opposing politicians, or directly by the public. A good example is when opposition parties call for a vote of no confidence in parliamentary systems for example. Through voting mechanisms, the public can concur with their elected leaders and re-elect them, or dissent and choose to vote for opposing candidates and/or parties.

In authoritarian regimes, a similar process plays out, but with some important differences. The decision on who is an enemy is still made at the executive level. However, whether it is a Prime Minister or a President, or a Premier making that call is irrelevant. In authoritarian systems there is also little to no recourse for those who may disagree. Often, the opposition party, if one exists, is ignored, and the public often lacks the formal voting mechanisms to remove a leader they disagree with. This can explain why the propensity for political violence may be greater in authoritarian regimes. As there are less checks on those who have a monopoly on the use of power, abuse of that authority is more likely.

2.2.1: Internal State-Sponsored Political Violence (Government Terrorism)

When a government finally determines who is a threat and designates someone, some group, or some organization as an enemy, the next step is figuring out where this threat/enemy is located. If it is determined to be within the borders of the country, then the threat is considered to be an **internal threat**. If it is determined to be outside the borders of the country, then the threat is considered an **external threat**. This distinction clearly matters as the state will have more autonomy to use violence against internal threats vis-a-vis external threats. The concept of sovereignty applies. Remember from Chapter One, sovereignty is fundamental governmental power, where the government has the power to coerce those to do things they may not want to do. Also remember from Chapter Three, sovereignty also involves the ability to manage the country's affairs independently from outside powers and internal resistance. If a state does not have the ability to manage its own affairs and issues, it will not be able to maintain its power over what happens. If a country enjoys widespread sovereignty, then the government will have more room from which to address internal threats. States have little to no sovereignty beyond their borders, though can project power in the defense of their interests.

When violence is officially sanctioned against a perceived internal threat or enemy, it can come in many forms. In democratic countries, this often involves use of force to arrest or detain those who act against the state. It may also involve the use of lethal means, particularly if the democratically elected government believes the threat could be an **existential threat**, or a threat to the existence of the state itself. An example could include a group that espouses an apocalyptic ideology, and may lack any political goals, other than seeing the destruction of their home government. Still, in a democratic society, the public will tend not to tolerate large scale measures. It is one thing to punish an extremist group, it's another thing for wider security measures that could affect society writ large.

Still, the use of violence in a democratic society can occur without formal sponsorship by its government. Political violence can be used by vigilante groups, paramilitaries, and other armed groups. In many countries, these groups may not have the *explicit* support of the state, but *implicit* support instead. Often, they are administratively separate from official government structures. Such groups will wage unofficial campaigns of violence and suppression against perceived internal enemies. They may or may not work with a state's security apparatus when targeting others. In addition, as these organizations are not part of a government's official institutions, governments may claim that they exert no control or influence over the group's actions.

In authoritarian countries, repression through violence may be official state policy. This is often referred to as **overt repression as policy**. Countries such as the Soviet Union under Stalin, or Nazi Germany, or in more recent times, Cambodia when ruled by the Khmer Rouge and Afghanistan in the 1990s before the U.S. invasion toppled them, all had adopted explicit repressive policies of violence towards people and segments of their population. Hundreds of thousands of people were exiled to work camps in Siberia during Stalin's reign. Millions of people were killed in Nazi death camps, simply for being born in the wrong group. The Khmer Rouge is responsible for one of the worst mass killings of the late 20th century. Up to two million Cambodians were massacred in their attempt to transform the country into an agrarian utopian society. Finally, Taliban rule of Afghanistan in the 1990s was cruel and vicious, often targeting minority groups, such as the Hazaras.



(Source: Skulls of the victims of the Khmer Rouge occupation of Cambodia in the memorial stupa at the [Choeung Ek Killing Field](#), Phnom Penh, Cambodia, by istoletv via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)).

In addition to overt repression, where violence is the official state policy, there is also **covert repression as policy**. Often actions undertaken by secret police services, or domestic intelligence agencies are considered covert. Use of violence against individuals or groups is often done secretly with society unaware that these violent actions are taking place. There are plenty of examples of authoritarian regimes using their domestic law enforcement services to quell opposition or stifle any dissent. Intelligence agencies such as in Syria or Iraq, referred to as the *Mukhabarat* in Arabic, are often integrated parts of a country's military structure. By surveilling the population, they can alert the military or law enforcement of any potential threats to the authoritarian regime's rule. Covert repression can also include nonviolent means as well. The former country of East Germany had the *Stasi*, or the State Security Service is a good example. The *Stasi* became infamous for their network of informants they developed in East German society. They used this network to terrify the population and use that fear to target those who might oppose the regime.

Keep in mind that such violence is much less tolerated today than it was in the past. Before the end of the Cold War, the concept of sovereignty was paramount when it came to the internal affairs of a state. However, since the 1990s, there has been a significant shift in the view of sovereignty. Following numerous humanitarian crises, scholars, policymakers and IGO officials have advocated for a new approach: **responsibility to protect (R2P)**. If a state refuses to protect its own citizens, then other states are expected to intervene in the state where abuses

are occurring. R2P goes as far as to suggest using military force to protect another country's citizens from persecution, especially if authorized by the UN Security Council.

2.2.2: External State-Sponsored Political Violence (State-Sponsored Terrorism)

When a country decides that the threat is external, the state can also take action. This action can be in the form of **state-sponsored terrorism**, which is defined as government support for terrorist actions in other states. However, these actions are going to be much more constrained than internal actions. Martin (2007) differentiates between two models of state-sponsored terrorism. The first is the **patronage model of state-sponsored terrorism**, which is when a state *actively* participates and encourages terrorist actions in other countries. The second is the **assistance model of state-sponsored terrorism**, which is when a state *tacitly* supports and encourages terrorist actions in other countries.

A good example of the patronage model of state-sponsored terrorism is Iranian support for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah is both a militant organization and a political party in Lebanon. Hezbollah directly translates as 'party of God' and politically represents Shi'a Muslim interests in Lebanon's parliament. Founded during the devastating Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the organization is active. They engage in combating other militias in Lebanon, have directly confronted Israel, both through fighting Israelis in southern Lebanon before Israeli forces pulled out in 2000 and with their rocket attacks on the country, and in supporting the Bashir al-Asad regime during the Syrian civil war. Hezbollah is designated as a terrorist organization by the US and other Western countries and Iran has been accused of supporting Hezbollah with weaponry, training and funding (Robinson, 2021).

For the assistance model of state-sponsored terrorism, a great example includes Pakistan's tacit support for Lashkar-e-Taiba. Lashkar-e-Taiba roughly translates as 'army of the righteous/pure'. They are a Pakistani-based terrorist organization that is most famous for a 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, where operatives targeted the country's financial district, a famous hotel landmark, and a Jewish cultural center. Pakistan has since banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, and prosecuted former members, however, the government tacitly supported the organization in the 1990s and still operates within Pakistan through a number of offshoot groups (Macander, 2021).



(Source: [Hotel Taj Mahal, Mumbai being burnt due to bombings and firings](#) by Stuti Sakhalkar via [flickr](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#))

2.3: Non-State Political Violence

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the different types of non-state political violence
- Understand the differences between civil wars, insurgencies, and guerilla warfare
- Apply explanations of terrorism
- Evaluate what is a revolution

As we stated earlier, a non-state actor is a political actor not associated with a government. Non-State actors come in many different types, from transnational corporations to nongovernmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, to international drug trafficking rings. Yet there are quite a few non-state actors who engage in political violence, from guerillas to insurgents to terrorists. Generally speaking, non-state political violence is by the type of action, rather than the type of actor. This is because the non-state actors can all engage in different types of political violence. For example, terrorists can participate in insurgencies and/or civil wars, whereas guerillas can engage in terrorist actions.

2.3.1: Insurgencies/Civil Wars

In the simplest term, a **civil war (simple)** is an armed conflict between two or more groups where one of the combatants is the government. Does this mean then that an armed engagement between a street gang and a police unit constitutes a civil war? The answer would be no. Even though the media may use terms such as war or civil war to describe such violence, political scientists would not refer to it as either war or a civil war. Remember, political violence is defined as the use of physical harm is motivated by political intentions. Given this, political violence scholars have narrowed the definition of the term.

According to Sambanis (2004), to meet the definition of **civil war (political science)**, a conflict must be between a rebel group and the government who are politically and militarily organized with stated political objectives that take place in the territory of a state that is a member of the international system with a population of at least 500,000. In addition to these general requirements, there are additional critical characteristics in distinguishing civil wars from the rest of armed engagement. The violence cannot be one-sided (see the section below on terrorism), and there needs to be sustained violence.

What then distinguishes civil war from other types of violence (e.g., riots, terrorism, and coup d'état)? First, civil wars are notated for the level of destruction. Wars within a country are often devastating. The US civil war killed over 600,000 people. Its scars are still felt in the US till this day. Given this, most scholars have adopted a numerical threshold of 1,000 deaths when defining political violence as the Correlates of War project as the one of the main deciding factors in determining whether an armed conflict should be classified as a war. While the use of numerical threshold can be useful in determining whether a violent episode is a civil war or not, strict application of that threshold can exclude cases that otherwise meet the definition of civil war.

Given the power dynamics involved in civil wars, the weaker side (typically the rebels) often rely on certain techniques when challenging the government. This reliance on insurgency tactics is what characterizes a civil war. An **insurgency** is an act of uprising or revolt against a government and/or the state. It is closely related to the concept of a rebellion, which we will define below. Insurgents claim that they represent the will of the people against a government that no longer represents them. For many insurgents then, their ultimate goal is the overthrow of the government, which in that case makes them revolutionaries (discussed more below). For other insurgents, their state goal may be secession, or if secession is not an attainable goal, then some level of political autonomy.

Insurgents use particular tactics because of the power imbalance that they face against the state. Even in a situation where the state is facing extinction as a functioning political entity, the state still often has the overwhelming firepower. This follows what we discussed earlier, where part of the definition of a state is that it monopolizes the legitimate use of violence. As such, the challenging side needs to be creative and innovative when challenging the government since the insurgent's probability of success is much lower, especially in head-to-head combat.

Guerilla warfare is similar to insurgency, and often the phrases are interchangeable. Like terrorism and insurgency, **guerilla warfare** is also better understood as a tactic, where small, lightly armed bands engage in guerrilla warfare from a rural base that targets the state. Guerilla warfare differs from insurgency in that these fighters usually do not engage in mass mobilization practices. Insurgents claim to represent the will of people. Guerillas do not. They tend to represent the interests of certain groups, and not necessarily the entire population. Of course, these definitions overlap and using the terms interchangeably happens in all settings.

What causes civil wars? Earlier literature on the onset of civil wars focused on grievances. The **grievance explanation** says that political violence along communal lines is jointly a product of deep-seated grievances about the status of the group and the situationally motivated political interests that various political actors desire to pursue (Gurr, 1993). Grievances often revolve around economic, social, and political rights, as well as demand for political autonomy. These grievances contribute to the likelihood of communal mobilization, which can lead to political violence.

This is especially more likely when a group historically has some level of political autonomy and then loses it. Resentment about the restriction on one's political access appears to drive rebellion amongst various communal groups. **Rebellion** is an act of violently challenging the government or existing ruler in order to bring attention to the status quo with which the challengers are dissatisfied. In this context, the sentiments of grievance can help leaders of the disadvantaged communal group. They can point to this instance as a basis in legitimizing their cause and propelling the movement. Given this, as the level of grievances increases within a group, the easier it becomes for leaders to recruit potential rebels. In turn, this can lead to rebellion and civil war.

The grievance explanation has been challenged by a number of scholars. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) prefer to look at opportunity factors for rebellion instead of motivational factors. They see rebellion as an industry that generates profit from exercising control over resources. They argue that “the incidents of rebellion are not explained by motive, but by the atypical circumstances that generate profitable opportunity” (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 564). More specifically, factors associated with the cost of and the availability of financing the rebellion, relative military advantage of the potential rebel group, and the pattern of demographic dispersion are all considered robust indicators of whether rebellion is an attractive option for opportunistic actors. In addition, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) show that rebellion is most likely when participants have low incomes. In their model, they incorporate measures of per capita income, the rate of male secondary school enrollment, and the economic growth rate. The basic idea is that if joining the rebel movement appears to be more profitable for the individuals, then it incentivizes the desire to participate, which in turn determines if a rebellion remains viable.

Finally, Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that civil war is understood through favorable environments. They disagree with theories that place emphasis on the necessity of strong, widespread popular support based on factors associated with grievances. Instead, they argue that an insurgency can be viable and sustained under certain conditions: mountainous terrain, contiguous cross border sanctuaries, and an easily recruited population. These conditions favor insurgents given the asymmetric distribution of power between the rebels and government forces.

2.3.2: Non-State Terrorism

Again, terrorism is defined as a violent act that generally targets noncombatants for political purposes. Many non-scientific analyses of various terrorism cases often cite religion, ethnoracial factors, extreme political ideology as the primary motivation for extreme groups to resort to violence. Many make a causal link between these factors and the outcome of a terrorist act by political extreme groups. However, it is evident that mere membership in a particular religious or ethnic group is not always causing one to commit these violent acts. So when and why do political extreme groups commit violence?

In the literature on the origins of terrorism, there are two dominant schools of theoretical explanation: psychological and rational choice explanations. The **psychological explanation of terrorism** relies on the idea that the violence itself is the desired outcome as opposed to being the means to the end. Post (1990) claims that “individuals become terrorists in order to join terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism.” While Post recognizes that this is a rather extreme claim, the psychological explanation posits that an act of violence is rationalized by the core ideology of a terrorist group where the participants are psychologically compelled to commit acts of violence.

Conversely, scholars like Crenshaw (1990) rely on the **rational choice explanation of terrorism** where the use of terrorism is believed to be the result of a willful strategy based on a careful political calculation. In this framework, terrorism is understood as an expression of political strategy where the act of violence is amongst many alternatives from which an extreme group may choose. Simply put, when the expected benefit of a terrorist act outweighs the cost of such behavior and produces the highest expected utility, then such an act becomes the most strategically sound option for a group. This analytical approach follows the conventional explanations for terrorism that a relatively weak group relies on a policy choice to make it hard for the state to ignore their claims.

For example, if the US armed forces were to go head to head with an existing terrorist groups, it is clear that the U.S. would easily defeat them. As a result, it makes no sense for a terrorist group to fight the US conventionally. Instead, it is preferable to strike the US where it is most vulnerable - targeting noncombatant targets, such as civilians. When looking back at the September 11th, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks, we see that al-Qaeda’s main target was the World Trade Center, the financial nerve center of the country. Military targets, such as the Pentagon, were also hit, but the goal of the attacks were to punish the American people, and put pressure on the US government to change their foreign policy and international behavior. If we were to use the rational choice explanation of terrorism, then the 9/11 attacks were not committed by an irrational group of extremists, but as a group engaged in a willful strategy to accomplish a political outcome. Indeed, it would be counterproductive to label them as “irrational” as that could lead to an underestimation of another attack.

The evidence is mixed in terms regarding the effectiveness of non-state terrorism. Terrorist action can lead to a specific change in government policy, but there have been few notable overall shifts in foreign policy. For example, al-Qaeda bombed several train stations in Madrid in 2004 as a reaction to the Spanish government involvement in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The attacks took place right before national elections and they influenced how Spanish citizens voted. Once the new government came in, they withdrew Spanish forces from coalition fighting in Iraq. However, the attacks in Madrid did not change the overall Iraq War. Other countries refused to change course.



(Source: [Remains of one of the trains bombed in the 2004 Madrid train bombings](#) by Ramon Peco via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#))

Terrorist action can also lead to changes in government policy that were not intended by the group. For example, the 9/11 attackers did not intentionally desire to change airport policies in the US. However, as anyone who has traveled in the past twenty years knows, the attacks had a dramatic impact. Now, all travelers in the US have to endure more intrusive safety protocols, including x-rays, taking off one's shoes, opening up carry-on bags, prohibition of liquids, etc. Prior to these attacks, most anyone could enter an airport, without as much intrusion. For example, people were able to go through security without a ticket and walk their loved ones to the gate. Similarly, they could wait at the gate when welcoming back their loved ones. These privileges no longer exist.

On other hand, sometimes the state purposes of a terrorist organization fail completely. A good example includes the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) call for the creation of a caliphate. A **caliphate** is essentially a state run by Islamic political authorities. A caliphate has not existed for quite a few centuries. ISIS leaders, who claimed to represent the interests of all Muslims worldwide, desired to build a caliphate in the areas of Syria and Iraq that they had conquered.

A caliph is believed to be the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad, which is an important concept in the history of Islam. Yet despite the best efforts of ISIS, the caliphate did not last. Syrian, Russian, Kurdish and American forces largely defeated ISIS in 2019. Even though ISIS committed atrocious violence and killed many non-combatants, they ultimately failed to achieve their primary political goal.

So how do we protect ourselves from a potential terrorist attack? Most countries develop counterterrorism policies, especially those that have been targeted in the past or are actively targeted today. **Counterterrorism policies** are defined as government or military efforts to prevent or thwart terrorism. Examples of counterterrorism policies include the U.S. government's efforts to cut off terrorist financing. This is accomplished by monitoring incoming and outgoing financial transactions, such as wire transfers and bank deposits. Other examples include extensive background checks for international student visas and retinal and fingerprint scans at border checkpoints. Another good example involves the EU's efforts to deradicalize convicted terrorists. They have developed a Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). According to the European Commission, "The RAN is a network of frontline practitioners who work daily with both those vulnerable to radicalisation and those who have already been radicalised." (European Commission, n.d.)

2.3.3: Revolution

The term revolution has been used in a variety of contexts. For example journalists will label news where a group of citizens politically (and often violently) protest and challenge the government in power as a revolution. An example includes current pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. Certain media outlets have labeled these protests as a revolution. Even the participants of the protest have used the word revolution in their slogan, "Liberate Hong Kong, the Revolution of Our Times." While journalists can use the word revolution, generally speaking describing the struggle as a revolution may not be appropriate. As mentioned in Chapter 2, political scientists need to clearly define the terms prior to making descriptive or causal inferences about the event of their interest. Otherwise, any potential politically violence action can be called a revolution.



(Source: Demonstration in support of 2019 Hong Kong Protests. by [Andrew Mercer](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#))

According to Skocpol (1979), a **revolution** is defined as a public seizure of the state in order to overturn the existing government and regime. This definition has three important parts. First, there has to be public participation in the movement. This means that the public must play a critical role. This characteristic of a revolution differentiates it from other types of political violence such as a coup d'état. Recall from Chapter Three, that a coup d'état is an attempt by elites to overthrow the current government of a state through abrupt seizure of power and removal of the government's leadership. While many political challenges and violence are initiated by political elites, a revolution must be supported by the general public.

Second, the main purpose of a revolution is the public seizure of the state. Other types of political violence may not require the seizure of the state. Some politically violent actors can achieve their goals with concessions from the state. For example, some insurgents may settle for an expansion of voting rights or meaningful protection of civil rights. Or, some terrorists may settle for a change in policy. A revolution in contrast will end with the rebel group in control of the state apparatus, taking full control over the function of the government.

Third, once the state is captured by the rebels, there will be a shift in the regime. This characteristic is critical when attempting to differentiate a revolution from all other types of political violence against the state. Without regime change, such actions are classified under

other types of political violence (e.g., civil war). It is very important to be able to clearly identify whether a particular event constitutes a revolution or not when studying the onset, nature, and possible solution to political violence. While violent episodes may initially appear to be the same in terms of the cause, researchers are most likely to observe differences in the duration or the nature of violence between revolution and non-revolutions.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 is a great example of a revolution as described by Skocpol. It marked the end of centuries of imperial Russian rule, with the assassination of the Romanov family in 1918. The ensuing civil war saw the communists, or Bolsheviks, fight under Vladimir Lenin. Their red army fought against the white army, a loose association of loyalists, capitalists and other elements. The success of the communists in 1923 led to a dramatic reordering of Russian society. A largely agrarian society was collectively industrialized in the ensuing decades. New social norms were introduced. It was truly a revolution in every sense of the word.



(Source: [February Revolution in Russia](#) by Unknown Author via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [Public Domain](#)).

The above discussion generally discusses a revolution accomplished through violent means. However, in some cases revolutions may occur without violence. Quite a few nonviolence movements have succeeded in achieving regime change. **Nonviolence movements** are defined as movements that engage in nonviolent practices to accomplish political goals. Tactics can include protests, boycotts, sit-ins, and civil disobedience. They are also referred to as nonviolent resistance or nonviolent protests. All three elements identified by Skocpol need to exist: public participation, public seizure of a state, and a shift in regimes. Where nonviolent revolutions differ is that the movement's leaders convince the state's military, or some portion thereof, that the state is better off under a new regime. It is not a coup per se, as a coup is led by military elites. In nonviolent revolutions, the military either refuses to intervene, and/or abandons the regime in power entirely. When that happens, the reigning military authority will work with the new regime to maintain peace and security.

A great example of a nonviolent revolution is the fall of communist regimes in 1989. The Soviet Union installed loyal regimes in Eastern European countries in the aftermath of World War II. As part of the Warsaw Pact, countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and East Germany were satellite states, dependent on the Soviet Union for their legitimacy and survival. When popular uprisings would occur, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Soviet forces rolled in, quelling any hopes of democracy. When popular uprisings occurred again in 1989, Soviet forces withdrew this time, allowing the puppet communist regimes to collapse. Eastern Europe quickly adopted democratic capitalist models. Little violence occurred, with the exception of the execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania.



(Source: Berlin 1989, Fall der Mauer, Chute du mur by [Raphaël Thiémond](#) from Belgium via [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#))

2.4: How Does Political Violence End? Post-Conflict Strategies

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand how political violence can end
- Analyze what are negotiated settlements
- Evaluate the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking

How does political violence end? Various arguments have made that the way in which political violence ends will determine if it happens again. Let's use civil wars as an example. In general, civil wars that end in a negotiated settlement have a higher chance of experiencing a renewed war in relation to the wars that end in a decisive victory (Wagner 1993; Licklider 1995). This is due to the fact that a negotiated settlement leaves the organizational capacity of both sides intact, making a future resumption of a war possible (Wagner 1993). On the contrary, a decisive victory of one side implies that the losing side no longer has its capacity to harm while the victor retains the capacity to repress any future mobilization. Consequently, a renewed violence becomes unrealistic for the losing side, keeping the probability of war recurrence at low.

A good example involves the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in the country of Sri Lanka. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was a Tamil militant organization that was based in northeastern Sri Lanka. Its aim was to secure an independent state of Tamil Eelam in the north and east in response to the state policies of successive Sri Lankan governments towards Tamils. The LTTE carried out its first major attack on July 23rd, 1983, which led to what is referred to as Black July, the common name used to refer to the anti-Tamil pogrom and riots in Sri Lanka. Black July is generally seen as the start of the Sri Lankan Civil War between the Tamil militants and the government of Sri Lanka.

For over 25 years, the war caused significant hardships for the population, environment and the economy of the country, with an initial estimated 80,000–100,000 people killed during its course. Sri Lanka is a nondemocracy, with a history of significant discrimination against non-Buddhist minority groups. Its authoritarian government was able to carry out quite repressive policies to defeat the separatist movement.

In late 2005 the conflict began to escalate until the government launched a number of major military offensives against the LTTE beginning in July 2006, driving the LTTE out of the entire Eastern province of the island. In 2007, the government shifted its offensive to the north of the country, the government took control of the entire area previously controlled by the Tamil Tigers, including their de facto capital Kilinochchi, main military base Mullaitivu and the entire A9 highway, leading the LTTE to finally admit defeat on 17 May 2009. Following the LTTE's defeat, pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance dropped its demand for a separate state, in favor of a federal solution

The Sri Lankan government was accused of massive war crimes violations against its own citizens.

Toft (2009) argues that civil wars that end in rebel victory are likely to produce enduring peace, but not in the way one expects. Rebel victories often end in political transformation, with the new regime often embracing democracy, though not always. Still, even if the rebel group adopts a democratic regime, it does not mean that they will abstain from repression.

Remember, if a rebel group wins, then this means that their capacity to wage violence is still intact. While rebels often reward the citizens who supported them and their successful challenge, they may also subdue groups within the country that opposed them. As a result, this new government, even if democratic, is likely to pursue repressive policies following the end of the civil war. Ironically, it is these same repressive policies that may have motivated the original conflict in the first place. However, after a civil war ends, repression leads to peace

Another way that civil wars can end and lead to peace are through negotiated settlements. **Negotiated settlements** are defined as successful discussions between combatants where an agreement is reached to end political violence. Hartzell (1999) argues that the key to the enduring peace settlement requires the institutionalization of certain power-sharing mechanisms. When rebels, insurgents, guerillas or terrorists disarm, they worry not just about their own safety, but also regarding the needs of the groups they were fighting for. A negotiated settlement often involves the recentralization of power in certain areas. This is where a government reasserts its authority, such as policing or education. Former rebels are concerned that without their inclusion in the decision-making process, there will be a lack of proper political representation. This could also lead to less access to economic opportunities. For these folks to lay down their weapons, at minimum safeguards must be in place to protect their interests, at best they need to be part of the solution.

Walter (1999, 2002) argues that power-sharing through a negotiated settlement may not be enough. Just because two or more sides agreed to do something, does not mean that they will follow through with it. There has to be a way to make sure that these negotiated settlements can be enforced. The simplest way to do this is through a third-party guarantor. A **third-party guarantor** is defined as an external force that can enforce the provisions of a negotiated settlement. Walter shows that the implementation of power-sharing agreement in itself is not sufficient in producing an enduring peace. This is due to the fact that a durable negotiated settlement requires not only short-term security concerns, but also long-term political problems that the post-war environment may produce.

Peacekeeping forces are the best example of a third-party guarantor. **Peacekeeping forces** refer “to the deployment of national or, more commonly, multinational forces for the purpose of helping to control and resolve an actual or potential armed conflict between or within states” (Encyclopedia Princetoniensis, n.d.). Peacekeepers generally contribute to the durability of peace established through negotiated settlements. In a post-conflict environment, peacekeepers facilitate an environment where self-sustaining peace is possible. This is true even after the peacekeepers have departed. Peacekeepers can help prevent violence from reoccurring through monitoring the behavior of the former belligerents, and in some cases enforcement of the agreed upon provisions. They also help prevent mistakes and miscommunications that could lead to resumption of violence. Increased communication can dampen the effect of **spoilers**, or disaffected individuals who may disagree with a negotiated

settlement and prefer political violence to peace. Finally, peacekeepers can also prevent potential abuse of former rebels.

Peacekeeping has been relatively successful since it began back in the 1940s. A conservative estimate suggests that peacekeepers reduced the risk of war recurring by over half! Likewise, it does not seem to make a difference whether the peacekeepers have been invited or imposed (Fortna, 2008). **Consent-based (traditional) peacekeepers** are peacekeepers that have been invited by the belligerents. **Peace enforcement missions** occur when consent is not required, or peacekeeping forces were not invited by the belligerents. This happens when an outside organization, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) imposes a security force in an area. This happened in Bosnia and in Kosovo during the Yugoslavia Wars of the 1990s. Finally, peacekeepers are important even when there are strong financial incentives to still fight, such as when lootable resources are involved. **Lootable resources** are defined as accessible natural resources, such as oil, minerals and precious metals that can confer wealth on those who own, mine or transport them.

Peacebuilding is also an important aspect of a post-conflict strategy. **Peacebuilding** is defined as the implementation of structures to promote sustainable peace. Peacebuilding efforts are relatively successful because it aims to restructure the political, economic as well as social institutions in a country. This often includes building stronger institutions, encouraging mass political participation, and promoting respect for societal diversity. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) also suggest that a successful peacebuilding strategy needs to address several items. These include addressing local sources of hostility, understanding the local capacity for change, and determining the level of commitment from the international community. Finally, peacebuilding does not necessarily require the use of peacekeepers or a peace enforcement mission. However, the likelihood of success increases greatly when UN peacekeepers are present.

Non-state Actors: NGOs, Multinational Corporations, Terrorism, and Transnational Organized Crime

So far, you have read a lot about states as the primary focus in international relations, but states are not the only organized entities that act between, above, and across states. In fact, some of these non-state actors may have more power and influence than some states!

Non-state actors: NGOs and others

3.1 Non-state Actors: Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)⁶

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain different types and purposes of NGOs.
- Identify influential NGOs and their areas of emphasis.
- Discuss the role of NGOs in global governance.
- Evaluate the contributions of NGOs.

While most people are familiar with the work of the largest IGOs like the UN, NATO, or the EU, they may be less familiar with how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) contribute to global governance. NGOs operate independently of a government or state and are open to the citizens of various countries rather than to the countries themselves. NGOs engage in transnational relations, cross-border interactions that may happen with minimal or no government involvement. In some cases, NGOs collaborate with governments, but often the goals of NGOs and particular governments do not align, and their relationships become conflicted.

The Union of International Associations lists over 8,500 NGOs worldwide; depending on how they are counted, that number may be in the tens of thousands.⁵⁹ NGOs mobilize individuals around a common concern, and they help facilitate the work of the United Nations and other IGOs. In terms of global governance, NGOs are a part of the global civil society, that is, the arena in which groups come together to engage in collective action in the service of shared interests, values, and goals outside government or profit-based motivations.

⁶ Reused from Chapter 15 of Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel. (2022). *Introduction to Political Science*. OpenStax. <https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-political-science> under CC-BY 4.0 license

What Do NGOs Do?

In most cases, NGOs are designed to address a transnational concern—like the environment, humanitarian issues, health care, economic development, or conflict cessation—that is important to all and necessitates cooperation across borders. Within these broad areas, the majority of NGOs focus on specific issues, such as saving endangered species, conducting anti-malaria programs in tropical zones, or providing small loans to local farmers in South Asia.

Often NGOs are the result of a moral crusade of one or a small group of concerned citizens. For example, Henry Dunant founded the Red Cross in the mid-1800s to aid soldiers injured in war. Some other well-known NGOs include Doctors without Borders, Greenpeace, and the World Wildlife Fund. Some NGOs have thousands of members, while others have only a few hundred, and their budgets and scope of impact are similarly varied. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), with close to 100,000 people on staff, is the largest NGO in the world.

Although NGOs exist in wealthy countries, most of the work of NGOs happens in the poorest and most conflict-torn areas of the world. In developing countries, NGOs often help fulfill needs that the government cannot, like providing access to adequate health care, nutrition, education, sanitation, or potable water. They also play an active role in the aftermath of natural disasters like hurricanes or floods and provide relief in emergency situations such as refugee or famine crises.

The work of NGOs is expensive. In 2015, the 50 largest humanitarian NGOs alone spent \$18 billion annually.⁶⁰ NGOs receive funding from a variety of sources, including member dues, grants from governments, development banks, and philanthropic foundations. Governments or IGOs may contract NGOs to do specific tasks in a broader development plan, and development, humanitarian, or disaster aid is funneled often through NGOs that have an established presence in the region. The World Bank estimates that over 15 percent of total overseas development aid is channeled through NGOs. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees allocates approximately 40 percent of its budget to over 800 partner NGOs.⁶¹ Like government aid agencies in other states, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) partners with NGOs to deliver aid and to implement programming.⁶² People sympathetic to an organization’s mission provide the largest share of most organizations’ budgets.

What Are Some Weaknesses of NGOs?

NGOs can only work where governments accept their presence. Governments in strict authoritarian states like North Korea allow virtually no NGO activity, whereas governments in many other countries place almost no restrictions on NGOs. In recent years, however, more governments have placed restrictions on NGO activities in their states.⁶³ In particular, human rights groups and religiously affiliated organizations meet with resistance in some countries that view them as undermining the government or “national unity.”

NGO	Scope of Operation	Year Founded	Issue Area	Website
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Greenpeace	3 million members, offices in 40 countries	1971	Largest environmental organization in the world	https://www.greenpeace.org/international/
Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières —MSF)	Employs 30,000 and works in more than 70 countries	1971	Medical humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict, natural disasters, epidemics, or health care exclusion	https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/
Mercy Corps	Works in over 40 countries , reaching 50 million people	1979	Global aid agency, helping people survive crises, escape poverty, and transform communities	https://www.mercycorps.org/
Open Society Foundation	Works in 120 countries , spends over \$1 billion each year	1993	Promotion of democracy around the world	https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/

Table 3.2 Sampling of Major Nongovernmental Organizations

Some criticize NGOs for being too narrowly focused on a specific issue rather than working on larger systemic problems. Some contend that NGOs should better coordinate with other actors rather than working in isolation and that reliance on Western donors leads NGOs to focus on projects that are more easily “sold” instead of those that are arguably more critical. NGOs may not be interested in or able to solve the root cause of a particular problem, and hence the solutions they provide may be temporary. Observers scrutinize NGOs, like many nonprofit

organizations, for how much of their budgets go toward fundraising, advertising, and overhead rather than to directly helping their stated cause.

What Role Do NGOs Play in Providing Collective Goods?

NGOs have been a presence at the UN since its earliest days, when they successfully lobbied the UN to include the promotion of human rights as part of its mission in the UN Charter.⁶⁴ Approximately 6,000 NGOs currently have “consultative status” with ECOSOC, which allows them to have input into policy discussions and to access UN documents.

International treaties provide collective goods, and NGOs have had significant input into the formation of most contemporary treaties, including the Paris Agreement (climate change) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. NGOs often form groups that work together to advance common goals—for instance, religious NGOs created the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN (RUN), which has its own meetings and coordinates policies and responses to issues of common concern.⁶⁵ During the years of negotiations over the Rome Treaty, interested NGOs formed a group called the Coalition for the International Criminal Court to help draft and convince states to ratify the treaty. Two other NGO coalitions, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition, were central in drafting and convincing states to join the Mine Ban Treaty (1997) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2010), respectively.

NGOs have had the most success lobbying for the adoption of international human rights treaties.⁶⁶ In the 1960s, Peter Benenson formed the influential human rights NGO Amnesty International to pressure governments to release political prisoners.



Figure 3.1 In 2007, Amnesty International protested the sixth anniversary of the arrival of detainees at the controversial US military prison at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. (credit: “Black Hood, Orange Jumpsuit, Bored Cop, ‘Authority of Law’ Statue by James Earle Fraser Outside The Third Guantanamo Hearing at The Supreme Court (Washington, DC)” by Takomabibelot/Flickr, Public Domain)

Amnesty International has played an essential role in ensuring the adoption of at least three core international human rights treaties: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the “Torture Convention”) (1984), the Rome Treaty (2002), and the Arms Trade Treaty (2014). In 1997, Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize for its work.

How Do NGOs Contribute to Global Governance?

In addition to drafting and convincing states to sign international treaties, NGOs help IGOs and state-based development agencies. They engage in information sharing and advocacy efforts, assist in emergencies, and play a key role in reinforcing the legitimacy of global governance.⁶⁷

NGOs also help monitor compliance with international treaties, often, as in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, under authority granted by the treaties themselves.⁶⁸ As NGO expert Peter Willets noted, “were it not for NGOs, there would be no international law of human rights and no U.N. machinery to protect them.”⁶⁹

Due to the nature of their work on the front lines in countries around the world, NGOs often have more information about what is happening in another country than a government or IGO has. This allows NGOs to serve as informal monitors of state behavior. By providing evidence and testimonies, NGOs can draw international attention to situations such as human rights abuses or worsening humanitarian or environmental conditions. Such pressure may cause governments to change their policies or provide critical aid to regions that may have been under-resourced.⁷⁰

3.2 Non-state Actors beyond NGOs

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss different types of non-state actors beyond NGOs and their purposes.
- Discuss the role of non-state actors in international relations.
- Explain the factors contributing to the rise of non-state actors.
- Describe the sources of power for non-state actors.
- Analyze the ways nontraditional non-state actors present challenges for international relations and state sovereignty.

Non-state actors beyond NGOs, like multinational corporations, national identity groups, religious groups, and transnational organized criminal groups, present challenges and opportunities for global governance.

Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations (MNCs), also known as multinational enterprises (MNEs), are companies with headquarters in one country that have operations in at least one additional country. These transnational actors influence state policy and international politics, especially in the areas of trade, workers' rights, and the environment. Because countries rely on the money and jobs multinational corporations generate, and because MNCs possess vast resources, they exert tremendous influence on international affairs.

Examples of MNCs

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2006 almost 80,000 MNCs were active around the world. That number fell to 60,000 in 2018, even as the combined worth of active MNCs rose.⁷¹ MNCs account for half of global exports, nearly a third of the world's wealth, and about a fourth of all global employment.⁷² Given the immense wealth and power of the largest MNCs, University of North Carolina instructor and former senior reporter for *Foreign Policy* David Francis has referred to them as "corporate nations."⁷³ Apple, for example, is wealthier than 90 percent of the world's countries.⁷⁴ The most profitable MNCs are in the tech, oil, and finance industries.⁷⁵

About 45 percent of MNCs are headquartered in the United States, including Exxon Mobile, Amazon, Coca-Cola, Walmart, Apple, and financial giant Berkshire Hathaway. US multinational enterprises employed 42.5 million workers worldwide in 2017, with the largest number of workers in China, the United Kingdom, Mexico, India, and Canada.⁷⁶ [In the globalized world, MNCs are less bound to remain headquartered in their state of origin.](#) As international relations specialist Parag Khanna notes, MNCs "choose locations for personnel, factories, executive suites, or bank accounts based on where regulations are friendly, resources abundant, and connectivity seamless."⁷⁷

What Are Some Criticisms of MNCs?

By their very nature, MNCs prioritize private goods (profit) over public goods. While they have the power to do "good" in their host countries, they often choose to set up operations in those countries because the countries are too weak to prevent them from exploiting labor and resources. Many developing countries do not force MNCs to pay minimum wages, to provide health care, to follow labor laws, or to abide by environmental regulations. In fact, the enormous wealth of MNCs enables them to disregard any rules a weak state has in place or to lobby against the future implementation of such regulations. MNCs are notorious for seeking profit above social benefits or even benefits to their country of origin. Many of the largest and most profitable MNCs are structured to avoid taxation and regulation and will operate wherever profit margins are highest.

Do MNCs Contribute to Global Governance?

Although they may not seem as political as IGOs and NGOs, the transnational activities of MNCs have transformed the nature of international trade and investment. Decisions MNCs make have enormous implications for a wide range of policy issues—like taxation, investment protection, and immigration—across many countries with different political and economic institutions.⁷⁸

MNCs do exert some positive influence over international relations. Because MNCs favor stable and secure environments, states looking to lure MNCs have a vested interest in maintaining stability and in settling disagreements diplomatically rather than through disruptive conflict. Because they benefit from seamless operations, MNCs facilitate transportation and communication across borders by building compatible infrastructures like phone lines, Internet access, and standardized pricing in countries around the world. Trade organizations like the WTO regulate MNCs, and trade treaties help determine the norms of behavior in trade and intellectual property.

Because they generate money, MNCs also have considerable clout with host governments and have the power to encourage states to uphold human rights and environmental protections. In addition to providing jobs for people in developing countries, MNCs can reinvest in local economies—for instance, by donating money for schools or hospitals or providing community services. MNCs can and often do partner with or donate to NGOs to benefit local populations in developing countries.

In 2000, the United Nations created the Global Compact to address the way MNCs could play a role in global governance.⁷⁹ The Global Compact asks companies to self-regulate by following set principles around human rights, the environment, and anti-corruption efforts. Almost 15,000 companies have joined the Global Compact, and businesses and states have committed to promoting development goals and sustainability.⁸⁰

National Identity Groups

Members of national identity groups share a common ethnic, religious, or linguistic identity and object to the political or territorial status quo. Typically, these groups are struggling for greater autonomy or recognition. They may be clustered in a specific region of a country, and they often represent a minority in that region, with grievances stemming from real or perceived marginalization and oppression that has left the group at a disadvantage. Even when these groups are primarily located within one state (such as the Rohingya in Myanmar or Basques in Spain), migration and globalization have a way of internationalizing their concerns. These groups often demand more representation in government, the protection of linguistic or religious traditions, and the right to establish institutions distinct from those of the country in which they reside. National identity groups may seek regional autonomy (relative independence from a central government), secession (breaking away from a state), or irredentism (reclaiming land).

Regional Autonomy Movements

Groups seeking greater regional autonomy are among those that are least likely to directly impact international relations. Autonomous regions within states have considerable control over regional governance, including education, language, and local laws. Examples of autonomous regions include the Åland Islands (Finland), South Tyrol (Italy), Kosovo (the former Yugoslavia), Cordillera and Mindanao (the Philippines), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Greenland (Denmark), and Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (the UK). Regional autonomy is often a relatively peaceful solution to accommodate the demands of ethnic minorities.

Secessionist Movements

Some groups are not interested in regional autonomy or other concessions from the government but instead favor establishing an independent state. In democratic states, these secessionist movements may resolve nonviolently via a sovereignty referendum that asks members of the minority group to vote on whether they want independence. South Sudan, East Timor, and Montenegro gained independence following referendums. Other groups win independence through warfare. Such was the case in Eritrea, although that victory was followed by a referendum declaring the Eritrean public's desire for independence. Other ethnic groups' efforts to gain independence have been less successful. For example, the efforts of citizens of the Catalonia region of Spain and of the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey have been met with silence or oppression. In 2020 there were 60 active secessionist movements, with only one or two expected to lead to independence.⁸¹



Figure 3.2 Catalan separatists rally in support of independence from Spain in 2014. (credit: "Demanding to vote!" by Joan Campderrós-i-Canas/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

When independence movements are successful, a new state joins the world community (UN membership is considered the marker of an independent state), maps are redrawn, and new

bilateral and multilateral agreements can be negotiated. Numerous states joined that community in the 1960s as colonialism fell around the world.

Irredentist Movements

A region under the political control of one country but ethnically tied to another is called an irredenta. Often, the ethnic group in the region constitutes a minority in the state where they live but a majority in a neighboring state. This particular configuration is ripe for conflict, either because people within the region want to leave their state to join their ethnic kin or because the country where the ethnic group is a majority wants to “reclaim” their lost territory and reunite the ethnic group.⁸² For instance, during World War II Hitler claimed that he wanted “Germany for the Germans,” which gave him cause to expand German borders to include the Germanic people living in neighboring countries. More recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin used a similar excuse when he occupied the Crimea, a territory in the country of Ukraine that is heavily populated by ethnic Russians. As these examples suggest, irredentist rhetoric can be cover for a traditional political strategy of territorial expansion to gain power and influence.

Religious Non-state Actors

According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 84 percent of the population in the world identifies with a religion. There are thousands of different religious groups in the world, but 77 percent of the world’s religious adherents are part of one of the five largest religions: Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Judaism.⁸³ Religious organizations or groups of adherents to a faith are known as religious non-state actors (RNAs). RNAs include individuals motivated by religious beliefs, by specific churches, by religious-based NGOs, and even by the transnational nature of the religious beliefs themselves. The Catholic Church has historically played a prominent role in international relations, and the Holy See, the governing body of the Church, has observer status at the United Nations. Given that there are almost one billion Catholics worldwide, the Pope has tremendous global influence.⁸⁴

RNAs can organize themselves or specific categories of their work into NGOs. The International Islamic Charitable Organization and Catholic Relief Services are examples of this type of NGO. Many religious groups use NGOs to help the marginalized and the impoverished, extending their reach far beyond their local community.

The Transnational Nature of Religion

Religious beliefs are transnational; there are few religions the adherents of which all reside in one state. Adherents to a given faith often feel a form of kinship or solidarity with others of that faith regardless of regional, linguistic, ethnic, or practical differences. Jews in the United States who have never visited Israel may feel a kinship with the Israelis. Muslims worldwide orient themselves toward Mecca to pray even if they have never been to Saudi Arabia. Terrorist attacks on religious groups, such as the bombings in Sri Lanka in 2019 on Christians celebrating the Easter holiday, are seen (and may in fact be intended) as an attack on the religion itself, not just on certain individuals.

The Role of Religious Leaders

Individual religious leaders can use their platform to comment upon and try to influence world affairs. Exiled religious cleric Ayatollah Khomeini instigated the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979. The Dalai Lama of Tibet put forward a democratic constitution, based on Buddhist principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a model for a future free Tibet. For his work in addressing collective problems including “international conflicts, human rights issues, and global environmental problems,” the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.⁸⁵ From the 1930s to the 1950s, Catholic Popes Pius XI and Pius XII condemned communism as antithetical to the Catholic faith and helped fuel anti-Soviet sentiment among Catholics worldwide. In 2020, Pope Francis urged governments around the world to use the COVID-19 pandemic to focus on “creating a fairer market economy, addressing the rapidly escalating dangers of climate change, and providing basic healthcare to their citizens.”⁸⁶



Figure 3.3 A mural depicting Ayatollah Khomeini outside the former US embassy in Tehran reflects his lasting influence. (credit: “Imam Khomeini” by Kamyar Adl/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Violence in the Name of Religion

Schisms within religions, such as between Catholics and Protestants in the Christian faith, between ultra-Orthodox and Reform movements in Judaism, or between Sunnis and Shiites in Islam, can lead to enduring conflict and even violence. Religious leaders can position threats to the faith from outside as a rallying or unifying force. Osama bin Laden, former leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, issued a manifesto against “Christian invaders” in Muslim holy lands as a call to *all* Muslims, not just Sunni Muslims, to join his fight. Similarly, the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel and the subsequent displacement of Palestinian Muslims met with resistance from both Sunnis and Shiites. RNAs can form communities of the faithful to advocate for changes in far-flung corners of the world where they believe their “brothers and sisters” are persecuted or oppressed.⁸⁷

Although many RNAs advocate for peace and devote themselves to humanitarian missions, others engage in conflict “for the good”—that is, they believe their cause is so important that

they are justified in using any means, including violence, to achieve it. This level of conviction propelled Catholic soldiers during the Crusades in the Middle Ages, and it motivates several notable religious groups today, including al-Qaeda and the militant Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁸⁸



Figure 3.4 Ethnic tribal militias like the Tuareg, pictured here, have joined with other militant Islamic groups in attempts to secure an independent homeland in Northern Mali. (credit: “Al-Qaeda draws Maghreb militants to Mali Al-Qaida rejoint par ses militants du Maghreb au Mali” by Magharebia/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

How Do RNAs Contribute to Global Governance?

It is difficult to classify a particular RNA and that RNA’s role in global governance as “good” or “bad.” Some RNAs help reinforce norms and participate in conversations about the global good, but others promote violence and challenge global governance norms. The net contribution of a single RNA can be mixed. The Muslim Brotherhood provides a telling example. Although the Egyptian government considered the Muslim Brotherhood an illegal political movement and classified it as a terrorist organization, the Brotherhood provided goods and services like hospitals and schools to Egyptian neighborhoods where the government was not providing those services. During periods of Egyptian democracy, the Brotherhood ran candidates for

office and participated in the legislature.⁸⁹ Thus the Brotherhood has engaged in both humanitarian and politically democratic activities and illegal, antidemocratic, and violent ones.

Violent Non-state Actors

Transnational actors that flagrantly violate established laws and employ violence to achieve their goals are considered “illegitimate.” They endanger security, stability, and the rule of law and are condemned under international law as a threat to global governance.⁹⁰ Like RNAs, sometimes the lines between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” transnational actors are blurred. Some nationalist and religious groups may pose a threat to peace and stability only in particular regions or for particular groups. Sometimes whether a non-state actor is considered legitimate depends on who you ask—as a saying from the Cold War era goes, “One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter.”

This discussion focuses on two main types of violent non-state actors: transnational organized crime (TOC) syndicates and terrorist organizations. These groups engage in various types of illegal activity including financial crimes, cybercrimes, and human rights violations. Their membership may be multinational, regional, or country-specific, but their crimes are transnational, involving activities across borders and in multiple states. They pose a significant threat to international and domestic security, and countering that threat requires a coordinated international response. Criminal networks flourish in weak states—those without functioning central governments, sophisticated criminal justice agencies, communications, or traditions of rule of law. Weak states often only nominally control certain regions of their countries, and in uncontrolled regions it is particularly easy to evade the rule of law. Violent NSAs also flourish under conditions of poverty and limited economic prospects, when people can be easily tempted by the potential for wealth or “revenge” against groups they believe have wronged them.

Transnational Organized Crime

Organized crime groups operate in almost every region of the world, and transnational organized crime (TOC) threatens international peace and security.⁹¹ Some groups have stable and definable memberships; others are more loosely organized. The Sicilian Mafia and various transnational street gangs are among the most prominent TOC syndicates.⁹²

TOCs engage in a variety of illicit activities, including smuggling, human trafficking, weapons trafficking, wildlife or artifacts trade, intellectual property theft, counterfeiting, cybercrimes, and money laundering, to fulfill their purpose: to make money. TOC syndicates rarely engage in only one illicit activity. International drug trafficking is the second largest source of TOC revenue, second only to counterfeiting, and drug trafficking organizations, many of which are affiliated with terrorist groups, are among the highest-profile TOCs.⁹³

TOC activities contribute to government corruption. In weak states, TOC groups bribe or ally with government officials, jeopardizing economic development, undermining the rule of law, and threatening government stability. As the *2018 World Atlas of Global Issues* puts it, “Corruption, trafficking, poverty, conflicts, and terrorism all sustain and reinforce one

another.”⁹⁴ Globally, TOCs test international law, make the expansion of democracy more challenging, and siphon money away from governments and people.

Transnational organized crime represents a global governance problem that cannot be satisfactorily addressed by one government alone. Criminals are typically headquartered in one country, but their crimes cross state borders and break both domestic and international laws. Because TOC groups encourage and depend upon government and law enforcement corruption, and because they tend to flourish in states that lack strong domestic criminal justice organizations that could investigate and prosecute them, a coordinated international effort is needed to fight this type of crime. Domestic criminal justice organizations such as the FBI in the United States coordinate with comparable organizations in other states and with crime-fighting IGOs like the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime to stem the activities of TOC organizations.

Terrorist Organizations

Terrorism is the use or threat of violence by non-state actors to influence citizens or governments in the pursuit of political or social change. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, terrorism became a global security concern. Globalization and advances in technology have allowed terrorist organizations to access funding and recruits from far beyond the organization’s headquarters and to spread their message via social media. In an article published only weeks before the 9/11 attacks, Paul Pillar of the Brookings Institute said, “In today’s globalizing world, terrorists can reach their targets more easily, their targets are exposed in more places, and news and ideas that inflame people to resort to terrorism spread more widely and rapidly than in the past.”⁹⁵ Like most other transnational issues, terrorism is a threat to all states, and it is impossible to envision a single-state solution.

Terrorists are motivated by some combination of nationalism, ideology, and religion. Islamist terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL), and Boko Haram have been responsible for the deadliest terrorist acts in the 21st century.⁹⁶ Like other religious extremist groups, Islamist terrorists want to impose their version of their religion on all spheres of life, including the political state. The desire for national independence in places like Palestine and Northern Ireland, as well as extremist ideological beliefs such as White nationalism or neo-Nazism, can also motivate terrorist attacks.

International cooperation is crucial to monitor and prevent terrorist activities. Following 9/11, the UN Security Council formed the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which coordinates international counterterrorism measures.⁹⁷ In 2006, the General Assembly called on member states to focus on the underlying factors that contribute to terrorism, including weak institutions, ongoing conflict, and human rights violations. Most regional IGOs have counterterrorism programs. INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, is an IGO that coordinates the efforts of the police in countries around the world. NGOs contribute to counterterrorism activities as well. IGOs and NGOs work in tandem to help states implement global counterterrorism strategies.

3.3 Transnational Terrorism⁷

By Katherine E. Brown

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As had been explored in previous chapters, globalisation has brought with it not only unprecedented opportunities and progress in human development but also greater risks. Events in one economy can quickly spiral to others and the same can be said of social, cultural and political events. One theme that we have not explored in detail is how terrorism has evolved in the era of globalisation. Rather like the way in which the dark web piggybacks on the internet, a shadow side of globalisation gives criminal and violent groups the ability to spread their message and widen their operations. The impact of this shadow form of globalisation alters not only the organisation, resources and methods of such groups but also their reasoning and motivations. Under these conditions we have seen the proliferation of transnational terrorist groups with globalised agendas whose operations involve many countries or have ramifications that transcend national borders.

What is transnational terrorism?

Terrorism, whether transnational or not, is a highly contested arena. To date there is very little consensus regarding its definition. Disagreements emerge over the purpose and function, the perpetrators, the victims, the legitimacy and the methods and targeting of terrorist actors. Perhaps the most widely accepted attribute of the term ‘terrorism’ is that it is derogatory and a sign of disapproval. Typically, labelling a group as terrorist negatively affects our perception of the group’s legitimacy, legality and how they should be addressed. Therefore, how we differentiate a terrorist group from any other group is important. For the purposes of this chapter, terrorism is understood as the use or threat of violence by non-state actors to influence citizens or governments in the pursuit of political or social change. This is not only a semantic or academic debate; the label gives states considerable power to act and use violence against a group and it significantly guides how a state should act. Wrong definitions can lead to flawed counter-terrorism strategies.

Moreover, as states cannot agree on the definition, they argue over both the nature and the cause of terrorism as well as who can be called a terrorist. With no agreed international law governing state responses, they struggle to work together to remove the threats. According to Acharya (2008), this permits states to act like vigilantes, or cowboys in the Wild West, on the global stage.

Rapoport (2004) divided the history of terrorist groups into four successive waves, each characterised by the global politics of the day. He noted that nationalist and anti-colonial groups emerged with a force at the end of the first and second world wars, while anti-communist and anarchist movements proliferated during the Cold War. Today it is argued that a new, or fifth, wave of modern terrorist groups are both products of and challenges to key ideas associated with globalisation, thereby giving

⁷ Reused from “Chapter 14: Transnational Terrorism” by Katherine E. Brown in [International Relations](#). McGlinchey Ed. Under a CC-BY-NC 4.0 license

terrorism a transnational character. It is important to note that some terrorist groups in the past had transnational goals, but they lacked the tools of the modern world to widen and deepen their message. Today's transnational terrorism is seen to operate in many states, utilising the 'shadow globalisation' flows of people, weapons and information to further their cause. The causes of this new type of terrorism reflect the deepening of human interconnectedness worldwide. Peter Mandaville (2007), writing on one of the first groups to be designated as a 'fifth wave' terrorist group, Al-Qaeda, argued that their initial success was because they operated a global technology, mythology and ideology. Specifically, it was the mythology of military success against the United States in the form of the spectacular attacks of 9/11 and then drawing it into costly military activities abroad. Combined with the franchise-like nature of their organisation, they were able to claim responsibility for attacks all over the world by financially, logistically and materially assisting smaller groups that affiliated themselves to the organisation. Such affiliations were possible because Al-Qaeda promoted a global ideology that linked local causes together via an image of world politics that presented Muslims worldwide as victims of Western oppression. These components enabled them to function and replicate on a global scale.

Today's terrorism is therefore transnational in cause, operation and effect. Its essential features ensure its importance within international relations because it represents a whole new security concern for states: the risk of attack does not just come from other states (war) but from mobile criminal groups that move between states and are dispersed globally (transnational terrorism). States perceive this new wave of terrorism as threatening core elements of their sovereignty – their capacity, legitimacy and autonomy within a particular jurisdiction. This all-encompassing threat has led to a range of responses. These have included the creation of new criminal offences, broadened legal definitions of terrorism, the granting of greater powers of detention and arrest, as well as improving funding for state agencies involved in countering terrorism. In light of the transnational elements, states have also sought closer cross-border cooperation between government agencies, most notably in policing and intelligence, in order to prevent the spread of terrorism. States have also reacted to the new threats by seeking to prevent or disrupt the emergence of ideas that might support terrorist violence through antiradicalisation initiatives. These are sometimes referred to as 'soft measures'. Overseas these include supporting development goals of other countries to facilitate their stabilisation and the production of moderate voices in politics. Within domestic jurisdictions, 'soft' counter-extremism policies include placing greater emphasis on challenging particular extreme ideas in schools and universities, monitoring citizens for signs of radicalisation and making illegal the ownership and distribution of material that glorifies violence. These forms of intervention bring the state more directly into contact with the everyday lives of citizens, often regardless of any laws broken. Such efforts demonstrate how terrorism is a concern for human security as well as state security because of the manner in which it affects everyday life.

Motivation and goals

Individuals join terrorist groups for a variety of personal and political reasons. They may join because most of their friends have, or for the feeling that membership of the organisation brings benefits. For example, the group Islamic State (also known as Daesh, ISIS and ISIL) seeks to establish a new theologically driven state in the Middle East and promises fighters from all over the world better living conditions and pay than they might achieve in their home countries. The ability to travel across borders more freely because of globalisation and the economic resources available to Islamic State in the form of oil make this possible. Individuals may also join a terrorist organisation because they strongly

empathise and identify with the group even if they are not directly affected by the cause. Global online media can facilitate this identification by giving a cause a global appeal. It is important to note that what motivates individuals to join and remain in transnational terrorist organisations is not necessarily the same as the wider goals of those groups.

A key way of understanding why individuals join and remain part of transnational terrorist groups is radicalisation theory. Radicalisation is understood to be 'everything that happens before the bomb goes off' (Neumann 2013). It suggests that there are pathways to becoming a radical or terrorist and that it is a dynamic and very individualised process. Because of its individual nature, there is no single terrorist profile in today's transnational world, even in particular countries. Terrorists may be female, married, old, rich, have children – or not. Attempts to profile behaviours have therefore not been successful. The New York Police Department produced one of the early guides for 'spotting' radicalisation, which led to some seemingly bizarre characteristics (inability to grow pot plants, enjoying camping out) being identified as 'signs' of radicalisation (Silber and Bhatt 2007). The signs were problematic because they were so broad in their scope that almost everyone was potentially a suspect. What radicalisation research does show is that a quest for identity and greater significance in the world together with empathy for those who are suffering makes an individual more vulnerable to terrorist messages that appear to offer solutions (Silke 2008). Research also shows that an individual with friends or family involved with terrorism or supportive of terrorist views is more likely to join a terrorist organisation than someone with no connections at all (Wiktorowicz 2006). As a result, transnational lone-wolf actors are extremely rare despite their high profile and the media attention they receive.

At the group level, goals are also transnational. This is best illustrated by looking at Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. These groups utilise a global religious language to create an understanding of global politics that divides the world in two. On one side is the world of Islam. This is a place of goodness, where religious laws are upheld and Muslims are not oppressed. On the other side is the world of war where Muslims are oppressed by unjust and tyrannical leaders. They argue that, because of the global connection Muslims have with each other as a community of believers (Umma), all Muslims should join them in their fight against the 'Oppressors', regardless of where they live. They also argue that because the 'Oppressors' are everywhere and attack Muslims everywhere, their cause and fight is global. They refer to the 'near enemy' (local governments) and the 'far enemy' (governments of global powers) as possible aggressors against whom a member of their organisation might fight. This enables them to tap into local political grievances and give them a global religious veneer, or to highlight global incidents and claim that they are related to their local cause. What is notable is the degree to which such an understanding of the world replicates (or is replicated by) some Western governments' thinking that also sees the world as 'either with us or against us'.

It is important to note that the logic of worldwide oppression that shapes Islamic State and Al-Qaeda thinking is not representative of the bulk of the world's Muslim population and is widely condemned by Islamic scholars. It is also important to note that while most of the coverage of terrorist events seems to focus on high profile events in Western states, the majority of those killed in terrorist attacks worldwide since 2001 have actually been Muslims, living in Muslim-majority countries. This is because of a range of factors. First, it is easier to target less well-protected and defended sites in poorer Muslim-majority countries. Second, ideologically, Muslims that resist jihadist violence are demonised as unbelievers by those groups and therefore become

'enemies' who can be killed. Finally, violent actions are often targeted to alter the relations between governments and citizens in the Muslim world and improve the strategic position of the terrorist group (Mustafa and Brown 2010).

Activities

Despite the consequences of transnational terrorism primarily being felt in Muslim majority-countries, fear and awareness of the threats is felt strongly in Europe and North America. Terrorism is a 'communicative act', by which we mean it seeks to send a message that goes beyond the actual destruction caused to life and property. That message is to be heard by three groups of people. The first are civilians either local or globally who witness the events. The second are governments which are called upon to respond to the terrorist violence. Finally, the third are potential supporters who are attracted to join by the terrorist actions. We will now look at each of these three groups in turn.

Transnational terrorist groups focus on the location of attacks as much as, if not more than, who is attacked in order to generate a wide message. The importance of location is demonstrated by the attacks in Paris in 2015 by the Islamic State group. Paris is one of the most visited cities in the world and the group targeted 'everyday' places – bars, a football stadium and a rock concert. This signalled the idea that anyone and anywhere is a target, increasing fear of and publicity for the group's actions. This targeting strategy is in contrast to that of groups which may act across borders – such as the Tehrik-e-Taliban, working in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, or Boko Haram, operating in Nigeria and neighbouring countries – but for which the local political scene remains key. With the Tehrik-e-Taliban, their actions, while linked to a global cause of 'jihad', are local. They target beauty shops, police stations and market squares because they see these as opposed to the way of life they want to establish in their lands. Boko Haram too targets villages across different countries' borders and punishes those who don't conform to their new laws, which are about 'everyday living' even as they claim allegiance to a wider global political cause. However, this is not to say these groups do not target individuals. The Tehrik-e-Taliban tried to kill the activist Malala Yousafzai because of her support for girls' education and Boko Haram kidnapped hundreds of Christian schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria. Schools are targets because they are seen to promote state agendas, and schoolgirls are targets because these groups wish girls to have an Islamic education that focuses exclusively on domestic responsibilities and learning the Quran. Malala Yousafzai has gone on to campaign against this understanding of Islamic education and promote women's schooling the world over, winning a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts. In addition, the Nigerian military was forced to take a more active stance against Boko Haram due to global outrage over the kidnappings. Thus, while these are 'local' causes and local targets, they are global and transnational in their wider effects.

The second feature of transnational terrorism is that activities are sometimes designed to provoke states into action as well as generate fear in populations. Attacks are frequently symbolic in purpose and often have a high casualty rate for maximum shock value. It was inconceivable, for example, that the United States would not respond to the 9/11 attacks or that France would not react to the Paris attacks. Here, attacks are designed to provoke states into doing something to prove they are protecting civilians, even when that action may undermine the values they live by or end up being so costly that popular support for government is eroded. This terrorist strategy was first formulated by Che Guevara, a leader of revolutionary communist movements in Cuba against the American-sponsored authoritarian Batista government. The approach is known as 'focoist' (or focoism), whereby terrorists imagine

themselves as the 'vanguard' of popular revolutions. The Uyghur ethnoseparatist groups (which now have links to regional Islamist terrorism) operating in China's north-western provinces have been applying this strategy for over a decade. Their attacks are seen to have provoked ever-greater Chinese crackdowns on the civil liberties of people living in affected provinces in order to provide security and to demonstrate the strength of the central government. Yet the government has failed to reduce the number or severity of the attacks and also failed to stop people joining the separatists. Some have argued that European counter-terrorism policies are more reactionary than effective because they follow the same pattern of government suppression of human rights in the name of security as the Chinese example. The disproportionately felt impact of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslim communities across Europe is, critics argue, providing more propaganda for the Islamist groups' recruitment campaigns.

The expectation of many terrorist groups is that, in time, ever greater numbers will realise they are oppressed and join resistance groups or that, with sufficient coverage, the international community will come to support their cause. The example of Palestine underlines this well, since, despite decades of political struggle – which has included terrorist tactics – to establish Palestinian independence from Israel, the Palestinian cause remains relatively popular domestically and internationally. On the other hand, rather than *creating* something (an independent Palestine), this tactic may also be used to *destroy* something. Here, we can point to the 9/11 attacks and the many years of terrorism that followed as bait to lure the United States into engagement in the Middle East as a means of undermining their political and economic stability. By this logic, first Al-Qaeda and later the Islamic State group pursue strategies that aim to grind down the global power and image of the United States so that it may no longer be willing or able to interfere in Muslim lands.

In the past, countries have managed to resist reacting to these sorts of violent action by terrorists. Consider Italy's reaction to the assassination and kidnapping of the popular prime minister Aldo Moro by the socialist Red Brigades: during the investigation of Moro's kidnapping, General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa reportedly responded to a member of the security services who suggested torturing a suspected Brigade member, 'Italy can survive the loss of Aldo Moro. It would not survive the introduction of torture' (Dershowitz 2003, 134). However, with public and media scrutiny operating at speed and levels not previously encountered, the ability of governments, especially democratically elected ones, to resist pressure is significantly reduced. The crossover with popular culture is interesting too, with military ethicists reporting a 'Jack Bauer effect' – referring to the tendency of this character in the TV series '24' to torture individuals as time runs out to stop a terrorist attack. Bauer's tactics often reflect (albeit in dramatised form) the enhanced interrogation tools that many governments have used in response to terrorism. Pressure is also placed on governments by allies and neighbours demanding support and action. For example, there has been a considerable chilling of relations between Thailand and Malaysia since 2004 because Thai authorities believe Malaysia to be turning a blind eye to Thai Muslim separatists operating across the border.

Finally, the third reason for terrorist violence is to recruit members and reinforce loyalty and membership among existing supporters. Extremely violent or highly technical attacks demonstrate the capability and will of the group carrying out the attack and its overall support. We see support for Islamic State coming from citizens in nations of every region because their attacks are dramatic and spectacular, which raises the profile of the group and demonstrates their military mastery. Mandaville

(2007) calls this the myth of success. Islamic State group videos and propaganda frequently assert the weakness of the opposition as demonstrated by their deaths. The videos dehumanise their opposition, treating them like cattle or computer game characters in first-person shooters. The use of videos that mimic computer game imagery is supplemented by Islamic State creating its own 'skins' or 'maps' for popular computer games. In its version of Grand Theft Auto, the city is Baghdad and the people opposing you are the police and the military. As one British supporter said of their life in Syria under Islamic State, 'it's better than that game, Call of Duty'. Members say how they will 'respawn in Jannah' – 'respawn' being a gamer word for 'reincarnation' or 'being reborn', and Jannah is paradise in Islam. This is clearly designed to recruit and sustain membership by linking to Western masculine experiences (Kang 2014).

Organisation and resources

Managing such a transnational organisation and connecting to multiple locations and identities requires considerable logistical and organisational capability. The practice of tapping into the local and the global can be described as a 'plug and play' approach. Transnational terrorist organisations not only have an ideology that 'plugs' into local grievances, their organisational structures and resources also operate in this manner.

One of the main claims about transnational terrorist groups is that they are not hierarchical in structure but rather cell-like and even anarchical, lacking a formal leader. This led Marc Sageman to talk about a 'leaderless jihad' (2008). He characterised Al Qaeda as a loose-knit amorphous organisation, a position which was hotly contested by Bruce Hoffman (2006). Hoffman seems to have lost the argument, as terrorist organisations are becoming increasingly decentralised as they take advantage of new technologies, forms of communication and other aspects of globalisation. Consequently, communicating with transnational terrorist groups can be difficult. Negotiators cannot be sure the people they are talking to are representative of the group or have sufficient leverage to influence other members of the group, and splinter groups are more likely under these conditions. There are risks and vulnerabilities for terrorist organisations associated with this approach, notably in relation to information and operational security, coordination issues and resilience. There are also advantages in terms of longevity: the lack of central leadership gives them a greater scale and scope of operations and makes opposing or destroying them very difficult.

Rather than focusing on individuals, it is more helpful to focus on processes. One of the key processes within transnational terrorist organisations is the distribution and acquisition of money and equipment. Here we see the connections to transnational crime – particularly the smuggling of human organs, drugs and guns and human trafficking. Criminals can provide terrorist groups with whatever they require, provided the price is right, and terrorists will engage in or tolerate criminal activities when it serves their needs. Failed states offer fertile ground for possible and profitable connections between terrorism and criminality. The US government's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (2006) contends that terrorists exploit failed states, using them to 'plan, organize, train, and prepare for operations'. However, some scholars disagree, noting that few international terrorists emerge from failed states (Simons and Tucker 2007) and most failed or failing states are not predisposed to exporting terrorism (Coggins 2015) – though they generate significant security problems for their own citizens and neighbouring states. What is worth noting is that states that are weakly governed, rather than failing, are also implicated. Pakistan is one such example – and was where Al-Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden was living when he was killed by the US military in 2011 during a covert operation. This occurred,

incidentally, without Pakistan being informed: the United States could not assume that he was there without the knowledge of elements of Pakistan's government, which is often accused of having state links to terrorism.

Countering transnational terrorism

The consequence of terrorism operating transnationally is that states have been presented with a number of decision points about when and how to intervene, and these are intimately connected. The first set of decisions is about where to intervene. Some Western states have been tempted to intervene internationally in order to prevent the emergence of terrorist groups or minimise the efficacy of existing terrorist groups in 'frontline' states. Such intervention comes in the form of international aid, military advice and training, and financial and military support to governments. This has entailed the risk of supporting undemocratic governments and engaging in militarised activities in contested spaces. The use of drones by the United States in Pakistan is one instance that has given rise to considerable controversy. First, because of the transnational element potentially undermining Pakistani sovereignty. A second point is that it imposes a state of fear on ordinary civilians, who find themselves under threat of strikes termed 'surgical' or 'targeted' by those operating them but which feel and are perceived as random by civilians in these areas (Coll 2014). Such operations can actually help terrorist groups by giving them a narrative to spin their agenda around, reinforcing local fears of an aggressive Western intervention in their societies that must be opposed.

A parallel approach has been to intervene at home by increasing state powers to minimise the effects and capability of terrorist groups to attack in Western societies. The consequence however, whether at home or overseas, has been to reduce civil liberties and restrict human rights. It is presumed that there is a necessary balance between human rights and human security and that protecting citizens, namely their security, is the first duty of government. However, a counter-argument is that failures to uphold these basic principles reward terrorist behaviours by treating them as 'outside' usual criminal processes, while at the same time punishing law-abiding citizens. Indeed, the human experience of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies and processes has been overwhelmingly negative. We can see this in the crackdown on protestors in Egypt, including journalists and civil rights groups, in the name of fighting terrorism. Human Rights Watch (2015) has reported that Egypt is undergoing the most serious human rights crisis in its modern history, with the government invoking national security to muzzle nearly all dissent. Egypt has attempted to justify these policies in light of transnational terrorist actions and the existence of opposition groups that appear to have overseas links with terrorist organisations. Similar patterns are seen in Turkey, especially following a failed coup attempt in 2016.

In Western nations, state attempts to impose security have often disproportionately affected certain groups – especially Muslims. The transnational element is perhaps most keenly felt at airports. Blackwood, Hopkins and Reicher (2013) found there was a 'prototypical' Muslim story of travelling through airports that was characterised by discrimination, humiliation and fear because of the actions by airport and border authorities. The ability of states to use violence so that a 'state of fear' is produced for (a section of) a population even when in the name of countering terrorism has even led some to call for the definition of a terrorist actor to include states (Jackson 2011, Blakeley and Raphael 2016). Those researching in the field of critical terrorism studies advocate this approach, arguing that the only significant difference between terrorism by state and terrorism by non-state actors is the agent carrying out the act of violence. For example, when the Israeli military attacks a Palestinian group this is commonly seen as 'defence' or 'national security'. But, when a Palestinian group attacks an Israeli troop

convoy, which they perceive as invaders or occupiers, they are commonly deemed 'terrorists'. If we remove the binary of state and non-state actors, we might see this instead as a conflict between two opposing forces – both sharing legitimate aims and objectives. Due to examples such as this, complex and emotive as they are, there is often a failure to fully examine state actions that critical scholars blame for a significant cause of human insecurity worldwide. It is also important to look beyond the state toward civil society and everyday acts of resistance.

Conclusion

Terrorism, and terrorists, are transnational in three ways: their goals, their actions and their organisational form. However, we must be cautious before assuming that this is the new, and only, form of terrorism. Not all terrorism is transnational. Terrorist groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) still operate at the national level, targeting just one state. States too have shown themselves capable of inflicting forms of terrorism. Furthermore, while examples of transnational terrorism since 2001 may appear to be mostly religiously inspired, one cannot conclude that there is anything inevitable about this, or that Islam specifically is the significant factor. Rather, it is in this instance that Islam provides a framework for some marginal groups to construct a convincing worldwide counter-narrative to that of a world dominated by Western political, social and economic models. For that reason, it is perhaps no surprise that Islamic terrorism, over and above other types of terrorism, has become a sustained issue of concern in international relations. An important note to conclude on is that countering terrorism does not fall exclusively to the state: civil society and everyday acts by ordinary people also have a role. These can include examples of popular culture, inter-faith dialogue and moments of solidarity that break down the oppositional and binary world view that dominates transnational terrorist ideology. Nevertheless, terrorist groups are products of their time and, just like us, live in a globalised world. They are both shaped by globalisation and contribute to it by their actions.

Globalization, Trade, and International Political Economy⁸

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Figure 4.1 US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and leaders from across the globe discuss public-private investment and cross-sector partnerships in a climate-smart agriculture and food system at the COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, on November 4, 2021. (credit: “20212204-OSEC-UNC-0006” by U.S. Department of Agriculture/Flickr, Public Domain)

Introduction

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) occurred in Glasgow, Scotland, in October and November 2021. The main goal of the summit was to foster collaboration between governments, businesses, and civil society and to propel action to tackle the climate crisis.¹

The conference was widely reported in both traditional media and nontraditional media. As discussed in [Chapter 12: The Media](#), traditional media is characterized by mass communication efforts and professional journalism. The main traditional media outlets include newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. With increased use of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms, nontraditional media has become increasingly powerful. Whereas professional journalists cover the news for traditional media outlets, nontraditional news

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coverage may be led by any individual with a smartphone and internet access. Nontraditional outlets, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, are particularly salient with specific niches of the public. That the results of the COP26 were reported on in traditional outlets like CNN, the Associated Press, the BBC, and Al Jazeera as well as nontraditional outlets like TikTok, Twitter, Instagram (more than 318,000 posts are tagged #cop26),² and Facebook (more than 160,000 people have posted using the hashtag #COP26) suggests that the public is concerned with the environment.³

The COP26 summit produced an official agreement, and governments pledged to commit to adaptation, mitigation, and conservation efforts on methane, coal, transportation, and deforestation. These pledges could help the world prevent global warming from exceeding 1.5°C above preindustrial levels, a goal the majority of climate scientists involved with the COP26 consider challenging but possible.⁴

While some governments have agreed to tackle the climate crisis, others have avoided making any commitments. Governments play the “commitment vs. avoidance game” because environmental policy, like every other kind of public policy, requires costs to achieve benefits.

For example, certain types of environmental regulations—the body of taxes and tariffs, quotas, subsidies, and regulations governments issue to promote environmental protection—increase the costs of industrial production. In a globalized economy, higher production costs make it more difficult for firms to sell their products in a competitive international market, especially if the regulations are adopted domestically but not internationally. In situations like this, a factory that cannot compete may be forced to close its doors, and if this happens, workers become unemployed⁵—that is, workers pay a high cost.

On the other hand, environmental regulations promote environmental quality. If a factory emits fewer pollutants, the quality of the surrounding environment increases. The community in the factory’s vicinity reaps the benefits of less pollution. Better environmental quality contributes to improved health conditions.

However, the causal impact of this environmental regulation in the promotion of a healthier environment is difficult to prove. The connection between the extent to which changes in pollutant emissions can improve or exacerbate the health of community members is complex. Many variables impact both environmental quality and the community’s health. To make things even more difficult, if you consider the market share of this factory in a country and compare it to the global market, the proportional environmental benefit of this environmental regulation may seem small.

Environmental regulations present a tradeoff: they promote environmental quality,⁶ but they may cause unemployment, at least in the short term. Environmental quality is a widespread benefit. The entire community profits from it, even if each element of the community profits only a little bit. On the other hand, unemployment is a localized cost, and unemployed workers lose a lot. As a result, labor unions, workers, and business parties commonly refer to environmental regulations as “job-killing regulations” and thus tend to oppose them.⁷ In short, because environmental policies redistribute economic costs and environmental benefits across

different groups in society, they face strong opposition, even if, as responses to the COP26 indicate, the general public is concerned about the environment.⁸

Given the complexity of designing environmental policies, governments consider the redistribution of costs and benefits and play the “commitment vs. avoidance game” based on how much their constituents, or voters, stand to win or lose with environmental regulations.

The ways in which public policies redistribute costs and benefits across domestic and international actors are at the core of the study of international political economy (IPE). This chapter presents a panoramic view of the development of the field from the 16th century to the present. The discussion begins with a brief historical overview, which is then followed by an analysis of some of the most debated issues in the field.

4.1 The Origins of International Political Economy

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define *international political economy* (IPE).
- Describe *mercantilism*.
- Define *wealth* according to the mercantilist theory.

International political economy (IPE) is a vast field of study occupied with the investigation of political processes and their economic consequences, which have both domestic and international impacts. IPE describes and explains the extent to which politics and public policies define winners and losers among different groups in a society.⁹

Those components of politics and policy making in a country that result in specific public policies are referred to as political factors. These components can be domestic, such as the organization of the electoral system, how politicians interact to establish policies, and the level of economic and institutional development, among others. They can also be international, like, for example, the pressure toward globalization and trade liberalization since the 1990s. Domestic and international political factors compel politicians to establish certain public policies.

Public policies invariably promote wealth redistribution in societies. As mentioned above, these policies shift benefits and costs across different groups and thus establish winners and losers.¹⁰ The example of the “commitment vs. avoidance game” played during the COP26 summit illustrates how governments negotiate environmental issues with eyes on how the policies they establish will cater to their constituents and thus increase these politicians’ chances of remaining in power.¹¹

Yet, political factors are constantly changing, and as they change, policy makers redesign policies, redefining the winners and losers. Profound transformations occurred in Western Europe during the Enlightenment, paving the way for the current economic system in the United States—the market economy, or capitalism. Such transformations also prompted the establishment of political economy as the field dedicated to the study of the relationship

between politics and the economy. Adam Smith (1723–1790), a Scottish political thinker and economist, was one of the first to examine the relationship between politics and the economy. Given the influence of his writings on the development of the field, he became known as the father of political economy.

Although political economy only emerged as a field of study in the late 19th century, politics and the economy were already interconnected in the real world. Political economy has been around for as long as politicians have been making decisions that favor some groups at the expense of others.

The changes in politics and the economy that occurred during the Enlightenment deeply altered political and economic practices domestically and internationally. The centralization of political power in the hands of the monarch in Western Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries, known as absolutism, illustrates the impact of these changes and how they laid the foundations for the market economy. During the absolutist era, the belief in divine providence—that God had chosen the monarch to govern—was widespread. Monarchs had absolute political power and made decisions with the aim of increasing that power. At the time, power and wealth were interchangeable concepts: power begot wealth and wealth begot power.

This environment provided fertile ground for mercantilism, the dominant economic system throughout the absolutist era. Mercantilism was based on capital accumulation, or the increase of wealth. Notice, however, that during the absolutist era, there were no paper currencies: no US dollars, Mexican pesos, or Euros. The currency was made of precious metals, gold and silver. The more gold and silver acquired, the wealthier—and more powerful—the monarch or the country.

Precious metals are naturally occurring elements and cannot be created (despite alchemists' best efforts); thus, the amount of wealth in the world was considered finite. Because wealth was limited, wealth accumulation was a zero-sum game.¹² The fact that a monarch got some gold meant that others had lost it. Therefore, to preserve their wealth and power, monarchs not only took precious metals whenever they could but also fiercely protected the wealth in their possession.

As rumors about “new worlds” rich in gold and silver circulated in Western Europe in the 16th century, monarchs sponsored naval fleets to venture into unknown seas in search of riches. Several European ships ended up “discovering” land and colonizing Native peoples in the Americas as well as in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. As the “new worlds” were colonized, monarchs could extend their domain to the colonies. Taking advantage of their absolute power, they seized precious metals and increased their wealth.¹³ After all, power begot wealth.

Wealth also begot power. During the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, European armies were composed of mercenaries.¹⁴ In times of impending war, monarchs would hire soldiers to defend their countries. The more wealth a monarch possessed, the more soldiers they could afford, and thus the higher their chances were of winning the war and maintaining their power.¹⁵

Given that wealth was finite, monarchs sought to accumulate wealth, or capital, through protectionist policies, which safeguard the domestic economy against foreign competition through the establishment of trade barriers such as tariffs, subsidies, import quotas, and other restrictions on imports. The rationale behind protectionist policies is that as a country's balance of trade, or the difference between the value of exports and imports in a given period, maintains a surplus, the country accumulates capital.

Protectionist policies limited trade across countries and thus suppressed any incentives for industrial innovation and market development. Economic activities during the absolutist era were extremely limited; agriculture, food production, and the production of consumer goods used rudimentary inputs and technology. Production output was basically for subsistence, and common people had very few possessions. Only the royal family and the aristocracy had access to the few goods available for consumption, while the majority of the population did not consume much.

Yet, the capital the monarchy and aristocracy accumulated during mercantilism made the Industrial Revolution possible. The Industrial Revolution promoted many significant changes at the end of the 18th century. These changes pressured monarchs to let go of protectionist policies in favor of trade liberalization, helped markets to flourish, and welcomed the participation of the individual in the economy.

4.2 The Advent of the Liberal Economy

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the origins of the market economy.
- Define *wealth* according to classical liberal theory.
- Describe Adam Smith's argument regarding the three levels of analysis.

The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution marked the introduction of new concepts that fundamentally transformed European societies and the world. Enlightenment thinkers freed human beings from an unquestionable religiosity, superstitions, and social rigidity. Absolutism could no longer be defended on the basis of God's will and divine providence. The ideas of anthropocentrism, or the argument that human beings are the most important component of the Universe; rationalism, which is the belief that reason rather than experience is the foundation of knowledge; and scientism, or the view that inductive methods of the natural sciences are the only source of genuine knowledge, prompted changes that culminated with the French Revolution and the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies. Movements toward political democratization and economic development based on these ideas have since been diffused to the four corners of the world.

The Enlightenment period promoted the idea of civilization as opposed to savagery. Societies that reflected anthropocentrism, rationalism, and scientism were the first to reap the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, including the development of the market and social progress, and to embody the idea of civilization. These societies were initially located in Western Europe and

were then propagated to the colonized world, accompanying the migration movement and the birth of industrialization. Societies based on traditional religion and superstition, where family relationships defined power and politics, were considered savage. In University of Denver emeritus professor David P. Levine's words, "Civilization is an important concept in political economy. . . . Civilized society provides its members with opportunities not otherwise available; but it also confronts them with dangers."¹⁶

One of these opportunities is wealth creation. Enlightenment thinkers rejected the mercantilist idea that wealth is finite, proposing that wealth could in fact be created. The concept of wealth had been transformed. As Levine puts it, "Producing wealth is a special sort of activity. It is one that employs some of our assets to produce commodities: goods and services valued in the market."¹⁷

This change in the perception of what constituted wealth had an enormous impact on political economy. If wealth is understood as the extent to which the market values a good or service, and if the creativity and industriousness of the human mind is boundless, then wealth is infinite.

More than 200 years later, we still employ Enlightenment ideas about the concept of wealth. Adam Smith played an important role in defining our understanding of wealth creation, the functioning of the market, and the role of the government in a market-based society. His beliefs in science and in human beings' inclination toward progress are key to his account of political economy. Adam Smith laid the foundation for liberalism, the dominant economic practice that persists today, in his classic work *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). He rejected mercantilism, suggesting that monarchy's insistence on the balance of trade surplus through trade barriers would hurt the economy. According to Adam Smith, the best approach to the economy was a laissez-faire one, in other words, the free-market approach in which governments do not interfere in the market and let things take their own course.



Figure 4.2 As this 2019 advertisement in a Bulgarian airport bearing his image shows, Adam Smith is still closely associated with free market ideas. (credit: modification of work by “Adam Smith Spreads the Gospel” by summonedbyfells/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Adam Smith developed his argument in *The Wealth of Nations* using different levels of analysis. First, he focused on the individual level and argued that self-interested individuals, or in other words, individuals focused on advancing their personal interests, tend to make decisions that will maximize results to their own benefit. Thus, if governments guarantee individuals the freedom to produce and trade as they please, society will be better off in the long run.

His second level of analysis examined the state. Adam Smith argued that countries should dedicate themselves to the production of what they produce best, following their comparative

advantages. For example, he argued that given France's geographic characteristics and the developed skills and abilities of its people, France can produce better cheese and wine than, for example, Great Britain, and at a lower cost. Therefore, he argued, France should produce cheese and wine. On the other hand, given Great Britain's geographic characteristics and traditions, the British can produce better quality wool than the French, and therefore Smith argued that the British should produce wool and not cheese and wine.

At the international level of analysis, Smith argued that if countries stick to their comparative advantages, international trade should allow individuals in different countries to have access to the best products at the lowest costs. This would eliminate the need for trade barriers and result in a system of free international trade. In this case, both the French and the British would get the best cheese, wine, and wool at the lowest cost.

Adam Smith's assumption regarding the benefits of a laissez-faire economy has accompanied the mainstream understanding of political economy since the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. According to Adam Smith, the accumulation of capital in preindustrial societies allowed for the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, which produced consumable goods for society and elevated the quality of life of industrialized nations.

The ideas promulgated by Adam Smith and other political economists slowly promoted trade liberalization in Europe. Britain moved toward free trade in the 1780s with the repeal of the Corn Laws, trade restrictions such as tariffs and quotas on imported corn and food. The Corn Laws intended to keep corn prices high and favor domestic producers of food.¹⁸ Several European states followed Britain's move and similarly promoted trade liberalization. Nevertheless, Britain returned to protectionist policies during the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815), a series of battles fought by the French Empire and its allies, led by Napoleon I, against several European countries that formed various coalitions. The costs of war are high, and as war expenses accumulated, the British government levied tariffs on imported goods to generate revenues and pay for the costs of war. The end of the Napoleonic Wars culminated with the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), a peace conference to reconstruct European relations after the downfall of Napoleon I. The Congress of Vienna led to the Concert of Europe, a general consensus to promote equilibrium among the five great European powers (Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom). It prevented another war from breaking out in Europe from 1815 to 1914.

The Concert of Europe period saw the flourishing of trade liberalization. Moreover, improved technology and the advent of new players in the international commodities market increased competition, and domestic pressure in favor of protectionist policies led the recently unified Germany to defect from the free-trade regime and return to protectionism in the 1870s.

In general terms, international trade picked up from the late 19th century until World War I. After World War I, protectionist policies became the rule again until the end of World War II, when the bases of the current international financial system were established.

4.3 The Bretton Woods Institutions

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the context of the creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions.
- Explain the origins and missions of the IMF, World Bank, GATT, and WTO.

At the end of World War II, the United States had a huge surplus in the balance of trade. Exports of military equipment and consumer goods to the Allied powers grew the American economy toward a pronounced recovery from the Great Depression, a severe financial crisis sparked by the 1929 stock market crash in New York that led to bank closures and high unemployment. The US government was aware of its military capabilities and advantageous economic position, especially in relation to destroyed Europe and Japan. As a result, the United States took a leading role in creating the post–World War II international order, an order that was expected to maintain peace and economic prosperity in the world.

As the end of World War II was imminent, representatives of the United States and Great Britain met to discuss the post-war international order. One of these meetings took place in July 1944 in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, and became known as the Bretton Woods Conference. Harry Dexter White, assistant secretary of the Treasury in the United States, led the US delegation, and John Maynard Keynes, adviser to the Treasury in the United Kingdom, led the delegation from Great Britain. The United States, Great Britain, and 42 Allied nations sent representatives to the conference. Yet, the participation of these 44 states was only relevant to the extent that they supported either the American or the British side.¹⁹

During the conference, the US and British delegations presented proposals for the establishment of the world economic system. The United States wanted to create an international order that was strong enough to promote international economic stability. Their main objective was to avoid another economic crisis like that of 1929. Great Britain's proposal was more focused on reconstruction, but the British had difficulty garnering support. In the end, the US proposal prevailed, with compromises. As a result, the Bretton Woods System reflected US concerns in the post–World War II period. For instance, the United States accepted the British suggestion that governments should stimulate their economies and promote international trade without competitive currency devaluations. According to the British delegation, if state governments followed this prescription, the world economy would be in balance and a future crisis like the one of 1929 would be averted.

In the end, the Bretton Woods Conference created two international financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which became known as the World Bank. These two institutions were based on the belief that global collective action was necessary to guarantee international economic stability and rebuild Europe.

During the conference, there were also attempts to create a third institution to promote and regulate international trade. However, trade is a highly sensitive issue, especially to weaker

states. Therefore, the third institution was not created in the conference, but discussions continued, and in 1947, the Havana Letter established the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In 1995, the GATT gave way to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The International Monetary Fund

At the time of the Bretton Woods conference, it was commonly believed that competitive devaluations among major international currencies had caused the 1929 financial crisis. Competitive devaluations happen when a country devalues its currency in relation to other countries to gain trade advantage, but other countries devalue their currencies in response. Though more recent evaluation has determined that other factors were responsible for the stock market crash,²⁰ the US delegation at Bretton Woods insisted on the creation of a strict international monetary system (as a way to prevent future economic crises) and a return to the gold standard, the monetary system in which the standard unit of account is a fixed quantity of gold.

The US economy had maintained a substantial surplus in the balance of trade during the war years and controlled a significant part of the world's gold reserves. As a result, confidence in the value of the US dollar was widespread. Capitalizing on the situation, the US delegation proposed a system backed by the US dollar and assured that the US government would guarantee that every dollar was backed by gold—one ounce of gold per 35 US dollars (USD). Other currencies would have a fixed parity with gold and also with the US dollar. The IMF would be responsible for monitoring the value of other currencies against the dollar.

After much deliberation, it was agreed that international currencies could deviate 1 percent from their fixed rates without previous consultation with the Fund. Yet, the Fund should be notified of any deviations greater than 1 percent but smaller than 10 percent. Only in cases of fundamental imbalance could the IMF authorize devaluations greater than 10 percent.²¹

Though this arrangement seemed to solve the problem of competitive devaluations, there was still the problem of a lack of international liquidity, that is, a lack of money or gold in the international market. Much of the liquidity problem was solved through the Marshall Plan, a program through which the United States sent USD 26 billion in war recovery aid to Europe and Japan between 1946 and 1949.

Even with the disbursement of the grants and loans, the American balance of payment, or the difference in value between all payments made to a country and the payments the country has made to the rest of the world, maintained a surplus of USD 6 billion,²² which helped extend the high confidence in the US dollar.

Yet, in order to establish the international monetary system, governments had to hold reserves, or money, gold, and other highly liquid assets that a country's central bank or other monetary authority could use to meet financial obligations. In the United States, the Federal Reserve System (commonly referred to as the Fed) is the central bank, and it works to promote the effective operation of the economy. Reserves help to keep currencies at a fixed, or pegged, exchange rate, in which a currency's value is fixed against the value of another currency, basket

of currencies, or gold. For example, when a country runs a deficit in the balance of payment—that is, when payments a country makes exceed payments it receives and there is a shortage of money—the supply of its currency in the foreign exchange market exceeds the demand. If the forces of supply and demand were free, the price of the currency would fall to adjust to the market. However, to maintain the proposed fixed (or pegged) exchange rate, a government could not allow its currency to devalue or appreciate more than 1 percent. Thus, in cases when the forces of supply and demand threaten the price beyond the 1 percent margin, the government should intervene in the international market to buy back its currency, using its reserves in dollars or gold, until the price of supply and demand restabilize. So, under the Bretton Woods guidelines, governments should keep reserves and act to correct the devaluation or appreciation of their currency.

In reality, those currencies that maintained surpluses and appreciated were not corrected while the fixed exchange rate regime was in place. As a result, devaluations are often seen as synonymous with economic problems rather than as a mechanism for regulating the system. Over time, even the IMF began to discourage the practice of valuation.

The IMF's original role was to maintain the parity between the US dollar and other currencies while eliminating currency exchange restrictions and thus facilitating the expansion of international trade. This was called the Bretton Woods System.

Delegates to the Bretton Woods conference decided that when a country joins the IMF, an initial quota would be assigned. The IMF has used a quota formula to assess a country's position in relation to members of comparable economic size and characteristics and thus establish the quota. The quota determines the member's maximum financial commitment to the IMF and its voting power, and it has a bearing on the member's access to IMF financing.

The IMF in Practice

During its first years of operation, from 1949–1958, the Bretton Woods system was favorable to the United States, as the United States was the only country in the Western world with surpluses. The United States, backed by its economic superiority and concerned with communism, rushed to guarantee conditions for restructuring and growth for the Western European and Japanese economies.

In 1949, the United States was categorical in its recommendation of a restructuring of the exchange rate against the US dollar. The restructuring was massive. The devaluation allowed gains in relation to exports since, by inducing a reduction in costs and prices against the dollar, the devaluation allowed for a trade surplus. The result was that the United States ran deficits throughout the 1950s. Initially, such deficits were not a cause of worry; the United States had understood that deficits were necessary for rebuilding the European economy and stopping communism.

Nevertheless, in 1958 the weakness of the dollar became evident. The first sign of concern came in the form of the establishment of conversion rates between European currencies. Until then, there was a conversion rate between each currency and gold as well as the dollar, but not

between the currencies themselves. The adoption of conversion rates made it easier to transfer credit between European countries and thus increased the flow of investments and international trade in Europe.

Between 1958 and 1965, American corporations made huge investments in the European market, raising US concerns about the deficit and worries about foreign direct investment (FDI)—one company's investment in a business based in another country. American deficits and investments in Europe resulted in an overabundance of US dollars in the international system, and with that abundance the dollar lost its credibility in the international market, and several countries that kept their reserves in dollars exchanged them for gold.

As countries exchanged their dollars for gold, the demand for gold increased, and when the supply did not meet the demand, the price of gold increased. As the gold standard was in place at that time, backing the US dollar by gold became more expensive. In an attempt to stop gold from appreciating on the international market, the United States briefly put its gold reserves on sale, stopping after the level of gold reserves decreased considerably. Likewise, as the demand for dollars decreased and the supply exceeded the demand, the price of the dollar decreased—that is, the excessive supply of the dollar in the international market led to a devaluation, and without the option to sell more gold on the international market, the United States was pressured to devalue its currency but met this pressure with considerable resistance.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson increased American participation in the Vietnam War. In the long run, this increased participation proved disastrous not only for the US economy, but also for the world economy. Although American economists urged the government to increase the tax burden to pay for war expenses, taxes were only readjusted in 1967, when the debt was already quite large.

All of these difficulties led the United States to pressure the IMF to create special drawing rights (SDR) in 1969. Member countries' quotas have been translated to SDRs, the IMF's unit of account. SDRs represent a claim to currency held by IMF member countries for which they may be exchanged. These units of account, issued by the IMF, were intended to increase the liquidity of the monetary system and reduce the world's dependence on gold and the dollar, its main reserves. Initially, USD 3.5 billion in SDRs were issued. The SDRs emerged when the world was already drowning in excessive liquidity of dollars.²³

Faced with this situation, in August 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a reform package that unilaterally ended the conversion of the dollar into gold and devalued the American currency by 7 percent. With these measures, the Bretton Woods system came to an end. In 1972, the dollar suffered another devaluation, further reducing the US debt.

With the end of the Bretton Woods system, the functions of the IMF were revised. At that moment, the world was going through a new phase.

Conditionalities

Under pressure from the United States in the new economic order of the 1970s, the IMF began attaching conditionalities, policy actions a country agreed to take in exchange for the receipt of

financial support, to IMF loans.²⁴ New York University professor Adam Przeworski and Princeton University professor James Raymond Vreeland suggest that conditionalities are a penalty.²⁵ This conception makes sense if you consider that the poorest countries seek the IMF's assistance more often than the richest ones.²⁶ These countries' pressing needs for credit put them in a vulnerable position, especially when conditionalities follow a "one size fits all" approach that forces strict monetary and fiscal policies on every borrower, irrespective of a particular borrower's circumstances, as critics like Columbia University professor Joseph E. Stiglitz²⁷ contend. However, more recent literature has shown that the IMF does tailor conditionalities to each borrower.²⁸ According to University of Rochester professor Randall Warren Stone, there is evidence that the more problematic a country's economic situation, the looser the conditionalities the IMF will impose. Regardless of how well the IMF tailors conditionalities, because borrower countries cannot opt out of them, they can be seen as a way IMF programs limit these countries' sovereignty.

In the early 1990s, developing countries facing balance of payments problems, currency devaluation, and macroeconomic instability turned to the IMF seeking credit and advice.²⁹ IMF bureaucrats and representatives of member countries responded with a program designed to promote economic stability. The program, which became known as the Washington Consensus, was intended to promote fiscal balance, sound macroeconomic indicators, increased participation in the international flow of goods and services, and, ultimately, growth and development.

Conditionalities function as a guarantee that a loan will be repaid, but the IMF is not an ordinary creditor, and developing countries with economic imbalances seek more than the Fund's credit. They seek credibility since the IMF's decision to lend sends a message to the international community, including financial markets, about its trust in the borrower's ability to overcome the crisis. For that reason, when the Fund disburses a loan, it has high expectations that borrowers' economic performances will improve. Such expectations appease financial investors' uncertainties about the market, and investments are more likely to return. Nevertheless, the Fund puts its reputation at risk. Although the Fund's image and reputation suffer from eventual disastrous outcomes of the implementation of market and financial reforms in certain countries, it is not always clear whether the IMF's policy recommendations or domestic governments' ability to implement economic policies are to blame. In any case, such disastrous outcomes represent obstacles in the pathway to a prosperous global economy.

The World Bank

The IMF was the apple of the United States' eye, and its creation consumed a majority of the time at the Bretton Woods conference. The creation of the World Bank was only discussed in the last few days. Under John Maynard Keynes's guidance, it was established that the Bank's original role would be to help rebuild the economies of countries devastated by war and to promote the economic development of developing countries. The Bank's first loan was to France, and loans to other European countries ensued.³⁰ However, in 1947, as the Marshall Plan ended up taking the lead in the reconstruction effort in Europe, the World Bank had to adapt, and it swiftly shifted to funding development projects around the world in sectors such as

power, irrigation, and transportation. In 1948, Chile was the recipient of the Bank's first loan to a non-European country in the amount of USD 13.5 million for hydroelectric power generation.³¹

In the 1970s, about 780 million people in developing countries (excluding China and other centrally planned economies) were living in extreme poverty, without basic human necessities like food, clean drinking water, sanitation, and shelter. In a speech in 1973, World Bank President Robert McNamara first described this condition as absolute poverty.³² In response to the situation, the World Bank turned its focus to directly helping the poor. In the same speech, McNamara communicated the World Bank's twin goals of accelerating economic growth while reducing poverty. The incorporation of these concepts in the Bank's mission transformed it into the institution focused on poverty alleviation and development promotion that it is today.³³

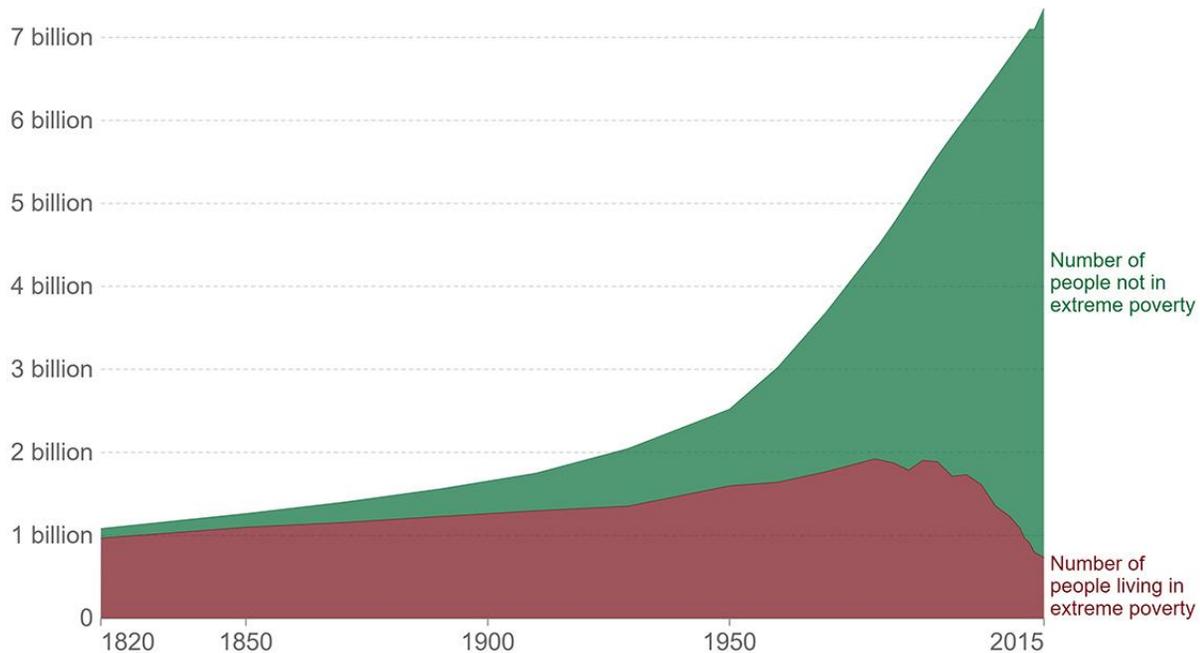
The 1980s and 1990s presented the world with new challenges related to oil shocks, shortages of oil and oil derivatives in the Western world that resulted from oil exporting countries' decision to reduce oil production; debt crises, as countries were unable to pay their debts; and environmentalism. The Bank responded by incorporating new skills and safeguards into its work. As a result, the Bank began to provide loans for structural adjustments, with the approval of the IMF. In other words, the Bank's loans were linked to the Fund's conditionalities, such as fiscal discipline, tax reform, and liberalization of foreign direct investment. The overall effectiveness of these loans was the target of criticism from the international community.³⁴

In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Bank started to assist former Soviet nations in transitioning their economies, and many of these recently recognized nation-states became World Bank members. During this time, the Bank also started to focus more closely on safeguarding the environment through sustainable development and poverty reduction.

World population living in extreme poverty, World, 1820 to 2015

Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than 1.90 international-\$ per day.

International-\$ are adjusted for price differences between countries and for price changes over time (inflation).



Source: Ravallion (2016) updated with World Bank (2019)

OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY

Figure 4.3 The number of people living in extreme poverty has been declining since the 1990s. (credit: “World population living in extreme poverty, World, 1820 to 2015” by Our World in Data, CC BY 4.0)

In the late 1990s, the World Bank refocused its efforts on conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, and development promotion. The period brought concern about the impact of corruption on the success of lending operations, which led the Bank to sponsor an anti-corruption strategy.

The mid-2000s brought the idea of the World Bank as a knowledge institution, an institution that collects and publishes data and reports, and by 2010, the Bank initiated a more transparent approach to development by providing policy makers in borrowing countries with reliable debt information to help them make informed borrowing decisions. For instance, following the [Millennium Development Goals](#) in 2000 and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) in 2015, the World Bank stressed community-driven development, the safeguard of vulnerable groups, and the impact of, mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change.³⁵

From the GATT to the WTO

The Bretton Woods conference was expected to establish a third institution, the International Trade Organization (ITO), to promote international trade and economic cooperation. Even though the institution was not created during the conference, negotiations aimed at its creation continued.

In December 1945, following the end of World War II, 15 countries engaged in talks to move away from protectionist policies, which had been the norm since the early 1930s, and to promote trade liberalization. The talks produced an agreement with about 45,000 tariff concessions, preferential rates on taxes or duties to be paid on imports, which marked the beginning of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).³⁶ At the time the deal was signed in October 1947, the team had expanded to include 23 members. The deal came into effect in June 1948.

Negotiations to establish the ITO continued at the UN Conference on Trade and Employment in Havana, Cuba, in late 1947, less than a month after the GATT was signed. Curiously, the GATT included provisions for the relationship between the GATT and the ITO, but also for the GATT's role in the case that the ITO ended up not being established.

All 23 GATT signatories participated in the Havana Conference. Their initial goal was to create the ITO as a specialized agency of the United Nations. The plan envisioned a powerful ITO that would regulate trade and labor and engage in commodity and international investment negotiations, among other responsibilities.

The ITO Charter was agreed to in Havana in March 1948, but it was never ratified in some relevant countries, including the United States. Though the US government had been a driving force during negotiations, the ITO faced serious opposition in the US Congress.³⁷ In 1950, when the US government announced that it would no longer pursue congressional ratification of the ITO Charter, the ITO was dead. As a result, the GATT became the multilateral instrument regulating international trade from 1948 until the WTO was established, almost 50 years later, in 1995.³⁸ During this period, the GATT's principles remained faithful to its origins, and the efforts to reduce international tariffs were unabated. GATT signatories met in a series of multilateral negotiations, commonly known as trade rounds ([Table 4.1](#)). Some of the most relevant advances in international trade liberalization were agreed to in these rounds.

Sections on anti-dumping, or tariffs imposed on imports to increase their prices to market value, and development promotion were included in the 1960s and in plurilateral agreements, agreements between a small number of signatories,³⁹ in the 1970s. In fact, the Tokyo Round (1973–1979) was the first major attempt to confront non-tariff trade barriers—trade restrictions such as quotas, embargos, or sanctions. The last round, the Uruguay Round (1986–1994), resulted in a new set of agreements, including the creation of the World Trade Organization.⁴⁰

The GATT was a relevant instrument to international trade liberalization from the late 1940s to 1995. While the GATT was in place, there was a continuous reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers across the globe. The increase in the volume of international trade surpassed production growth; that is, more unfinished products were traded among countries. The participation of developing countries in the Uruguay Round indicated that the GATT was recognized as relevant to multilateral trade.

Year	Location	Subjects Discussed	Participating Countries

1947	Geneva, Switzerland	Tariffs	23
1949	Annecy, France	Tariffs	13
1951	Torquay, England	Tariffs	38
1956	Geneva, Switzerland	Tariffs	26
1960-1961	Geneva, Switzerland (Dillon Round)	Tariffs	26
1964-1967	Geneva, Switzerland (Kennedy Round)	Tariffs, anti-dumping measures	62
1973-1979	Geneva, Switzerland (Tokyo Round)	Tariffs, non-tariff measures, framework agreements	102
1986-1994	Geneva, Switzerland (Uruguay Round)	Tariffs, non-tariff measures, rules, services, intellectual property, dispute settlement, textiles, agriculture, creation of WTO	123

Table 4.1 GATT Trade Rounds (source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-GATT-Trade-Rounds_tbl3_5056860)

Nevertheless, there were problems. Economic recessions throughout the Western world in the 1970s and 1980s led to increases in protectionist measures, especially for sectors facing increased international competition. Resulting high unemployment and constant factory closures led governments in developed countries to seek bilateral agreements with competitors, discarding multilateralism. Agricultural trade has never been discussed during the GATT rounds. Governments adopted subsidies—grants to individuals or firms, usually in the form of a cash payment from the government or a tax cut. Trade in services, which was not covered by GATT rules, had increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, GATT’s institutional structure and its dispute settlement system were the cause of concern.

These and other factors convinced GATT members to renew attempts to establish an institution to promote trade liberalization. Their efforts resulted in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Uruguay Round and earlier GATT negotiations form the basis of the WTO’s current work. WTO agreements cover goods, services, and intellectual property. The institution establishes governing principles of liberalization and permitted exceptions for member countries. It sets procedures for settling disputes, prescribing special treatment for developing countries.

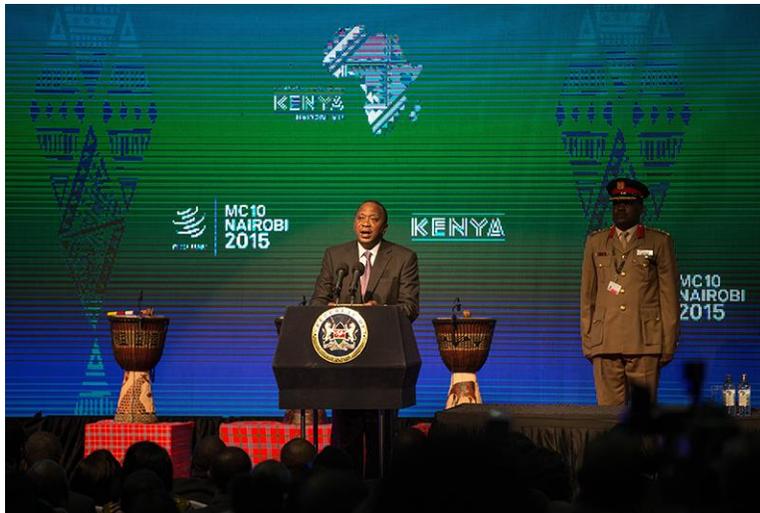


Figure 4.4 In 2015, Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta spoke during the opening of the 10th World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, the first to be held on African soil. (credit: “10th WTO Ministerial Meeting Opening_0016” by Make It Kenya/Stuart Price/Flickr, Public Domain)

Where countries have sought to lower trade barriers, negotiations have helped to liberalize trade. The system’s overriding purpose is to help trade flow as freely as possible so long as there are no undesirable side effects.

An important task of the WTO is managing the dispute settlement process. Trade relations often involve conflicts, and having an international institution to manage these conflicts in accordance with an agreed-upon legal foundation has proven beneficial. The WTO’s procedure underscores the rule of law, and it makes the trading system more secure and predictable. Dispute settlement is the central pillar of the multilateral trading system and one of WTO’s main contributions to the stability of the global economy. Without a means of settling disputes, the rules-based system would be less effective because there would be no way to enforce those rules.

Meet a Professional

Laíssa Vasconcelos, International Trade Coordinator

International grain commerce feeds the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Latin American grain industry worked hard to adapt in order to ensure the maintenance of the supply of grains to the world population.

Ensuring international grain supply is part of Laíssa Vasconcelos’s day-to-day work. Laíssa is an international trade coordinator at a subsidiary of a multinational corporation in Brazil that exports grains produced in Latin America all over the world.

Please explain what you do for your organization.

I’m an international trade coordinator. I coordinate grain purchase contracts and export operations at a subsidiary of a large corporation in Brazil. In addition to managing internal

purchases and exports, I support offshore operations and international arbitration panels, and I have an advisory role on the company's Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) committee. ESG analyses look at how companies affect the environment and society and also how governance within the company occurs—for example, if the company is promoting equity and diversity. Investors are increasingly relying on ESG indicators to make investment decisions.

How did you get involved in your position?

I have a degree in International Relations from PUC Goiás, Brazil and an MBA from FGV, also in Brazil. I entered the company to perform technical tasks, but I was interested in learning more, so in parallel I tried to understand the connections between the activities of my department and those of other departments. Eventually, I become a reference in problem solving and got promoted.

What advice would you give students who are interested in your line of work?

Try to get a job where you want to work, even if you have to start at the bottom. Do your job well and pay attention to what's going on around you. Learn how what you're doing fits into the bigger picture. When you work hard and learn, people will see the value you bring to the company, and you'll be able to advance to the point where you can do work that you really enjoy. Be proactive and develop skills that put you in a position to be considered for roles in different areas.

4.4 The Post–Cold War Period and Modernization Theory

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe changes inaugurated with the end of the Cold War.
- Explain key tenets of modernization theory.
- Cite a counterargument to modernization theory.

From its beginning in the late 19th century until the end of the Cold War in 1989, international political economy was almost exclusively focused on the world's international financial powers—liberal democracies in Western European countries and the United States. The majority of the research and discussions in the field did not include countries in regions that had different political and economic systems. Even when these other countries participated in international relations, as was the case in the Bretton Woods conference, they were considered mere spectators. The preferences of Western financial powers dominated the agenda.⁴¹

During the Cold War, economic transactions between the East and the West were very rare. Western liberal democracies interacted among themselves, and Eastern socialist republics did the same. The majority of international trade took place between the United States and European countries. However, the end of the Cold War highlighted the economic and political issues countries in other regions of the world, such as formerly communist and Latin American countries, were facing. With the end of the Cold War, the focus of IPE shifted from an exclusive interest in developed Western nations to promoting development across developing countries

in different regions. Since the late 1940s, modernization theorists had been searching for ways to bring economic growth and democracy to developing societies.



Figure 4.5 Oneida Gómez holds a coffee plant in the nursery she has planted with the help of Blue Harvest, a Catholic Relief Services partnership with Keurig Dr Pepper and the Inter-American Development Bank’s SAFE Platform that aims to improve the water supply to help the agricultural economy in El Salvador. This is just one example of a huge number of development projects in the post–Cold War era. (credit: “Blue Harvest El Salvador” by Maren Barbee/Flickr, Public Domain)

Modernization theorist Seymour Martin Lipset was one of the first to propose a link between economic development and democracy. He argued that improved wealth and education levels would create the right conditions for the establishment of democratic institutions.⁴² Once people with low socioeconomic status are given access to education, Lipset contended, they become less committed to their existing ideologies and less isolated from people of other socioeconomic statuses. As these groups become more educated and politically active, they become part of the middle class, and as the middle class increases, it pushes for democratic institutions.

In general, the key argument of modernization theory is that economic growth promotes structural changes in society that lead to increased political representation and, eventually, to the establishment of democratic institutions. Nevertheless, even though most developed countries are democracies, it is difficult to establish a causal mechanism, or a link, between economic growth and democratic institutions.

UCLA emeritus professor Barbara Geddes, a political scientist who has examined developing societies for over 20 years, contends that modernization is the most empirically supported hypothesis about the suitable conditions for democratization.⁴³ Similarly, University of Chicago professor James A. Robinson has found statistical evidence indicating that economic development is highly correlated with democratization, even though the exact mechanism by which economic growth spurs democracy has not yet been uncovered.⁴⁴

New York University professor Adam Przeworski and Fundação Getúlio Vargas professor Fernando Limongi, two other prominent modernization scholars, argue that the impact of economic development in a society is so strong that once a country reaches a certain threshold of growth, a democratic regime will always survive. These scholars offer a metaphor to explain this relationship, suggesting that if modernization is a long walk, democracy is only the final step. In their empirical analyses, they find that transitions to democracy occur independently of the level of economic development (or high per capita income levels); however, once a transition happens, countries with higher levels of economic development tend to remain democratic.⁴⁵

Considering the difficulty of finding the causal mechanism between economic development and democracy, MIT professor Daron Acemoglu and colleagues have reevaluated the modernization hypothesis. They find that most studies that claim to have found a connection between economic development and democracy fail to account for relevant variables. They argue that events during critical historical moments lead to divergent economic and political outcomes—either promoting economic development and democracy or leading to poverty and authoritarianism. Thus, these scholars believe that these critical historical moments are an underlying cause of economic development and democracy.⁴⁶

The core debate in modernization theory has not been solved. While developing countries, with the support of international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, continue to pursue economic development, given the unwanted consequences of the market economy, the focus has shifted from development to sustainable development.

4.5 From the 1990s to the 2020s: Current Issues in IPE

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how IPE has changed in the decades following the end of the Cold War.
- Explain how governments react to international trade.
- Describe government responses to international finance and crises.
- Label the pros and cons of different exchange rate regimes.

The end of the Cold War opened new doors for IPE. Over the last four decades, numerous developments, such as intensifying globalization, trade liberalization, international migration, poverty reduction, growing inequality, and climate change, embedded in an unprecedented wave of technology development, have profoundly altered not only what IPE examines, but how.

Since the late 1980s, as the focus of IPE shifted from a handful of developed countries to incorporate many others in several different regions, its “international” aspect has become more pronounced, as have the accompanying complexities.

IPE has become more focused on empirical analyses. Sophisticated software and advanced statistical techniques now allow researchers to measure variables once considered to be

unquantifiable. Today, IPE researchers start conversations based on the validity of their empirical findings.

Three key issue areas have risen to prominence in contemporary IPE: globalization and international trade, international finance and crises, and exchange rate regimes. In keeping with trends in IPE, this chapter examines these issues through an empirical rather than a historical lens.

Globalization and International Trade

The international system pressures states to act in ways that promote the dissemination of international norms. For instance, ideas encouraging globalization have motivated trade liberalization since the 1990s.⁴⁷ Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells defines globalization in economic terms as:

“An economy whose core activities work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale. Thus capital markets are interconnected worldwide, so that savings and investment in all countries . . . depend for their performance on the evolution and behavior of global financial markets.”⁴⁸

The interconnectedness of markets poses an opportunity or a threat to a country, depending on the country’s ability to compete in the international market.

A large body of IPE literature examines government responses to globalization. Political scientists like Yale University professor David R. Cameron, Cornell University professor Peter J. Katzenstein, and University of Southern California professor Geoffrey Garret have demonstrated that under the pressure of leftist parties, domestic governments tend to expand in order to counterbalance the volatility of an open economy and to protect impacted workers.⁴⁹ An extensive body of political economy literature discusses the impact of globalization on domestic governments, asking whether globalization causes the government to contract or to expand.

Trade policies distribute the benefits and costs of trade among groups in society,⁵⁰ favoring either market liberalization or protectionism. Liberal trade policies promote lower prices across the board, and with this, domestic industries face international competition. Consumers win, but workers in import-competing industries that cannot keep up with international competition lose. On the other hand, protectionist trade policies safeguard import-competing industries that are unable to compete internationally but increase prices to consumers. That is, while trade liberalization promotes widespread benefits with localized costs, protectionism does the opposite; it promotes limited benefits with generalized costs.

Show Me the Data

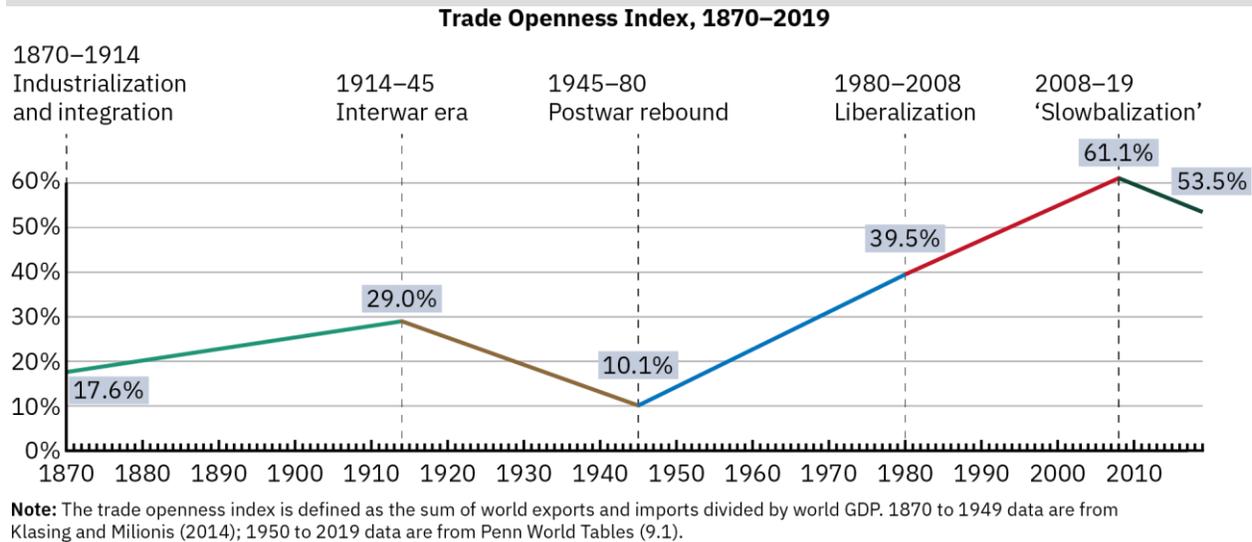


Figure 4.6 In recent years, globalization has retreated for the first time since World War I. (sources: Our World in Data; Pearson Institute for International Economics; attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Globalization calls for market liberalization. It decreases government participation in the economy by allowing the market to regulate the movement of capital, labor, goods, and services across borders. As a result, businesses move production plants from one location to another in search of competitive advantages; production costs decrease, and trade volumes increase.

The economic gains from trade liberalization are widely documented,⁵¹ but the dislocation of production plants to areas where cheaper labor is available has left behind unemployed factory workers. While trade liberalization leads to lower prices and brings new consumers to the economy, increasing the quality of life of millions of people, it also generates unemployment when factories that, in the face of international competition, cannot keep their doors open end up exiting the market. New York University political scientist Fiona McGillivray demonstrated that, when faced with fierce international competition, entire industry sectors struggle, and as more factories close, more workers become unemployed.⁵²

Factory workers' skills tend to be industry specific. Thus, if unemployment is an industry problem, unemployed workers have difficulty finding similar jobs with comparable wages and benefits. For example, a welder in a steel factory has abilities that cannot be easily translated to other industries. Consequently, unemployed workers—in this example, steel workers—are left with few options. They may accept a low-skilled, low-paying, limited benefits job; enroll for professional (re)training; and/or remain unemployed. Considering the difficulties of professional (re)training, Harvard University professor Torben Iversen and former Berlin Social Science Center researcher Thomas R. Cusak have shown that workers who lose their jobs due to international competition tend to remain unemployed for long periods of time.⁵³

Studies about the impacts of globalization on government spending tend to focus on workers. Globalization affects factory owners and investors differently than it impacts workers, and thus factory owners and investors tend to deal with market volatility differently. Investors usually save money for rough periods, buy insurance to protect themselves from market volatility, and pressure the government for assistance. Workers do not usually have extra money to save or with which to buy insurance and thus are left only with the option of resorting to the government for assistance. Whether the government is composed of left/labor or right/liberal parties that espouse liberal economic ideologies, following the ideas initially proposed by Adam Smith impacts the size of the government. Majority left/labor governments tend to spend significantly more on welfare policies, such as unemployment benefits and food stamps. These policies generate spending and increase the size of the government. Right/liberal majority governments tend to cut welfare expenses, spend less, and thus decrease the size of the government.

Winners and Losers in International Trade

Several researchers have studied people's preferences about international trade and have found that the key variables influencing preferences toward globalization and market liberalization are 1) material gains and 2) education levels.

One can argue that an individual who works in an import-competing industry would be a loser in an environment of trade liberalization and thus would tend to oppose it. Suppose that an industry in Country A does not have comparative advantage in sugar production. Countries B, C, and D have more favorable conditions to produce it and therefore can produce better quality sugar at a lower cost. What would happen if Country A's government did away with trade barriers, including tariff and non-tariff barriers, on sugar imports? Country A would receive more of the higher quality, cheaper sugar from Countries B, C, and D. The sugar industry in Country A, which had adopted liberal trade policies, would face pressure from the international market to become more efficient and to produce cheaper sugar. If the sugar industry in Country A were not able to keep up with international quality and prices, it would, with time, get out of the market. Consumers in Country A would not buy sugar from Country A producers; they would prefer the better quality and cheaper sugar from Countries B, C, and D. Sugar producers and workers in Country A would be worse off in the short term and would close their doors, and workers would lose their jobs.

Though workers would suffer, the country as a whole would get better sugar at a lower price, and this is why, economically speaking, trade liberalization tends to favor markets in general as they promote better quality and/or lower prices.

Suppose a person works in the sugar industry in Country C. If world governments do away with agricultural trade barriers, sugar producers in Country C would sell their product on the international market. Both landowners and agriculture workers in Country C would be better off. As a result, people who work in export industries tend to favor free trade policies.

Some scholars argue that people's opinions on trade policy also depend on education levels. Educated (or highly skilled) individuals tend to be more likely to favor trade liberalization.

Although trade liberalization generates winners and losers in particular industry sectors in the short term, such as export or import industries, the preferences of high-skilled individuals toward trade do not go hand in hand with their personal material gains or losses. Some possible explanations for this seemingly irrational behavior include the fact that these high-skilled individuals may find other jobs with relative ease in different industries and the fact that they also tend to reap the benefits of better quality and cheaper exports in the domestic market.

Yale University professor Kenneth F. Scheve and Dartmouth professor Matthew J. Slaughter illustrate the argument that a person's level of education heavily influences their perceptions of trade liberalization.⁵⁴ They surveyed individuals in the United States and found that individual preferences toward trade policies are a function of both material effects and skill levels (measured as educational attainment or occupation). Fiscal and municipal management specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank Martin Ardanaz, Columbia University professor M. Victoria Murillo, and University of Houston professor Pablo M. Pinto replicated Scheve and Slaughter's survey in Argentina and also found that support for economic integration depends on both material effects and education levels.⁵⁵

Suppose that the United States is Country A in the example above. That is, although the United States does not have a competitive advantage in sugar production, it produces it anyway. The sugar industry creates several jobs and supplies a considerable portion of the sugar consumed in the country. However, given that the United States does not have a comparative advantage when it comes to sugar production, the sugar produced in the United States is more expensive than the sugar produced in a country with a comparative advantage in sugar production, like Brazil, for example. Therefore, to make sure that sugar made in America can compete in the market, the US government subsidizes its production. These types of subsidies are payments or incentives the government grants to firms in the form of cash payments or tax cuts. Subsidies can be used to promote industry sectors considered relevant to a country, such as the sugar industry in the United States. In the end, although Americans pay higher prices for sugar, some American jobs are kept. If the government eliminated sugar subsidies, consumers would pay lower prices, but sugar producers and workers would be forced out of the market.

International Finance and Crises

Financial crises are a regular feature of the international economy. Retraction, and sometimes recession, follow cycles of economic expansion and growth. When a crisis hits, it can have dire consequences including effects like capital flight, the large-scale exit of money from a country as a result of market uncertainty; decreased investments; unemployment; and economic contraction. In such situations, governments take actions to lessen the negative effects of the crisis and to reverse the downward trajectory of the economy.

IPE examines the economic consequences of government actions. When financial crises like the American financial crisis of 2008, which is considered the worst since the Great Depression, do occur, governments are limited in the ways they can respond to them.⁵⁶

The politics that led to the 2008 financial crisis had their roots in George W. Bush-era tax cuts and the increased international borrowing of the early 2000s. The international inflow of

money to the United States made it easy for the government and individuals to borrow at low interest rates. Intense borrowing created huge deficits in the balance of payments. At one point, the United States had debts equivalent to 5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), the sum of everything produced in a country in a given period. A similar level of debt would certainly affect the reputation of other countries, especially developing ones, making it more difficult for them to get loans,⁵⁷ but creditors decided to overlook the situation when it happened in the United States. The extensive amount of money that poured into the market stimulated the American economy. People were consuming a lot; the demand for imported goods and services rose, and housing prices skyrocketed.⁵⁸

Politicians like former United States Federal Reserve Chairs Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke refused to acknowledge these warning signs. They suggested that high debt and an overstimulated economy could indicate bumps ahead in other economies, but not in the United States. Greenspan, Bernanke, and their followers made the case for “an economic American exceptionalism,” but in the end, the United States was not entirely different from other countries in the world.



Figure 4.7 Protesters rally in Minneapolis calling for accountability in the banking industry, the prosecution of bankers for the 2008 financial crisis, and relief for families and communities devastated by foreclosures. (credit: “Rally to demand accountability from the financial institutions and legal action against bankers” by Fibonacci Blue/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

A slowdown in economic activity opened up the doors for a financial crisis that deepened with massive capital flight. In the end, fiscal and current account deficits were indeed indications of a serious financial crisis ahead. When the Obama administration took office in January 2009, it followed Keynesian guidelines, taking significant steps to intervene in the economy, including bailing out major corporations, to lessen the impacts of the crisis.

The American government did not have to act to secure an exchange rate, as most countries who go through such a crisis do, but it did act to reduce capital flight and stimulate investments. Domestic actors called for unemployment stabilization and eventual deficit reduction. The government's ability to bail out big corporations through the disbursement of loans during the crisis indicates that there might indeed be some form of "American economic exceptionalism." Perhaps no country other than the United States could have contradicted IMF prescriptions.

The actions of the American government in response to the 2008 financial crisis were markedly different from the actions of other states. Greece provides a telling example. Greece has had to conform to fiscal policy austerity as prescribed by international institutions, while the US government has been able to take whatever course of action it chooses.

Different governments have access to different actions during a financial crisis. The United States' seemingly successful recovery implies that a government's ability to respond to a financial crisis depends not only on domestic incentives but also on its power to pursue an expansionary economic policy in times when this action would not at all be recommended. Though more powerful countries can stand to take more risks than less powerful ones, only the United States, which is the world's financial hegemon,⁵⁹ has the leeway to take this course of action. This exception takes one back to the establishment of the post-World War II international financial system where the United States had the most prominent role.

Exchange Rate Regimes in a Globalized Economy

As discussed above, the Bretton Woods monetary system established a gold standard under which governments kept gold in their treasuries to back the value of their currencies. In 1971, the gold standard was extinguished, and since then the value of national currencies has been based on trust, or their perceived value. Whenever an individual buys something, they believe that good or service is worth a portion of their money.

The demand for goods produced in one country creates the demand for that country's currency. As a result, exchange rates are established. An exchange rate is the price of a currency relative to another currency. A government can use several mechanisms to manipulate the value of its currency. By creating incentives to sell abroad and buy domestically, governments change the relative prices of their currencies. Such incentives can occur through trade (increased output, but especially innovation and productivity). In terms of monetary policy, the government can print money, or it can increase interest rates to curb consumption. A government can also manipulate the value of the currency by establishing changes in the exchange rate regime.

While almost every economist would agree that a free trade policy is superior to imposing trade barriers, when it comes to exchange rates, there is no agreement on which policy is best. Governments can choose from among three main exchange rate regimes: a floating (flexible) exchange rate, a fixed (pegged) exchange rate, and a multilateral exchange rate.

In a floating exchange rate regime, the supply and demand of a currency in the market determine its value. For example, when American consumers want to buy more Mexican products, the demand for Mexican pesos rises and, consequently, the price for pesos increases. Americans will spend more dollars to buy pesos. When Mexican consumers want to buy more American products, the demand for dollars increases, and the price of dollars also increases. Pesos become devaluated in relation to the dollar. In a floating exchange rate regime, the prices of currencies float naturally according to the pressures of supply and demand. Theoretically, in the long run there is an equilibrium among all the currencies in the market, and the balance of payments of every participating country is zero.

A government may decide to fix the exchange rate regime. In such cases, no matter how supply and demand forces interact, exchange rates remain constant. No matter how much Americans demand Mexican agricultural products or vehicles, if the Mexican government maintains a fixed exchange rate, 1 peso will be equivalent to 2 dollars, for example. The mechanisms through which a government maintains a fixed exchange rate regime are market interventions, such as using reserves to correct the devaluation or appreciation of their currency, and fiscal and monetary policies, which refer to governments' decisions about taxation and available credit in the economy. A government usually fixes an exchange rate to stimulate exports/reduce imports and avoid large deficits on the balance of payments.

In a multilateral exchange rate regime, governments allow their currencies to fluctuate within margins. There is a floor (the lowest allowed value) and a ceiling (the highest allowed value), and whenever the currency reaches either the floor or the ceiling, the government intervenes using marketing interventions and fiscal and monetary policies to change the relative price of a currency.

Each exchange rate regime has pros and cons. On the positive side, a fixed exchange rate regime stabilizes the flow of international trade since it promotes predictability and offers an anchor for macroeconomic policies. However, a fixed exchange rate regime may result in losses in either output or employment, depending on the country's position as an importer or exporter. Under a fixed exchange rate regime, politicians lack the ability to manipulate monetary policy for electoral or partisan reasons.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, a floating exchange rate regime can be unpredictable and may not help to stabilize the flow of trade, but it allows for the political manipulation of the currency.

A politicians' incentives to manipulate a currency may conflict with what is best for the economy or with societal preferences. For example, prior to an election a politician may promise not to fix the exchange rate regime. Although fixed exchange rates bring stabilization, they tie the government's hands when it comes to the manipulation of the currency. Exchange rates are more likely to be fixed in the aftermath of elections.

When politics and the economy interact, how interest rates should be balanced is unclear. Therefore, an independent central bank, or a central bank with the power to define monetary policies without government influence, may be a good option to promote an exchange rate regime and monetary policies more connected to an economic agenda and less responsive to electoral politics.

The movement toward globalization and trade liberalization since the 1990s has resulted in a tremendous increase in capital mobility, the ability to move capital from one country to another, and shifted much of domestic politics toward floating exchange rate regimes. Movements in exchange rate regimes affect the return on investments, and investors exert pressure on governments to adjust rates in ways that benefit them. In the short term, the shift to capital mobility and financial integration (the process that connects financial markets all over the world) favors capitalists with mobile assets, such as investors, and disfavors those not so mobile, such as manufacturing or farming. In the long run, this trend tends to favor the mobile capital owners over workers.

It is hard for economists to agree on an optimal exchange rate regime because socioeconomic issues and electoral politics influence which regime is best for a given country. In order to avoid some of these questions, many countries have independent central banks that are more tuned to socioeconomic aspects and less immersed in party politics.

4.6 Considering Poverty, Inequality, and the Environmental Crisis

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the origins of poverty, inequality, and the environmental crisis.
- Discuss prominent criticisms of liberal economic theories and the market economy.

As the David P. Levine quotes included in the above discussion of the advent of the liberal economy suggest, the market economy has provided its members with great opportunities but has also confronted them with great dangers. The advent of liberalism brought the possibility of creating wealth and the continuous development of market economies, which culminated in unprecedented levels of globalization and trade liberalization since the 1990s. Innovation and scientific and technological developments are intrinsically associated with the incentives the liberal market provides. In other words, as people like Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates and cofounder of Apple Steve Jobs put their minds to work, they create amazing things that can be produced on a large scale for the consumption of billions of people around the world. People like Gates and Jobs are rewarded with wealth, and this possibility fuels entrepreneurs across the globe and propels them to create, find solutions to difficult problems, and transform how people live their lives.

However, dangers associated with capitalism, like poverty, inequality, and environmental crises, are the other side of the coin. Many authors argue that these dangers are inescapable consequences of capitalism.

Poverty and Inequality

Like Levine, several scholars have suggested that poverty is an inescapable feature of capitalism, or the market economy. Recall that, with the advent of the market economy, it became possible to create wealth. Ideas that circulated during the Enlightenment, such as laissez-faire economics, an emphasis on individual freedom, and the protection of property rights by a limited government, promoted wealth creation and capital accumulation. At the same time, these ideas have exacerbated poverty and inequality.

Under other economic systems, such as mercantilism, wealth was fixed, and monarchs and the aristocracy lived lavish lives, while the rest of the population lived frugal lives. As there was no trade among countries, there was not much to consume. People ate what they planted or raised, wore what they sewed, and when things went well, they could barter some excess with their neighbors. As they were all in the same boat, everyone had similar living conditions, and there was no striking inequality. Only a tiny portion of the population, the royals, lived differently.

The Enlightenment brought profound changes, from the advent of markets to urbanization and a new relationship with private property, including land. At the same time that the market economy was being developed during the Enlightenment period, the Industrial Revolution made it possible to produce goods for mass consumption.

A new social class emerged: the middle class. While those people in the middle class were able to consume much more than before, many people were relegated to a condition of poverty, where they did not participate in the markets or had no plot of land to subsist on. Those who were poor had no means by which to fulfill their basic needs for water, food, and shelter. This condition was different from the destitute condition of the mercantilist period, when people had at least their basic needs met.

Several authors argue that the same mechanism that produces wealth and innovation also creates poverty, inequality, and environmental crises. In other words, poverty, inequality, and environmental crises are understood as unwanted consequences of the market economy.

While the industrial process creates affordable goods for mass consumption, it has had unwanted consequences. For example, those who had been displaced from the land where they used to live started to sell their labor in exchange for a wage. Note that there were no wages during mercantilism; the relationship with work was completely different, and the landlord took care of the families that lived on his land. The British television series *Downton Abbey*, set in the early 20th century, illustrates the change from a world where the landlord was responsible for caring for the families that lived on their land to a world where individuals were free and thus responsible for the care of themselves and their families. Note, however, that the changes illustrated in the show had been going on for almost a century.

The concept of wages creates a serious tension within the market economy: in order for workers to be able to satisfy the basic needs of their families, wages should be as high as

possible. On the other hand, in order to keep production costs down and guarantee the profit of the capital owner, wages should be as low as possible.

This relationship between labor, wages, basic needs, and unemployment creates poverty. Most sell their labor in exchange for a wage that should allow the worker to provide for themselves and their family. If the labor is not specialized, the pool of people capable of working the job is large. If there are more individuals willing to sell their labor than actual demand for that type of labor, wages are lower and there is unemployment. The supply of capable workers exceeds the demand for workers with those skills. If, as a consequence of low wages or unemployment, a worker is unable to provide themselves and their families with basic goods, they are considered poor.



Figure 4.8 In the United States, individuals who are unemployed may submit claims for unemployment benefits; however, these benefits are often not enough on their own to support a family.⁶¹ (credit: “Unemployment Office” by Burt Lum/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The generalized suffering among the poor during the Industrial Revolution prompted several political philosophers to search for answers to solve the problems of growing poverty and inequality. At the beginning of the 19th century, these political philosophers proposed a variety of responses to the challenge. Although each of their proposals had singular characteristics, each involved the social ownership of the means of production, or the control of farms, factories, and business offices by the people. Thus, these political philosophers became known as socialists.

Socialist thinkers proposed forms of societal organization that upset the foundations of the market economy. There was a general belief among socialists that this economic system could not satisfactorily address the problem of inequality of property or wealth, and thus they proposed not only the social ownership of the means of production but also a stronger government to coordinate and redistribute wealth in society. These ideas are in striking

opposition with the classical liberalism advanced by Adam Smith, which promoted a laissez-faire economy, a free market with minimal government intervention.

Though many people associate socialist thinker Karl Marx with socialism or communism, the majority of his work concerns the market economy. Marx contended that, in order to end the exploitation of the proletariat⁶² by the owners of the means of production, workers should unite and rebel against the capitalists. While society prepared for the advent of communism,⁶³ a dictatorship of the proletariat—a socialist state—should govern.

Several countries underwent socialist revolutions in an attempt to implement socialist ideals at the expense of the market economy, individual freedoms, and property rights protected by a limited government.

Unlike socialist thinkers, some contend that poverty and inequality can be overcome from within the capitalist system. One of the most renowned proponents of overcoming poverty through technology development and investments, Jeffrey Sachs, authored *The End of Poverty*, published in 2005, which heavily influenced the global fight to overcome poverty.

In the book's foreword, music celebrity and philanthropist Paul David Hewsen, better known as Bono, writes: "We are the first generation who can . . . unknot the whole tangle of bad trade, bad debt, and bad luck. The first generation that can end a corrupt relationship between the powerful and the weaker parts of the world which has been so wrong for so long."⁶⁴ In the book, Sachs contends that "our generation is heir to two and a half centuries of economic progress."⁶⁵ That is, since the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment in Europe, economic and technological developments have made it possible to meet basic human needs globally.

Given this opportunity, in order to end extreme poverty, Sachs calls for a commitment to embrace the Millennium Development Goals: raising the voices of the impoverished, redeeming the role of the United States in the world, adapting the roles of the IMF and the World Bank, strengthening the United Nations, and promoting science and sustainable development.⁶⁶ Sachs hoped that, by committing to these goals, the world could eliminate poverty by 2015.

Sachs's standpoint represents a moral commitment to end poverty within the capitalist system. Poverty did not end by 2015, but the world has made progress toward the goal. Globalization and trade liberalization have increased since the 1990s, and both developed and developing countries have taken part in the process. Developing countries' gains as a result of trade liberalization since the 1990s are in the billions of dollars added to GDP growth.⁶⁷

Economic integration has pulled billions of people out of poverty and increased their quality of life. The global poverty rate, defined as the percentage of people living at USD 1.90 a day or below, decreased from about 35 percent in 1990 to about 10 percent in 2017. Over the same time period, the number of people living at the global poverty rate has also consistently decreased, from nearly 2 billion to close to 689 million.⁶⁸

However, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other challenges threaten efforts to eradicate poverty. These threats jeopardize the attainment of the World Bank's goal of bringing

global extreme poverty to less than 3 percent by 2030. Global economic growth was predicted to decrease by 5.2 percent in 2020, the largest drop in 80 years. More importantly, the severity of the world situation in the face of the pandemic has the potential to erase the gains of years of poverty eradication efforts. While COVID-19 triggered the trend reversal, its effects have been intensified by armed conflict in some countries and the growing impact of climate change worldwide.⁶⁹

The pandemic-induced economic slowdown may have a lasting impact on international investment levels, remittances, and the labor force skills and overall health of millions of people who are now unemployed, as well as on learning outcomes (affected by school closures and the adaptation of educational practices, such as online courses) and supply chains.⁷⁰ World leaders, governments, international institutions such as the World Bank, celebrities, NGOs, and private individuals are fighting to prevent COVID-19 and its consequences from reversing efforts to eradicate poverty.⁷¹

The Environmental Crisis

In the contemporary economy, almost any imagined good can be produced for mass consumption. These goods are frequently manufactured, processed, or assembled in distant countries using parts from several other countries, and once ready, they are shipped to stores around the world. This production process uses raw materials, labor (often cheap labor in developing countries), and energy, including the energy used for transportation. While this process creates affordable goods for mass consumption, it has undesirable consequences. In addition to contributing to poverty and inequality, this system also does harm to the environment. As factories burn fossil fuel to generate energy and power machinery, greenhouse gases (GHG) are emitted into the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) considers the cumulative release of GHG since the Industrial Revolution to be the main cause of climate change.⁷² In short, the environmental crisis is another unintended negative consequence of the market economy.

Literature on the possible ways to deal with the environmental crisis can be divided into two broad currents of thought. Some scholars propose that, in order to overcome the crisis, society must alter the mechanisms that generate it, and since the crisis is caused by the unwanted consequences of industrial production, these scholars argue for degrowth, a decrease in economic production and consumption levels. That is, to these scholars, slowing down industrial production and facing economic degrowth is the only way forward if the world hopes to counteract climate change.⁷³

Another group of scholars claims that the mechanisms that generate the crisis may be altered through sustainable development. These scholars argue that it is possible to combine economic growth and environmental quality as long as the production process is improved through innovation, technology development, and regulatory intervention. The UN, the EU, and many governments support this argument. The prevalent idea is that as countries increase production efficiency through the development of green technology, global society may overcome the environmental crisis.⁷⁴

For a long time, the unwanted consequences of industrial production have been largely neglected. This is due in part to skepticism about climate change,⁷⁵ but mostly to the costs associated with addressing them. In economic terms, the level of industrial output in a market is determined by supply and demand. Factories produce goods to meet the needs and wants of consumers. Traditionally, factories have incorporated the private costs of production into their prices. These costs include, for example, raw materials, labor, rent, utilities, and depreciation. However, these factories have not typically included the social costs of production into their prices. The social costs of production include costs related to social and environmental requirements, such as occupational injuries; deforestation; air, water, and land pollution; acid rain; and GHG emissions.

Because environmental costs have not been incorporated into the price of goods, they have been split across many individuals. Commonly, it is not consumers who bear the burden of a product's highest environmental costs. For example, the Texas Gulf Coast is home to six oil refineries. Oil refined at these plants fuels the vehicles of millions of consumers across America. In addition to refining oil, these refineries are the country's largest polluters of benzene, a chemical compound known to cause various forms of cancer. Individuals who live in the vicinity of these plants and breathe the benzene-polluted air pay some high costs. They are more likely to develop forms of cancer associated with exposure to benzene than individuals that live further away from the plants.⁷⁶ So, the individuals who live near these refineries pay the highest environmental costs, while the benefits of cheap gas are spread among millions of American consumers. If the environmental costs of production were included in the price of gas, it would be much more expensive.

When only the private costs of production are added to a good's price, the market reaches one price; however, the inclusion of social and environmental costs shifts this price. The difference between price one, which does not consider social costs, and price two, which adds them to the final price, demonstrates the unwanted consequences of production, commonly referred to as environmental externalities. As fewer consumers are willing to pay the full price for a product, sales of the product decrease. As sales decrease, production levels also decrease. Consistently lower sales and reduced production levels tend to generate unemployment.⁷⁷

To mitigate and adapt to the consequences of the environmental crisis, the UN has promoted Sustainable Development Goals.⁷⁸ The European Union (EU) has worked to develop a stringent body of environmental policies since the late 1980s,⁷⁹ and Korea and Japan have adopted similar policies.⁸⁰ The United States took some relevant steps toward sustainable development during the Obama administration (2008–2016), scaled back those efforts during the Trump years⁸¹ (2016–2020), and has resumed efforts to meet sustainable development goals under Biden. (2020–present).

5. International Law⁹

by Knut Traisbach

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International law is an important area to understand and much of it is theoretical or historical in nature – building on themes explored in the previous chapters. You have seen in the preceding chapter that some of the discussed theories regard ‘norms’ as a regulatory force in international relations, although the theories differ in their understanding of the relevance and function of these norms. This chapter takes up this notion and introduces you to the role of international legal norms as a particular means for the social regulation of international affairs.

Imagine a small settlement with a number of properties on each of which stands one house in which lives one family. This settlement has no common government, parliament, court system or police force. The internal affairs of each family as much as the borders of each property are respected as inviolable. The families have predominantly bilateral relations with each other and engage in commercial exchanges of goods and services. It is commonly accepted that if the head of a family dies, the established promises to other families and agreed exchanges are respected by the heirs. When children decide to delineate a new property or when a new family from elsewhere wants to settle in, the other families must agree first and recognise this new property. When disputes between families arise, they may result in violence, especially if someone challenges an established border or intervenes with a family’s interests. It is commonly accepted that one may have recourse to force to defend one’s interest in family and property. Other families do not intervene in these disputes as long as their interests are not affected or they have formed a special alliance with another family.

Ask yourself now whether you would call this settlement a ‘legal system’? Would you even speak of ‘laws’? Perhaps intuitively you would say no. Yet, consider for a moment which kind of rules and principles must exist even in such a setting. How does any form of regulation work? Why does it work? If

you delve a little on these questions, you will encounter some of the foundational legal institutions that exist in most legal systems. The concept of property, title, territory and border are there; a principle of autonomy and supreme authority seems to apply to the families; and the institution of contract certainly exists. You will also detect rules of some sort in the form of established customs and you might even identify a principle that says that ‘agreements need to be kept’. Lawyers make use of the Latin phrase ‘pacta sunt servanda’ to express this basic principle. Thus, even in such a rudimentary setting, some customary rules and principles exist even if they are not called ‘law’ or written down in any form.

You will also note that some characteristics of what you may intuitively regard as essential to a legal order are missing: There is no authority ‘above’ the families which makes laws for all, adjudicates conflicts or enforces laws and judgements. There is no government, parliament, court or police system. The rules and principles seem to stem from established practices motivated by the functional needs of

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cohabitation, pragmatism or mere common sense. Whatever rules exist in this settlement, their validity and effectiveness are routed exclusively in the will of the families and their members.

This settlement resembles many peculiarities of the international legal order. In fact, the settlement resembles a certain depiction of the international legal order that most international lawyers today would call outdated, even though it is precisely this depiction of a primitive legal order that haunts international law even today. If you translate the situation of the settlement to the international plane and substitute the families with states, you will get a picture of international law characterised by states as the principal actors. In this depiction, states hold the supreme and exclusive authority over their polities and follow predominantly customary and contractual rules in the relations between them but have no world government above them.

The principle of sovereignty expressed this supreme and exclusive authority of states over their territory, and it confirmed the equal status of all states. It developed its current meaning through the writings of legal and political philosophers between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. Sovereignty continues to be the foundational pillar of the international legal order. For many decades this foundational pillar of international law read: sovereign states are the masters of international law with no world government above them. This meant that the validity of any legal rule depended on the will of states or, conversely, that states are only bound by authoritative legal precepts (norms) that they have consented to. In a famous judgement in the *Lotus case*, the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague – the principal judicial organ of the League of Nations, the predecessors to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of the United Nations (UN) – stated in 1927 (The Case of the S.S. 'Lotus', judgement of the Permanent Court of International Justice, 7 September 1927, 18):

International law governs relations between independent States. The rules of law binding upon States therefore emanate from their own free will as expressed in conventions or by usages generally accepted as expressing principles of law and established in order to regulate the relations between these co-existing independent communities or with a view to the achievement of common aims. Restrictions upon the independence of States cannot therefore be presumed.

What law is international law?

It is this depiction of international law that often culminated in the question of whether international law was really law. How could international legal norms be effective if their validity depended on the will of states, the very subjects international law should govern? This doubt in the validity and effectiveness of international law ultimately led to a rupture between the two disciplines of international law and international relations theory after the Second World War. Two scholars, Edward Hallett Carr and Hans Morgenthau, suggested around this time that international law was particularly inept for understanding the behaviour of nations. They were disappointed by what they identified as an idealistic belief in international law which, after all, had not prevented – for the second time – a world war. They proposed instead a more 'realistic' assessment of international relations based on power and interest. The founding realist school of international relations theory thus questioned the effectiveness and relevance of international law as a decisive influencing factor for the behaviour of states and for the assurance of international peace and security.

Much has changed since then. The international legal order has diversified in every possible way. There are countless bilateral and multilateral contracts between states (called treaties or conventions in international law), and more than 5,000 intergovernmental organisations and their different organs engage in the regulation and administration of nearly all aspects of international life.

International legal norms pervade global affairs. Every time you travel internationally, send an email, or update your social media profiles, there are not only domestic but supranational legal norms at play, including regional norms as in the European Union. Be it border control, diplomatic and consular relations between countries, the determination of flight and navigation routes, internet regulation, privacy, the use of postal and telecommunication services, industrial standards or cross-border environmental hazards – international law permeates these areas as much as the better-known fields of the protection of human rights, humanitarian interventions and the fight against transnational terrorism.

It is important to understand, then, that the question of whether and how international law matters depends not least on one's conceptual outlook on international life. This chapter introduces you foremost to the (traditional 'occidental' or 'Western') normative understanding of international law in order to show you how international lawyers think and how they use international law. This implies a focus on valid legal rules that authoritatively regulate international life. Yet the understanding of international law as a system of legal norms is not the only possible approach, nor is it the solely valid one. In fact, there are numerous other approaches that complement the normative outlook on global law (Walker 2014). It is also important that the occidental depiction of international law is not the only one existing in the world. Scholars from outside the West have shown, for example, how the dominant view of international law neglects important and often earlier contributions to international law by other cultures. Asian, African and Latin American countries should form part of our understanding of international law. For example, international treaties existed already in Africa and Asia over three thousand years ago. Islamic legal thought, present in Persia, India, South Asia and Europe, also had legal regulations of how to conduct hostilities at least since the seventh century. There is not one single conception of international law or international politics.

By focusing on the normative understanding of international law, the chapter takes a modest approach and steers a middle ground. There are also conceptualisations that portray international law as a cosmopolitan order securing solidarity and peace in a 'post-Westphalian' world in which states have largely lost their status as sole sovereigns. On the other hand, there are theories that continue to question the social effectiveness and relevance of international legal norms to shape the behaviour of international actors. In addition, one can also analyse international law through empirical research that uses collected data about the social behaviour of actors as it is done, for example, to scrutinise the effectiveness of human rights norms. Yet, a purely empirical analysis has difficulty in conveying the idiosyncrasy of normative thinking and argumentation in international law. Even if collected data shows instances of non-compliance with human rights norms, it would be wrong to draw conclusions from this about the binding character or range of social effects of these norms.

International lawyers as a particular group of professionals learn techniques to determine which legal norms exist and which are applicable to the relevant actors in a certain situation. Lawyers speak of the sources and subjects of law. They learn how to apply these norms using specific techniques, such as interpretation or the balancing of conflicting rights. These professional techniques are not value-neutral

or objective but involve subjective choices and politics. An approximation to objectivity and ideals of justice is achieved only through specific procedures that need to be followed, recognised modes of argumentation and particular processes of decision-making. In a nutshell, international law consists of certain conventions on argumentation and modes of conflict resolution that some regard as a craft, others as an art. Most likely it is both.

The contents of international law

One distinguishes broadly between domestic, regional and (public and private) international law. Domestic law stems from domestic lawmakers and regulates the life of the citizens of a particular state. Regional law, such as European Union law or the law of regional human rights mechanisms, stems from regional intergovernmental institutions and addresses the governments and individuals of a particular geographical region or legal regime. Public international law is the subject of this chapter and addresses – in most general terms – relations involving states, intergovernmental organisations and non-state actors, which include today individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private corporations. Private international law concerns conflicts of laws that may arise in cases where the domestic laws of different states could apply, for example in cases of cross-border e-commerce, marriages or liabilities.

Within public international law, a distinction is traditionally drawn between the law of peace and the law of war (humanitarian law). The law of peace regulates peaceful relations and includes such subject matters as international treaty law, the law of diplomatic and consular relations, international organisation law, the law of state responsibility, the law of the sea, the environment and outer space or international economic law.

International humanitarian law (IHL) is the law of armed conflicts (*jus in bellum* – the law applicable in war) and regulates the conduct of international and non-international hostilities. In times of war, the use of force, including the killing of human beings, is not prohibited. The legal regulation of armed conflicts goes back to the mid-nineteenth century and comprises a large body of customary rules and a series of important conventions and additional protocols to these conventions adopted primarily in The Hague and Geneva. International humanitarian law regulates, among other things, the methods and means of warfare and the protection of certain categories of persons – for example, the sick and wounded, prisoners of war and civilians. More specific treaties prohibit the use of certain types of weapons (such as chemical or biological weapons, mines or cluster munitions) or the protection of cultural property during armed conflict. Much of the development and codification of this body of law is the merit of the International Committee of the Red Cross, founded in 1863 by Henry Dunant, which is a private humanitarian institution based in Geneva and forms part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

At the transitional points between the law of peace and the law of armed conflict lies the legal regulation of the resort to force (*jus ad bellum* – the law to engage in war) which concerns the conditions that need to be met to use force legally as, for example, in instances of self-defence (Article 51, UN Charter). More recently, scholars also speak of the regulation of the transition to peace after the end of armed conflicts (*jus post-bellum* – the law after war) which includes questions over how to end armed conflicts, transitional justice and post-war reconstruction.

The strict distinction between the law of peace and the law of armed conflict has been somewhat blurred with the rise of international human rights law and international criminal law. Human rights law builds on and develops fundamental principles of humanitarian law for the protection of individuals. On the other hand, human rights have considerably influenced the refinement of humanitarian rules for the protection of combatants and civilians. International criminal law has seen a rapid development after the end of the Cold War first with the establishment of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and then with the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002.

From 'no world government' to global governance

Consider now what it meant to establish, for example, an international legal prohibition of torture. Torture was a common and legal method of interrogation before the seventeenth century. A legal prohibition of torture would mean that governments are obliged by international law not to allow their officials to use torture. How did an international legal norm prohibiting torture develop? What were its effects?

Subjects: Who makes international law and to whom does it apply?

You have seen already that traditionally only states (for historical reasons also the Holy See/Vatican and the Maltese Order) were subjects of international law and bearers of privileges and obligations. Privileges included sovereign status, immunities, jurisdiction or membership in international organisations, for example. Obligations towards other states arose from voluntary contracts, from the principle of non-intervention or from responsibilities for wrongful acts.

The status of a sovereign state implied full membership in the international society of states. It is a contentious issue in international law whether a territorial entity gains the legal status of a sovereign state depending only on a number of factual criteria (such as the existence of a population, territory, effective government and capacity to enter into international relations) or whether this requires also a formal recognition by other states. Already the criteria of statehood are contentious, and in practice it is not always easy to determine whether all conditions are met. In addition, for political reasons states have sometimes recognised other states that did not fulfil one or more criteria of statehood, or they have not recognised states despite them fulfilling all criteria. After the break-up of the former state of Yugoslavia, for example, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008. Serbia has not formally recognised Kosovo as an independent sovereign state. Neither have a number of other states such as Russia, China and Spain, which all try to control movements for regional independence or autonomy in their own territory.

Coming back now to the example of the prohibition of torture, which options did individuals have under international law to seek redress for acts of torture? If a foreigner was tortured by officials of another state, the home state could complain to the latter. The individuals themselves, however, could do very little under international law, for individuals were not subjects of this body of law. Even worse, if a state tortured its own citizens, this was an internal matter in which other states could not intervene.

Sources: How is international law made?

The most important and most concrete sources of international law are bilateral and multilateral treaties. Multilateral treaties are usually prepared during long negotiations at diplomatic state

conferences where a final treaty text is adopted and then opened for signature and ratification by states. When an agreed number of states have ratified the treaty, it enters into force and becomes binding on the member states.

Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice lists as sources of international law on which the court may rely in its decisions: treaties, customary international law, general principles of law that exist in most domestic legal systems (such as behaving in 'good faith') and, as a subsidiary means, also judicial decisions and scholarly writings.

Customary practices are even today still a common and highly contentious source of law. Customary law refers to the established practices of states that are supported by a subjective belief to be required by law. If a customary rule exists, it is binding on all states except where a state has persistently objected to this rule. You can imagine already that the deduction of legal rules from social practices and subjective beliefs poses many difficulties and bears many insecurities regarding proof and actual content. Also during diplomatic conferences that prepare a treaty text, many difficult compromises are brokered. To paraphrase a saying that is often attributed to Otto von Bismarck, laws are like sausages. It is better not to see them being made.

In the context of our example of the prohibition of torture, imagine the following scenario: state A has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which contains a prohibition of torture in Article 7, and is also party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This country fights terrorism and brings suspected terrorists to secret prisons in countries which are not party to any of the above conventions. In these prisons, the suspects endure intense interrogations which include sleep deprivation, waterboarding (causing the sensation of drowning) and other measures.

As an international lawyer faced with this case your starting point would be the aforementioned international treaties that contain a prohibition of torture. You would need to determine whether the interrogation measures amount to torture. Here, the codified definition in international treaties and the interpretation of this definition in previous cases can give you important guidance. You would also need to determine whether the particular state in question has ratified the pertinent treaty or treaties. In our example, the situation is complicated by the fact that both treaties limit the territorial applicability of the treaty to all individuals within a state's territory and subject to its jurisdiction. Hence one could argue that instances of torture on the territory of non-state parties do not fall within the ambit of the treaties. Also a counterargument is possible. One could make a case for the extraterritorial application of the treaty if the acts of torture on foreign soil were effectively controlled by a state that is a member to the treaty.

You would then proceed to see whether a customary rule exists that prohibits the use of torture. Even if the treaties prohibiting torture have not been ratified by a state, you could argue that the treaty has codified an already existing customary rule or, if a large majority of states has ratified the treaties, that this is evidence that a customary rule has been formed. In light of horrendous historical experiences, you may also argue that the prohibition of torture is of such fundamental importance that today no derogation from this rule is permitted. In other words, you would argue that the prohibition of torture is a peremptory rule of international law (*ius cogens* – peremptory law) that does not permit any exception.

You can see now how the early idea of state consent as a necessary requirement for an international rule still permeates these argumentations. The main difficulty often consists in establishing state consent or, at times, in constructing alternatives for it.

Global organisation: The United Nations era

The end of the Second World War and the end of the Cold War are probably the most significant historical watersheds in the development of recent public international law. The end of the Second World War in 1945 led to the establishment of the United Nations and the rapid development of several areas of international law, including human rights law, international criminal law and international economic law.

The United Nations is the most important global intergovernmental organisation with major offices in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. It was established with the principal aim to ensure peace and security through international co-operation and collective measures. As of 2021, it has 193 member states. Article 2 of the UN Charter, the founding treaty of the United Nations, confirms as guiding principles the sovereign equality of the member states, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the use of force and the principle of non-intervention.

Delegates of all member states meet once a year during the General Assembly to discuss pertinent issues of world politics and vote on nonbinding resolutions. The Security Council is the highest executive organ of the United Nations in which the representatives of ten selected member states and five states with permanent seats decide on issues of peace and security through binding resolutions, which may result in economic sanctions or even military actions. The 'permanent five' (the People's Republic of China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) hold the privilege of a veto right allowing them to prevent the adoption of resolutions of the Security Council on any substantial (as opposed to procedural) issues. Major reform initiatives of the composition or voting procedures of the Security Council have been unsuccessful so far. This taints the effectiveness and the democratic legitimacy of the Security Council and, especially during the Cold War, it severely constrained the Security Council as two of its key members (the United States and the Soviet Union) were engaged in an ideological conflict. Politically, however, the right to veto was a necessary concession to ensure the participation of the most powerful nations in a world organisation.

Numerous principal and subsidiary UN organs and specialised agencies engage in the application, enforcement and development of international law. This work comprises, for example, classical legal work in the International Law Commission and special committees of the General Assembly, practical work in the field and diplomatic efforts by Offices of High Commissioners and their staff, or actions taken by the Security Council. All of these bodies, and many more, promote and shape international law in various ways. In the International Law Commission, for example, a group of experts create reports and drafts on specific topics that are then submitted to a committee of the General Assembly and can provide an important basis for later treaty negotiations. The Offices of the High Commissioners for Human Rights and Refugees do important work in the field where their staff endeavour to uphold international law often in crisis situations. Their experiences influence also subsequent interpretations of international law, for example, regarding who qualifies as a refugee. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fulfils a crucial function in disseminating knowledge about international law by promoting education and research on human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Community and governance: The changing structure of international law

The existence of a world organisation, the legal prohibition of the use of force, the establishment of a system of collective security and the protection of human rights have caused fundamental changes in the international legal order. International lawyers and politicians speak frequently of the 'international community' that co-operates to pursue community interests which cannot be achieved by single states alone. These community interests may range from environmental challenges and cultural heritage to issues of human security.

How much the meaning of sovereignty has changed, one can see, for example, in the principle of a shared 'responsibility to protect' (R2P). According to this principle, states have an obligation to prevent gross human rights violations not only at home but also abroad, if necessary through forceful United Nations measures. The protection of the individual from severe atrocities has thus become a matter of national, regional and international concern. This means that states can no longer claim that gross human rights violations are internal matters and that they are protected by their sovereignty.

Today there are countless actors that engage in the making, interpretation, use and enforcement of international norms. States still are the major international actors and the principal makers and addressees of international norms. Yet the bureaucracies of intergovernmental organisations and their organs, numerous international, regional and domestic courts and tribunals, non-governmental organisations and even groups or single persons (so-called 'norm entrepreneurs') engage in the pronouncement, interpretation and dissemination of international legal norms, standards and other types of 'soft law'. And, they often do this without, or even against, the will of states. For example, a NATO-led intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was executed without the authorisation of the UN Security Council. NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is a collective security organisation, effectively a military alliance, of Western states. It was originally created to help contain the spread of communism in Europe during the Cold War but has endured in the years since. Its actions in Kosovo contributed to the establishment of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty which was a private expert group under the auspices of the Canadian Government to respond to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's challenge on how to respond to large-scale violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The commission produced a report on 'The Responsibility to Protect' to which both the UN Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly referred to and which is used as an argumentative tool by civil society actors, including many non-governmental organisations. You can thus see how a private initiative has transformed into public normative authority.

This multitude of norms, legal regimes, actors and normative processes is reflected in more recent approaches to international law that focus more on pluralistic governance processes than on a unified legal system, and more on informal law-making than on formal sources.

The functioning of international law

In order to understand how different actors make normative claims and how they use international law, the aforementioned broader perspectives offer valuable insights. The emergence of a norm like the prohibition of torture and its influence start long before such a norm is codified in an international treaty. Political scientists and legal scholars have described a normative 'life cycle' that relies on a (transnational) social process which is characterised by an initial norm emergence, followed by early adoption of this new norm, spreading of this acceptance and ultimately by widespread internalisation of the norm and compliance with it.

For the first stage of norm emergence, the influence of so-called 'norm entrepreneurs' (such as private individuals, lobbying groups, non-governmental organisations) is essential. Through a combination of means (e.g. framing of issues, campaigning, empathy appeal, persuasion, shaming, claiming, declaring, etc.) and on different organisational platforms, the norm entrepreneurs try to enunciate norms and persuade governments to embrace them. In the case of torture, this meant that even literary novels and political pamphlets contributed to a change in social perception and an increase of empathy with victims which in turn led to the social unacceptability of torture.

Once a 'critical mass' of actors have adopted a new norm prohibiting torture or of a responsibility to protect, a threshold or tipping point is reached. At this second stage, the norm starts to spread through international society. Here an active process of transnational – domestic, regional and international – socialisation takes place which, primarily, states, international organisations and networks of norm entrepreneurs carry forward. Those state and non-state actors that have endorsed the norm engage in a process of redefining what qualifies as appropriate behaviour within international society. Social movement theory, which studies mobilisations in society to make collective claims about social changes, provides valuable insights on the conditions and effects of this process.

A third phase of internalisation or obedience is reached when norms 'achieve a "taken-for-granted" quality that makes conformance with the norm almost automatic' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 904). If this process succeeds, norms such as the prohibition of torture become truly transnational in the course of this process. They exert normative force domestically through constitutional guarantees and through the work of civil society groups. In addition, the norms are invoked in regional and in international human rights fora such as regional and international courts or human rights bodies. Thus, these norms acquire a transnational character through interactions between a variety of actors – both state and non-state – across issues areas and across historic public/private and domestic/international dichotomies (Koh 1997, 2612).

This, however, does not mean that international law is a guarantor for a just global order. Much rests on the will and interests of the actors involved. International law itself cannot solve injustices and cannot manufacture solutions. Ultimately, many of the politically charged issues simply reflect in the language of international law. For example, we have seen already that international law prohibits the use of force by states in peace times except when the forceful measures have been authorised by the UN Security Council or when a state acts in self-defence (Article 51, UN Charter). In this scenario, not only politicians but also international lawyers will argue in legal terms whether the use of force against an (allegedly) imminent terrorist attack that has not yet occurred can be justified as a form of 'pre-emptive' self-defence. Similarly, since it is not illegal to kill enemy combatants during an armed conflict, international lawyers will exchange legal arguments about whether terrorists qualify as combatants and whether the killing of terrorist suspects in a foreign country is permissible under international law because of a continuing global war on terror that amounts to a state of armed conflict. Finally, also in the ambit of our example on the prohibition of torture, lawyers will argue about whether the situation of a hidden ticking bomb might exceptionally permit torturing the apprehended attacker if this could save innocent lives.

This is not to say, however, that international law is inherently indeterminate or arbitrary. The normative force of international law lies in the creation of new argumentative needs, in the possibility

to challenge established positions, in the specific required modes of argumentation, in the institutionalised fora for conflict resolution and in the justificatory potential that rests in law.

Conclusion

Although questions about the relevance and effectiveness of international law persist, especially when powerful nations use their political power to 'bend' international law, today hardly anyone declares international law as irrelevant. Accordingly, the discussion has shifted from 'whether international law is really law' to 'how do international norms matter'. Also the divide between international law and IR theory has been closing for some time now. Liberal approaches to IR acknowledge that norms have an important role to play for the shaping of state preferences and in international co-operation to attain common aims by setting common normative frameworks. The English school argues for an international society in which states through interaction naturally create rules and institutions, as exemplified in the example of the families at the beginning of this chapter. The constructivist school focuses on social processes, including legal norms that shape the self-understanding, role, identity and behaviour of actors. Social movement theory analyses the creation and effects of group organisation in civil society and how campaigning, for example for human rights, gains social force and translates into political results.

International lawyers, on the other hand, have been opening up towards empirical, sociological and political approaches to understand how norms develop and how actors exert normative authority. This goes beyond understanding international law exclusively as a coherent legal system with recognised sources of law and specific techniques of legal practice. International lawyers increasingly adopt a more pluralistic and holistic outlook and an understanding of international law as a social process. This social process results in normative regulations that function as standards of conduct to guide and evaluate the behaviour of international actors. That the individual has acquired such a prominent role in international law as a central subject beyond state confines is truly remarkable. Today, each individual has rights that permeate the international and that are fundamentally embedded in an – albeit imperfect – global law which in turn permeates each of our lives. This law is not static but in a constant process of development. It requires to be made effective, challenged, defended and reformulated in order to fulfil its emancipatory potential.

International Law and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) ¹⁰

By Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel

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Figure 5.1 According to the Seychelles News Agency, yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean is the most overfished tuna in the world. Under pressure from the European Union and numerous nongovernmental organizations, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission countries met in 2021 to discuss the sustainability of fishing practices.¹ In this photo, buyers and sellers negotiate prices of different varieties of tuna at a market in Mogadishu. (credit: "2013_03_16_Somalia_Fishing m" by AMISOM Public Information/Flickr, Public Domain)

Introduction

No individual or state “owns” the oceans and the wildlife in them. They are a shared, finite resource. Overfishing is an unsustainable global problem, especially now that technological advancements allow thousands of fish to be harvested at once. Only through the establishment of rules can the fish continue to be a source of food and income for future generations.

¹⁰ Reused from Chapter 15 of Rom, Mark, Hidaka, Masaki, & Bzostek Walker, Rachel. (2022). *Introduction to Political Science*. OpenStax. <https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-political-science> under CC-BY 4.0 license. Access for free at <https://openstax.org>

In a system of sovereign states, managing international resources like the fish in the sea is no easy task. As discussed in earlier chapters, state sovereignty is the concept that states have an inherent right to independence and a right to formulate policies and take actions that they deem to be in their own national interests. Managing international resources requires navigating the claims sovereign countries have on those resources, understanding the needs of individuals who depend upon them for their livelihood, and thinking about the sustainability of those resources for the future. No individual state can do this alone.

International law and non-state actors, especially international organizations, participate in global governance in order to address complex issues like managing global fishing or preventing conflict. Along with governments, thousands of organizations engage in collaborative problem-solving, encourage broad and transparent international communication, and assist those in need. By creating and following norms and rules and advocating for the impoverished and marginalized, international law and non-state actors shape state behavior and promote a more peaceful and prosperous international system. The importance of international law and non-state actors to the outcomes of international relations is a subject of some debate among proponents of the various theories of international relations, but there is little doubt that the era of globalization has enhanced their visibility and influence.

5.1 The Problem of Global Governance

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define *global governance*.
- Define and give examples of collective goods and the tragedy of the commons.
- Discuss global governance as a response to the anarchic nature of the international system.
- Identify the actors involved in global governance.

States do not operate in isolation. They exist in a global community of sovereign states. As in all communities, each individual actor has their own motivations or goals and is impacted by the broader shared environment. Though the international system is anarchic—that is, there is no overarching international authority to help promote peace and prosperity among states—each state’s efforts to achieve those goals is to some degree dependent upon the actions of other states in the system. Recognizing that the achievement of prosperity and security requires shared action, the global community sets rules and norms of behavior to give some structure to the anarchic system. This global governance is the process by which sovereign states accrue rights and duties in the international community. It provides “peace and security, justice and mediation systems for conflict, functioning markets and unified standards for trade and industry,”² helping states thrive even under conditions of anarchy.

Like other communities, the international system is tasked with convincing individual members to take some responsibility for solving collective problems. This task is especially difficult when individual members somehow profit from behavior that exacerbates these problems. The

tragedy of the commons³ occurs when there is a rivalry for limited resources to which it is inherently difficult to restrict access and individual states prioritize their own short-term economic survival over broader long-term community interests, interests that are often referred to as collective goods. Individual states have incentives to take actions in order to secure these goods for their own benefit that may negatively impact others. For example, individual states may prioritize cost savings for manufacturing plants that use the cheapest energy source, even if doing so contributes to continuing damage to the common environment. China, for instance, engaged in rapid industrialization, dramatically increasing the size of its economy and the quality of life for the Chinese people; however, in the process, China became the world's leading producer of air pollution. Air pollution cannot be contained to the boundaries of the country producing the pollution, and clean air is a collective good. International issues like air pollution, where one state's actions to mitigate its role in intensifying a problem may be ineffective if its neighbor does not take similar action, illustrate the complexities of the tragedy of the commons.

The anarchic nature of the international system complicates efforts to persuade states to recognize their contribution to a common problem and to take responsibility for their actions. Collective goods benefit everyone, regardless of whether they participate in securing them, and it can be difficult to motivate individual states to make sacrifices to secure those goods if other states are already working on it—a phenomenon called free riding, which is discussed in more depth in [Chapter 6: The Fundamentals of Group Political Activity](#). Through global governance, the international community helps states and people obtain these public goods while maintaining the principle of state sovereignty on which the international system is based.

Multiple actors take part in global governance. States themselves, both as individual actors and through their participation in organizations with other states, are the primary actors. Nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, national groups, and religious actors also contribute to global governance. International cooperation among these various actors is needed to reach agreement—to develop international law that sets limits on who can do what and establishes punishments for exceeding those limits. Disruptive groups that pose a threat to the common peace and prosperity can only be countered through global governance.

5.2 International Law

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define and identify sources of international law.
- Explain how state sovereignty informs international law.
- Differentiate between the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Discuss the development of key areas of international law, including the law of the sea, the Geneva Conventions, and human rights law.

International law is a set of formal and informal rules that loosely govern the international system, setting parameters around the conduct of state and non-state actors. In the absence of a central global government, international law plays a critical role in increasing the predictability of international relations, helping to counteract the anarchy of the system by prescribing norms and setting expectations of behavior. It facilitates state interactions in “common” places, such as the air and the sea, and helps promote peace and lessen the impact of conflict. International laws govern airline travel, commerce, maritime law, human rights, the development and use of weapons, and the environment, among other areas.

International law is not found in a single book or document; rather, it is the sum total of international treaties, other international agreements, and customary law, which is derived from the long-time practices of states (see [Chapter 11: Courts and Law](#)). International law has developed out of functional necessity, as in the cases of international transportation, commerce, or communications, for example, or because of broad consensus around moral or immoral behavior, as in issues of human rights and the laws of war.

Two courts adjudicate international law: the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has jurisdiction over disputes between states, and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has jurisdiction over individual criminal behavior such as war crimes or genocide. Some other international organizations such as the European Union and the World Trade Organization also have legal systems that adjudicate disputes between member states.

How Does International Law Establish the Rights and Obligations of States?

The recognition of state sovereignty provides the foundation for international law. Typically, sovereign states willingly enter into agreements that they believe will benefit them in some way, with the understanding that by signing a treaty they agree to its terms, including obligations and constraints on their behavior. The United Nations (UN), a global organization bringing together nearly every state in the world to promote peace and stability, hosts a repository of more than 500 active treaties across every conceivable issue in international relations.⁴ Signatory states may monitor or punish states that do not fulfill their treaty obligations. In this way, all individual, sovereign parties to a treaty ensure that they are treated fairly under the terms of the agreement and that they receive the benefits they are due.

Some treaties require states to modify their domestic policies. For instance, states that sign the Paris Climate Accord commit to solve a common problem, climate change, by taking certain steps in their own country. Signatory countries that fail to take those steps may be acting within their sovereign rights, but if they signed the treaty, those domestic actions (or that domestic inaction) are now regulated by international law. States that sign international conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) commit to follow the guidelines set forth in those documents.

Examples of International Law

Three particularly well-developed areas of international law are the law of the sea, the Geneva Conventions, and human rights law. They illustrate how functional needs and moral obligations have driven the development of international law and helped states acquire global goods.

The United Nations convened the first conference on the law of the sea in 1958. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was signed in 1982 and came into force in 1994. Among other things, the UNCLOS clarifies where countries' boundaries extend into the ocean, who "owns" the fish in the water, and who has the right to use sea traffic lanes. UNCLOS identifies state "rights, freedoms and obligations" in areas such as shipping, fishing, wrecks and cultural heritage, and the protection of the marine environment.⁵

All UN member states sign the Geneva Conventions, a series of treaties and protocols that codify international humanitarian law. Through the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the first Geneva Convention was signed in 1864, allowing noncombatants to treat wounded soldiers in the battlefield. There are now four Geneva Convention treaties—the fourth of which establishes a legal definition of war crimes—all focused on protecting civilians and prisoners of war during military conflicts.

The Geneva Conventions serve as the basis for a much broader body of international human rights law that includes nine core human rights treaties that extend beyond wartime behavior. These treaties recognize the "inalienable rights" of people and codify crimes against humanity. They call upon all states to prevent genocide, which they define as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,"⁶ and to punish those who perpetrate it.

All UN member states have ratified at least one of the nine core human rights treaties, and 80 percent have ratified four or more, accepting the obligations and duties under international law to respect, protect, and promote human rights.⁷ In 2001, the international community developed a principle called Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which justifies international intervention to protect human rights. Arising from the horror at the complacency of the international community during the Rwandan genocide and the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, in 2005 world leaders at the UN World Summit unanimously agreed to adopt R2P.⁸ The philosophy behind R2P is that "state sovereignty carries with it the obligation of the State to protect its own people, and that if the State [is] unwilling or unable to do so, the responsibility shift[s] to the international community to use diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect them."⁹ R2P obliges state governments to prevent crimes against humanity, and if they do not, it specifies that the United Nations Security Council may intervene to protect at-risk populations.

How Is International Law Enforced?

Enforcing international law requires the will and power of states. This can be a challenge for a variety of reasons including the risk of hostile confrontation, the potential damage to valuable international relationships, and the reluctance to interfere with state sovereignty by

intervening in domestic affairs. States are rarely punished for violations of international human rights law that happen within their borders.

Beginning in 2017, the Myanmar government launched a campaign against the Rohingya, an ethnic minority, and in the years since observers have accused the government of burning down villages and engaging in systematic rape and torture in violation of human rights treaties Myanmar has signed. In cases like these, in which a government violates an international law within its own borders, the international community may be unwilling or unable to enforce treaty obligations.¹⁰ The groups suffering these human rights abuses are typically without political or military power and have little recourse if the international community is unwilling to come to their aid, even if there is broad agreement that international law is being broken.

International law is the “judicial branch” of global governance. Within a country, judicial decisions are meaningful when, if necessary, the executive branch has the ability to enforce them. Because there is no executive branch in the global governance system, international laws are difficult to enforce. Sometimes powerful states decide to enforce international law, but this is not guaranteed and often depends upon power imbalances (powerful states are more likely to get away with noncompliance than weak states), state interests (states that are allied with powerful states may get away with noncompliance more than enemies), and the perceived ease of halting the bad behavior.



Figure 5.2 In August 1990, Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq, invaded Kuwait, violating international law. The UN Security Council set a January 15, 1991, deadline for Iraqi withdrawal.

On January 17, a UN coalition of 39 countries, led by the United States, launched Operation Desert Storm to force Iraq out of Kuwait and show “intolerance for military aggression and the strengthening of international cohesion, international law and liberal institutions, including the UN.”¹¹ In this photo, soldiers and civilians raise American, British, Saudi, and Kuwaiti flags to celebrate following the retreat of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. (credit: “American, British, Saudi and Kuwaiti flags are held aloft by celebrating soldiers and civilians following the retreat of Iraqi forces from Kuwait as a result of Operation Desert Storm” by Cw02 Ed Bailey/Department of Defense, American Forces Information Service, Public Domain)

The International Court of Justice (ICJ)

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), also called the World Court, is headquartered in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. The ICJ was the original judicial institution of the United Nations.



Figure 5.3 The Peace Palace in The Hague is the home of the International Court of Justice. (credit: “Peace Palace” by Cliché Lybil Ber/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0)

The ICJ was founded in 1945 to resolve disputes between states. Any UN member state can bring a case to the ICJ. The ICJ’s jurisdiction is limited to interstate disputes and advisory opinions for United Nations bodies. The most common types of cases states bring before the ICJ involve boundary and resource disputes. About a third of UN member states—not including the United States—have signed a document agreeing to be bound by the ICJ’s rulings. Since its founding, the ICJ has issued approximately 160 rulings, including both resolutions to interstate disputes and advisory opinions.¹²

The International Criminal Court (ICC)

When egregious human rights crimes are perpetrated on domestic groups and do not cross state boundaries, they are particularly challenging to punish as the doctrine of state sovereignty protects internal affairs. Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide and “ethnic cleansing” in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the UN established international criminal tribunals to help

bring the perpetrators to justice and to end impunity, or the lack of punishment for criminal behavior. Given the costs and logistics associated with these temporary and issue-specific courts, in 1998 the United Nations Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a permanent court to oversee such cases.

The ICC was designed to address problems outside the scope of the ICJ, particularly to bring to justice individuals accused of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 2018, the ICC's jurisdiction was expanded to cover the crime of aggression. Thus far, the ICC has heard 30 cases and is investigating multiple others.¹³

Over 120 states are party to the Rome Statute, but powerful states with global reach like Russia, China, and the United States have been reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of the ICC, fearing it will infringe on state sovereignty and be used as a political weapon against soldiers or other nationals abroad. The United States has established a network of bilateral treaties with countries around the world promising not to prosecute any US citizen through the ICC.¹⁴

How Does International Law Contribute to Global Governance?

As doctoral researcher Heath Pickering notes, “agreements to norms and treaties have . . . increased international institutions, given rise to non-state actors, and rapidly developed the contemporary customary and treaty based rules system.”¹⁵ Given the relative lack of enforcement mechanisms, state compliance with international law is surprisingly high. Most states comply with their obligations most of the time, and state leaders typically couch their actions in the language of international law, feeling compelled to justify their behavior according to accepted norms. The more states comply and feel the need to explain their behavior in common terms accepted by the international community, the more predictable international relations will be.

5.3 The United Nations and Global Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define *intergovernmental organizations* and discuss their role in global governance.
- Discuss the purpose and history of the United Nations.
- Describe the structure of the United Nations.
- Explain the role of peacekeepers.
- Analyze the sources and limits of the power of the United Nations.

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are groups made up of member states that are held together by formal agreement. The number of intergovernmental organizations has increased dramatically since World War II. IGOs help the international community focus on issues and coordinate actions even when individual states' interests may push them to act in ways that are incompatible with common goals. Each member state's government selects delegates to represent its interests at IGO meetings.

There are dozens of IGOs. This section focuses on global IGOs—that is, IGOs whose membership is open to states around the world. The scope of global IGO activity varies widely, from technical organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Hydrographic Organization to organizations with a specific, narrow focus, such as the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. While some global IGOs have a relatively small number of members, 193 out of 195 recognized sovereign countries in the world are members of the largest global IGO, the United Nations,¹⁶ and 164 are members of the World Trade Organization.¹⁷

With its worldwide reach, the United Nations contributes to global governance more than any other IGO. Since its beginning in 1945, its membership has grown as the number of sovereign states has increased. The newest members are Montenegro and South Sudan. The Holy See and Palestine are nonvoting “observer” members.¹⁸ The UN addresses every conceivable issue in international relations, from peace and security to migration and refugees, law, food, development, energy, and human rights, among others. Dozens of smaller global IGOs are housed within the UN framework.

The Founding and Mission of the UN

The United Nations was created after World War II to ensure international peace and stability. In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, established a global IGO called the League of Nations. The purpose of the League was to facilitate good relations among countries of the world and to punish aggression. To deter aggression, the League used the principle of collective security, requiring member states to jointly retaliate against any aggressive action of another state. Because the United States Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the United States did not join the League of Nations. Ultimately, the League was ineffective in punishing aggressive states, and expansionist powers Japan, Germany, and Italy all withdrew from the League prior to World War II.

While some might view the outbreak of World War II less than 20 years after the conclusion of the First World War as a failure of the idea behind the League, the leaders of the WWII Allied states saw the outbreak as evidence of the need for an even stronger global organization, and in response they created the United Nations. United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt committed US membership and backing, and the US Congress agreed to join the United Nations. While the League had required unanimous agreement among its members to take action, the UN requires only a majority vote for most resolutions. A two-thirds majority was required for issues of peace and security, admission of new members, and budgetary matters. Initially, the United Nations had 51 member states, mostly from Europe.

Because the United Nations was founded in part on the principle of the sovereignty of member states, it is not and cannot become a “world government” with ultimate authority over its members. UN decisions are not binding on member states without the consent of those states. Like international law, the UN contributes to global governance by setting obligations and rules of behavior for member states. The United Nations Charter recognizes the rights of sovereign states and their obligations as members of the international community while emphasizing the importance of multilateral cooperation as the cornerstone to peace and prosperity for all.

Member states commit to use peaceful means to settle disputes and to uphold and support UN decisions. The Charter specifies that the UN may intervene to stop acts of aggression or threats to the peace and that member states are only to use force in self-defense.

[The UN website](#) displays the organization’s slogan: “peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.” The three overarching goals of the United Nations are promoting peace, ensuring human rights, and achieving sustainable development with a focus on protecting the environment—all collective goods that can be elusive in a system of sovereign states each concerned only with its own survival and well-being.

In service of the goal to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,”¹⁹ the UN has been involved in peacekeeping activities in areas of interstate conflict since the late 1940s.

In 1948, UN member states signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), which lays out principles such as the right to freedom of religion, freedom of family choices, and freedom to travel. It became the foundational document for the protection of human rights worldwide.²⁰



Figure 5.4 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of US President Franklin Roosevelt, served as the chairperson for the delegation that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²¹

(credit: “Eleanor Roosevelt holding poster of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in English), Lake Success, New York. November 1949” by FDR Presidential Library & Museum/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Recognition of the dignity of each person and their inalienable rights sets the stage for many other UN activities. The UN’s ability to coordinate international solutions to problems and to marshal funds and expertise has helped many states, especially in the developing world, achieve better economic, educational, health, and environmental outcomes.

How Is the UN Structured?

The UN is organized into six main bodies: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice. In addition, dozens of related IGOs work on issues in conjunction with or under the auspices of the United Nations.²² The International Court of Justice was discussed above. This section turns to the other five main UN bodies.

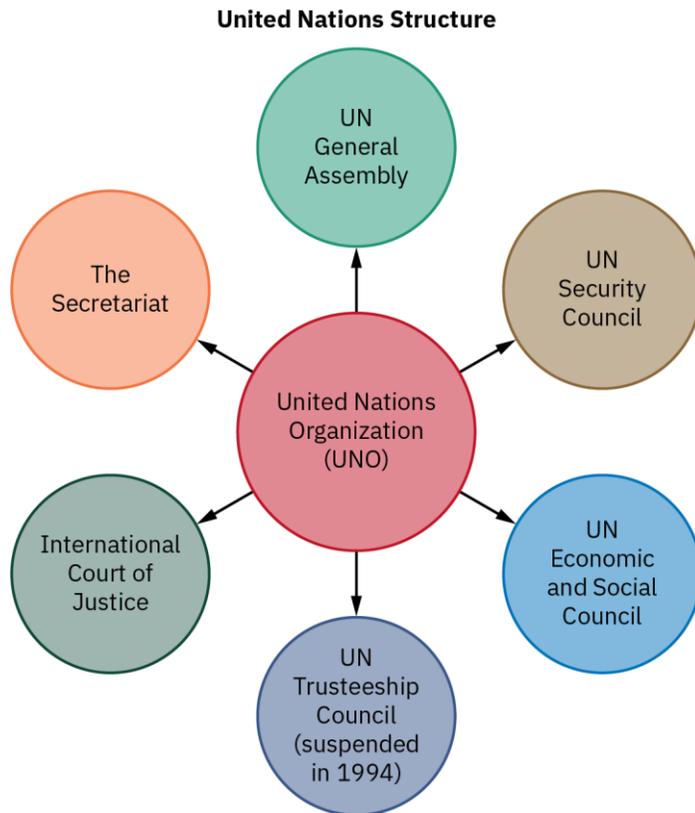


Figure 5.5 The United Nations is organized into six main bodies. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

The General Assembly

Each of the 193 UN member states has equal representation, regardless of its size or wealth, in the primary deliberative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly (GA). The GA

serves as a venue for states to discuss the most pressing international challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, armed conflict, illicit trade, poverty, and hunger, as well as systemic problems such as wealth inequality and intolerance. Every state in the world faces these troubles to varying degrees, and thus the quest for solutions is a quest to provide collective goods. At its annual meeting, GA members deliberate policies and goals for the international community, elect members to the Security Council, and discuss reports from other UN organs.

The Security Council

The Security Council performs the UN's most crucial peacemaking work. Fifteen member states sit on the Security Council. Ten are elected by the General Assembly to two-year terms, while the other five seats, known as the Permanent Five (P5), belong to the victors of World War II and the primary architects of the United Nations—the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The P5 have veto power over any Security Council action. Even if the other 14 states on the Council agree with a given action, the veto of any one of the P5 will block the action. Admission to membership in the United Nations requires the affirmative vote of nine Security Council members and no vetoes from within the P5.

Though the General Assembly has more than tripled in size, the structure of the Security Council has not changed since the founding of the UN in 1945. There is ongoing discussion about increasing the size of the Security Council beyond 15 states, and some advocate for expanding the P5 since the Security Council has no permanent representative from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East.

The Security Council monitors international conflict, facilitates diplomatic resolutions to disputes, and may place sanctions on member states engaged in violence. To stop ongoing or impending conflict or violations of international law, the Security Council has authorized military intervention (e.g., in response to North Korea's aggression against South Korea in 1950 and in response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait), levied sanctions (e.g., in 2006 against Iran for refusing to stop its uranium enrichment process in its quest for nuclear weapons), and imposed arms embargoes (e.g., against Serbia in 1998 for ongoing aggression against Kosovo). The Security Council also provides a space for multilateral discussion about transnational threats to international security such as terrorism, poverty, migration and refugees, and trafficking of goods and people.

The Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a primary driver of global governance policy aimed at dealing with the collective problems facing the world community. Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld explained, "While the Security council exists primarily for settling conflicts . . . the Economic and Social Council exists primarily to eliminate the causes of conflicts."²³ ECOSOC's responsibilities span economic and social issues. Dozens of subagencies are housed under the ECOSOC umbrella, including regional development agencies and issue-specific organizations. In particular, ECOSOC focuses on "development," or raising the standard

of living for people around the world through economic expansion and improved access to resources common throughout wealthier states, such as electricity, sanitation, education, and health care. In recent years ECOSOC has focused on how to incorporate care for the environment in the drive for economic prosperity, a concept known as sustainable development.

Since 2015, the United Nations has focused on helping member states achieve [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), a set of 17 objectives that broadly address “ending poverty, protecting the planet and improving the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.”²⁴ These goals are part of the UN’s “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” ECOSOC coordinates the work on these goals and collects the data required to measure progress toward their achievement.

The Secretariat

The UN Secretariat performs administrative work. Upon the recommendation of the Security Council, the General Assembly elects the head of the Secretariat, the Secretary-General, for a five-year renewable term. The Secretary-General engages in leadership, diplomacy, and public outreach to promote the UN; to draw international attention to urgent issues; and to raise money for UN activities.

The Trusteeship Council

At the time of the founding of the UN in 1946, much of the world was under European colonial control. The Trusteeship Council was formed to allow the UN to administer the former colonial territories that had belonged to the defeated powers of World War II: Germany, Italy, and Japan. All territories placed in trust to the United Nations subsequently attained independence. While it still exists per the UN Charter, the Trusteeship Council is currently inactive.

What Tools Does the UN Have to Help Keep Peace?

The main mission of the UN is to keep the peace by enhancing transparency, providing countries with a forum in which to peacefully resolve disputes, and engaging in projects aimed at alleviating the causes of conflict. The Security Council can send UN representatives—troops, police, observers, and civilians—to conflict zones. UN peacekeepers are deployed at the request of the warring parties and with the authorization of the Security Council. Three guiding principles undergird the UN deployment of peacekeepers: 1) consent of the parties, 2) impartiality, and 3) non-use of force except in self-defense or in defense of a Security Council mandate.²⁵



Figure 5.6 UN Peacekeepers are often referred to as “blue helmets.” (credit: “Over 200 Nepalese peacekeepers arrive in Juba” by Isaac Billy/UN Photo, CC BY 2.0. Photo courtesy: USIP, www.usip.org)

[In 2020, there were approximately a dozen ongoing UN peacekeeping missions](#), mostly in the Middle East and Africa. The first UN peacekeeping mission was in 1948, monitoring the armistice between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In 1949, peacekeepers were sent to the border between India and Pakistan to monitor a ceasefire agreement in Kashmir. Both of those missions were small in scale—unarmed peacekeepers were sent to monitor an existing ceasefire. Both are still active. More than 3,000 UN peacekeepers from 120 countries have died in this service.²⁶

UN Specialized Agencies and Related IGOs

Numerous IGOs work to address specific global issues. Some, like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), operate independently but share information with the UN and help support the UN’s mission. Global IGOs such as the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are [specialized agencies operating within the UN framework](#). These agencies act autonomously, with their own constitutions, leaders, headquarters, and bureaucratic organizations.

[Table 5.1](#) highlights the mission, accomplishments, and goals of the three most significant global IGOs: the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Working on the collective good issues of global health, economic development, and international trade, respectively, these organizations provide guidelines for state behavior, encourage and enable countries to share information and data, and collaborate on policy making.

IGO	Primary Purpose	Activities	Notable Accomplishments	Current Goals
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World Health Organization (WHO)	To track and combat disease and improve health worldwide	Public health education, immunization campaigns, data gathering, and coordination of international health initiatives such as pandemic response	Elimination of smallpox, near-elimination of polio, dramatic reductions of malaria and yellow fever	“Triple Billion” Goal: one billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage, one billion more people better protected from health emergencies, one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being ²⁷
World Bank	To create sustainable economic growth in the poorest countries by investing in human capital and ending extreme poverty ²⁸	Funds projects designed to alleviate poverty and help people around the world have access to food, water, education, health care, sanitation, transportation, and energy	Provided millions with access to health services, improved electric and water systems, improved highways, child immunizations, and teacher training ²⁹	To end extreme poverty (decrease the percentage of people living on less than \$1.90 a day to no more than 3% by 2030) and to promote shared prosperity (promote income growth of the bottom 40% of the population in each country) ³⁰
World Trade Organization (WTO)	To open trade worldwide and provide a forum for trade negotiations and to settle disputes ³¹	Sets rules for global trade and helps countries avoid costly and dangerous trade wars	Increased world trade and decreased average tariffs; increased income of members ³²	To help trade flow smoothly, freely, and predictably

Table 5.1 Major Global IGOs

Show Me the Data

The [World Bank Open Data website](#) provides free and open access to innovative visuals that tell the stories of global development data. You can explore a walkthrough of the 2020 Sustainable Development Goals at the [World Bank Data blog](#), where you can see examples of these detailed and interactive data visualizations.

What Constrains the Effectiveness of the UN and Global IGOs?

In IGOs, sovereign states represent their own interests, bringing their own cultures and ideas to discussions of global governance, and IGOs are limited in their ability to intervene in the domestic affairs of member states. Although the purpose of IGOs is to help states work cooperatively, and though they strive to help states coordinate activities in pursuit of collective goods, in most circumstances, states place their own desires and interests above those of the broader international community. For example, ideally all states would work together to promote collective security by punishing aggressor states; in practice, states often cannot agree on what constitutes aggression or are unwilling to hold their allies accountable. Similarly, global poverty might be more easily eliminated if all countries worked together and pooled resources, but most countries are anxious to keep the gains of prosperity to themselves and dedicate only a small percentage of their wealth to help other countries. Countries that refused to lock down or promote vaccination might prolong the COVID-19 pandemic despite the actions of other states following WHO guidelines to control it.

Funding is another limitation on the effectiveness of the United Nations. UN member states pay dues based on their wealth relative to other member states. The United States pays 22 percent of the operating expenses of the United Nations and almost 28 percent of its peacekeeping budget. China now pays the second highest amount toward the peacekeeping budget, at 15 percent.³³

Another limit on the UN is its inability to enforce its decisions or rules. In many ways, it is an aspirational body. The General Assembly passes resolutions, but often without any real expectation that they will be implemented and without the ability to impose consequences if they are not. Sometimes the Security Council or others working on treaties or building international law use those resolutions to help justify sanctions or other punitive measures against states. According to the United Nations, GA resolutions “have been a constant driver for the development of space law and international cooperation of Member States in their space activities . . . Many provisions of the General Assembly resolutions related to outer space have become widely accepted by the international space community.”³⁴

5.4 How Do Regional IGOs Contribute to Global Governance?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of regional IGOs and give examples.
- Differentiate between the missions of NATO and the EU.
- Explain how the missions of NATO and the EU have evolved over time.

- Describe causes of tension within regional IGOs.
- Discuss the ways regional IGOs contribute to global governance.

Much of the work of global governance is done at the regional level. IGOs such as the Arab League, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the African Union (AU) have extended the UN model to regional affairs, and IGOs like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have extended it to subregional affairs. Regional IGOs work to improve the quality of life for people in a given region by encouraging economic development, facilitating trade, and/or enhancing security. They seek to lessen conflict by enabling cooperation and dialogue between neighboring states and by promoting common interests. Regional IGOs may become involved in any issue of common interest to states in the region, such as protection, trade, climate change, migration, or human trafficking. Military alliances focus on the coordination of military policy, while economic IGOs focus more on promoting trade and economic progress. IGOs composed of mostly democratic states can promote and reinforce democratic norms, punishing member states that stray from democratic practices. The African Union took just such steps when it responded to the 2013 military coup in Egypt by suspending Egypt's membership in the IGO.³⁵

Over time, regional IGOs may broaden their scope, increasing the levels of cooperation between member states. The idea that cooperation on small, discrete policy areas such as coordinating postal services or air traffic control can create mutual trust and evolve into cooperation on larger, more complex issues is called functionalism. This is illustrated in the case of the European Union, where the original economic union evolved to include a multitude of domestic and foreign policy issues such as the environment, health, labor, security, and immigration. Ultimately, what began as a union of states concerned with individual and regional economic growth developed into an organization espousing common values and objectives that extended to a wide variety of issues traditionally within the sole purview of individual sovereign states.

NATO

The largest and oldest regional IGO is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, NATO is the most powerful military alliance in the world, with 30 member states and combined forces of over two million troops. In 2019, NATO states accounted for 54 percent of global military spending.³⁶

In an anarchic system, security IGOs increase predictability by making public member states' military commitments. Alliances are designed to serve as deterrents against attacks on any member states, as potential attackers know they would face the combined strength of the alliance in response. Alliances also coordinate policy responses to international events and to the foreign policy decisions of non-allied states, thus making accidental or impulsive military action less likely.

NATO's Purpose and Current Mission

The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal formed NATO in 1949 to safeguard US allies in Europe by deterring a Soviet attack. In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined NATO, and Germany joined three years later. Article 5 of the NATO Treaty promised collective defense, assuring members that “an attack on one or more of them . . . shall be considered an attack against them all.”³⁷ The individual security concerns of each NATO country were subsumed by what they considered the shared existential threat of communist expansion or Soviet nuclear attack.



Figure 5.7 US Secretary of State Dean Acheson signs the Washington Treaty creating NATO in 1949. (credit: “Secretary of State Dean Acheson signs the Washington Treaty, April 4, 1949. President Harry Truman and Vice President Alben Barkley are standing next to him,” by Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer/The US National Archives and Records Administration, CC0 1.0)

The Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, creating 15 new states, the largest of which is Russia. Instead of dissolving in response, NATO expanded, ultimately including both many Eastern European states that had previously been allied with the Soviet Union and some former Soviet states. Part of NATO’s original purpose was to forbid “the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent” and to encourage “European political integration.”³⁸ Thus, after 1991 NATO offered membership to any state that could meet the political and financial obligations of membership. After the end of the Cold War, NATO’s mission shifted from fighting communism to preserving the general security of member states and the international community.

With the addition of North Macedonia in 2020, NATO had 30 member states. As of this writing, three additional countries are seeking membership, and another 30, including most of the states of the former Soviet Union, have joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program.

The Countries of NATO and When They Joined

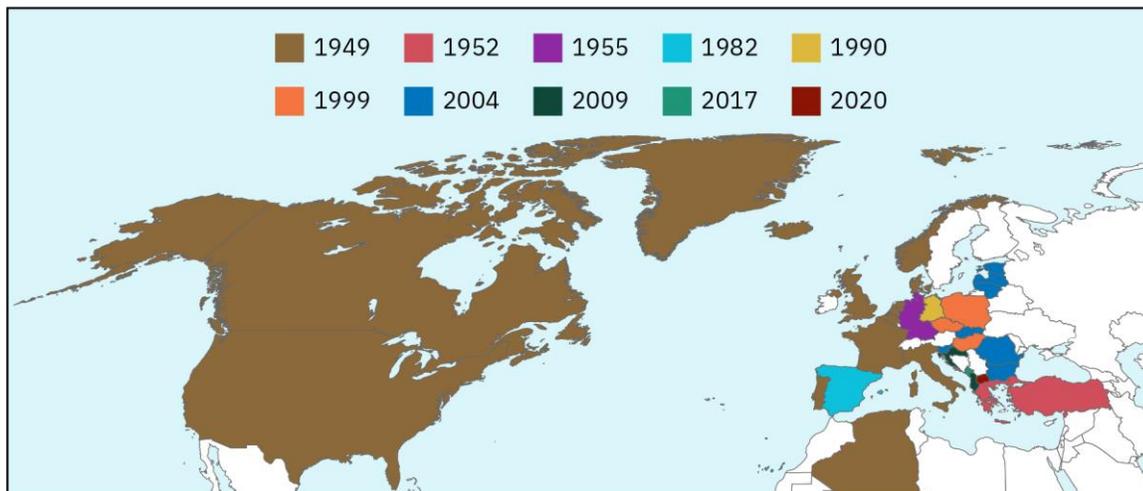


Figure 5.8 Since its formation in 1949, NATO has expanded to include 30 member states. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

NATO invoked the collective defense agreement of Article 5 for the first time following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. In response to those attacks, the United States attacked the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The United Nations authorized a NATO-led peace-building force to establish a new government and stabilize the country.

NATO can deploy a unified command military force to engage in armed conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has intervened in international crises, monitored security threats, trained security forces, and undertaken peace-building in Kosovo (since 1999) and Afghanistan (2003–2021).³⁹

What Kinds of Conflicts Exist within NATO?

As with all IGOs, NATO's primary challenge is managing the varied interests of its members and creating common policy acceptable to all. However, in security organizations like NATO, the influence of the most powerful state is more pronounced. Throughout the Cold War, NATO depended on the promise of US military force. The United States dictates NATO policy more than, say, Germany dictates what happens in the EU and more than the UK influences what happens at the United Nations. In the post-Soviet world, and with the addition of members outside Western Europe, US power in NATO has weakened as the organization has had to balance the needs and concerns of other member states.

NATO allies do not always agree. Although NATO has insisted that it is not an "enemy" of Russia, Russia's aggressive actions in Crimea and toward Ukraine have caused concern among many NATO member states, especially those with borders near Russia. In 2016, NATO called Russia a "challenge [to] the Alliance" and "a source of regional instability."⁴⁰ However, some

members of NATO, including some larger Western European states, are reluctant to take any action that might be seen as aggressive toward Russia.⁴¹ Varying conceptions of security threats are natural given the differing size and geographic location of member states. These variations complicate the creation of unified policy priorities and responses.

Another source of conflict is burden sharing, that is, how much each country should contribute to the funding and operations of the alliance. The two wealthiest NATO countries, the United States and Germany, each pay 16 percent of the operating costs, and each country is called to allocate 2 percent of its GDP to defense expenditures. Due to the size of the United States' GDP and its allocation of 3.4 percent of its GDP to defense, in 2020 the United States' spending on defense made up 69 percent of the overall NATO defense spending.⁴²

Regional Security IGOs Since the Forming of NATO

Many regional multipurpose IGOs, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union, have a security function within a broader framework of regional cooperation and promotion of the common good.⁴³ The United Nations has called upon regional organizations to support peacekeeping work both on their own and in cooperation with the UN. At an August 2015 summit, then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, "The United Nations increasingly shares responsibility for peace and security with regional organizations. We should do everything possible to help them resolve regional problems and to include the states concerned in solutions. At the same time, regional organizations should continue contributing to United Nations peace and security efforts."⁴⁴

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) calls itself "the world's largest security organization."⁴⁵ It works on a broad range of security initiatives, including arms control, terrorism prevention, preventative diplomacy, and peace building. It has offices in member countries that monitor current and potential zones of conflict.



Figure 5.9 The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has supported the Somali National Army in its efforts to counter militant groups in the ongoing Somali Civil War. (credit: "On night

operations with the African Union Mission in Somalia 11” by AMISOM Public Information/Flickr, Public Domain)

Africa has been the most conflict-prone continent in the 21st century. The African Union, the largest and best-resourced regional organization on the continent, has a spotty regional security and peacekeeping record. In 2002, the AU ratified the African Peace and Security Architecture plan, which enlisted regional economic organizations and other partners to address security challenges on the continent.⁴⁶ Subregional economic organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community have played an increasingly prominent role in handling security issues, particularly in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Lesotho, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The European Union

Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, the European Union (EU) is the largest and most influential regional economic IGO. Since the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (a move referred to as “Brexit”) in January of 2020, the EU includes 27 countries across the European continent. The EU began as a small-scale economic organization, but its mission has expanded to promote peace and solidarity among European countries.

Although it recognizes the sovereignty of its member states, including their right to withdraw from the organization, the EU has moved far closer to the union of countries than has any other IGO. Most EU countries have adopted the common currency, the euro, and most allow citizens to travel and work across borders within the 26 countries, made up of most EU countries and a few non-EU countries, known as the Schengen Area. Countries that apply for admission to the EU must meet certain entrance criteria, including an established free-market economy and a democratic government. Candidate countries must adopt national legislation that aligns with admission criteria; hence applications may take years to finalize.

The Purpose of the EU

In 1951, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands formed the European Union to support their economic recovery from the devastation of World War II. Over the next four decades, the countries’ economies became increasingly integrated. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993, which introduced the common currency and a commitment to common security and foreign policies, established the current structure of the EU.

EU member states commit to a common set of values, stated in Article 2 of the EU treaty and reinforced in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, that they consider central to European life: “a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail.”⁴⁷ In addition to affirming human rights guarantees such as freedom of expression and freedom from torture, the Charter outlaws the death penalty, specifies the equality of the sexes, and protects cultural heritage.⁴⁸

The Organizational Structure of the EU

Five main bureaucratic and political organs oversee and help guide EU activities and policies. Leaders of European states sit on the European Council, which meets several times a year and, working with the European Parliament, sets the broad priorities of the EU.

European citizens directly elect the 705 members of the European Parliament to five-year terms. These members represent seven political groups from left to right on the political spectrum. The European Parliament plays both policy-making and budget-oversight roles. A part of the EU executive branch, the European Commission, promotes EU interests. The European Parliament elects a president to head the 27-member College of Commissioners for a five-year term. The Commission implements EU legislation, represents the EU internationally, and allocates funding for EU projects. Member states nominate commissioners, who are then approved by the European Parliament and serve as the bureaucratic heads of various policy agencies within the EU.

The Council of the European Union works more like the United Nations, where each member state represents its own interests to the whole. The Council of the EU is a policy-making body that, along with the European Parliament, discusses and passes laws for the EU. Its members are empowered to commit their home states to any decisions the Council makes.

Located in Luxembourg, the Court of Justice of the EU settles disputes arising under the laws of the European Union. The Court can interpret, find countries in violation of, and sanction those who disobey that law.

EU Priorities

No issue is beyond the scope of the European Union. In many ways it functions as a state in the international system, for its members coordinate policies and share common positions on international issues. The EU develops economic, defense/security, foreign, immigration, and labor policies that apply to each member state. Independence of action in any of these areas would be a concern to the organization. Thus, while member states retain their sovereignty in some senses, the EU has the ability to interfere in domestic issues and to punish noncompliance.

Annually, the European Parliament publishes a list of issues that will be on the EU agenda for the coming year. In 2021, the issues included pandemic-related topics such as access to the COVID-19 vaccine and helping economies recover, social and humanitarian issues such as access to food, issues of discrimination, cultural issues including the state of the performing arts, and “some of the big background changes shaping the world we live in today—the digital, environmental and geo-political challenges ahead, from Europe’s borders to its transatlantic relationship.”⁴⁹ Because the primary mission of the EU is to ensure the peace and prosperity of Europe, anything that threatens that mission is an issue of importance for the organization.

What Kinds of Conflicts Exist within the EU?

When 27 countries, each with its own goals and ambitions, attempt to coordinate a unified response to common issues, tensions and conflicts are inevitable. Addressing the needs and desires of every EU member state and trying to reach agreement on a common policy is difficult, especially when the organization’s mission incorporates so many different policy areas. The economies, politics, and cultures of the EU states differ, and these variations complicate efforts to create a “European identity” beyond the identity of the member states.⁵⁰

The EU’s unification of so many traditional state functions, including economic and foreign policies, under a supranational umbrella has led to some backlash. Economic pressures on national governments can lessen the perceived benefit of being a part of the EU. Domestic constituents of wealthier states, who believe they are losing their sovereign identity and subsidizing poorer and weaker states, may become convinced that EU membership is no longer in their country’s best interest. Although only the United Kingdom has entirely withdrawn from EU membership, political groups in many member states include anti-European Union (“Euroskeptic”) sentiment in their platforms.

The loss of the United Kingdom, a founding member and one of the wealthiest and most powerful states in the EU, represents a significant setback, and managing relations between the UK and the EU in the aftermath of Brexit is an ongoing challenge.

Over time the EU has expanded to include states that have not traditionally displayed the strongest records on democracy or human rights. Democratic backsliding in member states Poland and Hungary and the rising strength of populist and nativist movements in other EU countries threaten democratic norms and institutions.

The growth and aggressiveness of Russia and, to a lesser extent, China also pose foreign policy challenges to the EU. Prior to Brexit, some international relations literature discussed the EU as a unified great power capable of acting as a counterweight to Russia or China in international relations. Determining the appropriate role for the EU and how it should address different international relations challenges remains a vital task for the organization.⁵¹ As former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Javier Solana notes: “In order to be an international actor, the EU must act in unison and speak with one voice. If each member state acts individually, Europe will find itself relegated to the role of mere spectator in the arena of major world events, with neither the capacity nor the power to influence their outcome.”⁵²

Regional Economic Organizations

Encouraged by the success of the European Union, almost every region in the world has formed an economic IGO and a regional economic development bank. These regional economic organizations (REOs) aim to improve cooperation and facilitate economic development by increasing transparency, funding projects, encouraging free trade, and reducing economic conflict. A handful of regional IGOs, such as the African Union and the Arab League, are more general in nature, but almost all have a substantial focus on economic development.

Because the success of an REO depends upon the peace and stability of a region, REOs are often pulled into efforts to enhance regional security. The United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), the successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is the world’s largest free trade area.

Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay established MERCOSUR, the Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur), in 1991 to “accelerate sustained economic development based on social justice, environmental protection, and poverty reduction.”⁵³ In subsequent years, other countries in the region, including Venezuela and Bolivia, joined MERCOSUR as full or associate members. In 2017, MERCOSUR suspended Venezuela for failing to comply with democratic principles.⁵⁴ In 2011, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru founded a new Latin American trading bloc, the Pacific Alliance. The Pacific Alliance has decreased tariffs in the participating countries and increased trade with the European Union and countries in Asia.⁵⁵

In the Asia-Pacific region, the largest REO is ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Since Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand founded ASEAN in 1967, it has expanded to include Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. ASEAN has both security and economic priorities. It has become one of the largest free-trade areas in the world.

Other Types of Regional IGOs

Some regional IGOs, like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, are organized around a common identity. Others, like the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), are organized around shared economic interests. The 13 member countries of OPEC own approximately 75 to 80 percent of the world’s known oil reserves. OPEC is open to any oil-producing state, and only the most powerful oil-producing states, such as Russia, China, and the United States, have opted not to join the organization. OPEC seeks to “coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries and ensure the stabilization of oil markets in order to secure an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, a steady income to producers and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry.”⁵⁶ The organization helps its members coordinate oil supply and pricing, which can (but does not always) provide relative stability and predictability in the petroleum market and avoid contentious trade wars.

How Do Regional IGOs Contribute to Global Governance?

From a realist perspective, which focuses on the primacy of states, IGOs are most important as tools states can use to their own advantage. No IGO can act independently of its member states, and the largest states typically have disproportionate influence over an organization’s actions.

While realists might point to persistent war and poverty as evidence of the ineffectiveness of IGOs, liberal internationalists and constructivists tend to highlight how IGOs constrain state action, increase areas of cooperation, draw states together in unprecedented ways, and help alleviate the scourges of war and poverty, even if they have not yet eliminated them. For instance, both the number of people dying in war and the number of states engaged in war

have dropped significantly since World War II.⁵⁷ Also, since they are most directly impacted by the events in their own region, regional IGOs are better able than outside observers to monitor the actions of member states. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently held a meeting for regional IGOs to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on various cultural activities around the world and to elicit promises from the participants to monitor and support the cultural and creative sectors in their regions as countries recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.⁵⁸

IGOs that begin with a narrow scope are prone to expansion, particularly when member states see the benefits of working together. Organizations like the United Nations use language—like urging “global citizenship,” promoting “the good of all nations,” and being a member of an “international community”—to encourage states to rise above sovereign individualism and see themselves as contributing to and benefiting from membership in a valuable, cohesive group. The use of language reinforcing desired norms can change state behavior, reducing uncertainty and enhancing cooperation.

6.1 Human Rights¹¹

By Kevin Bloor

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This chapter begins with an examination of attempts by the international community to uphold the universality of human rights. Humanitarian intervention will be contextualised via the prism of international law, judicial institutions and the impact on national sovereignty. This invites a discussion of selective intervention, the responsibility to protect and Western hypocrisy on the topic of human rights.

Human Rights

Origins and Development of International Human Rights Law and Institutions

Whilst human rights are a relative concept, the international community often justifies humanitarian intervention on the assumption that the concept is a universal one. Human rights are upheld via domestic legislation alongside a number of international agreements and judicial bodies. There is an inherent moral (and often legal) character to the concept of human rights. Since the turn of the century, there has been an increase in the number of institutions and agreements that seek to uphold human rights.

Before we consider the various sources of authority in regards to defining human rights, there is a useful distinction to be made between positive and negative rights. The former consists of those rights that place a positive duty upon others (usually the state). An example would be the right to healthcare and social welfare provided by the government. A negative right consists of the right to non-interference (such as freedom of speech and religious worship). These are sometimes called ‘civil rights’ and entail those rights consistent with being a citizen of that particular state. The exercise of rights is also beholden on the recognition of an obligation to others, and that rights cannot be taken away unless due process has been followed. In addition, positive and negative rights are grounded upon the principle of equal opportunities regardless

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of social background. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) lists both positive and negative rights.

The doctrine of human rights has been influential within international law and various institutions of global governance. This process of influence has occurred alongside an expansion in the scope and scale of human rights within the context of global politics. The main sources of international law derive from treaties, conventions and general principles recognised by state and non-state actors. The obvious reference point remains the UDHR. Signed in 1948, the UDHR entails thirty articles affirming the rights of the individual. Although the declaration is not legally binding, it does provide a framework for the debate surrounding the protection of human rights and a template for humanitarian intervention. The UDHR has also provided the background for subsequent treaties and agreements within international law. Most notably, it marked the first step towards the formation of the International Bill of Human Rights. The three opening Articles set the tone of the document that reflect liberal discourse, emphasising: (a) that all are entitled to free and equal rights and dignity, (b) that no distinction shall be made on access to such rights based upon sovereign legal jurisdiction, and (c) that 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person' (United Nations 1948). Other key elements include Article Seven (which deals with discrimination) and Article 20 (freedom of assembly and association).

Treaties consist of a formal written agreement between sovereign states (and in some cases international organisations) which are considered binding within international law. Treaties form a contract between the signatories involved and can take a number of forms, such as protocols, covenants and pacts. Treaties therefore impose a set of obligations recognised and upheld by the signatories. A breach of contract can result in sanctions imposed by quasi-judicial bodies. Treaties often have a regional basis and can at times play a central role within the process of regional integration. For instance, the European Court of Human Rights maintains human rights amongst every member-state of the Council of Europe, under the 1950 European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), and thus this includes not just all continental European states, Belarus aside, but also Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia to name but a few.

A convention is an agreement between different countries that is also binding upon the signatory states. International conventions cover a wide remit of areas such as trade, disarmament and human rights. Conventions play a surprisingly influential role within the anarchic system of states. In contrast, general principles consist of normative values such as justice and equitable treatment. In the context of international law, general principles act as 'gap fillers' when codified and uncodified elements do not provide a satisfactory course of action. For instance, the principles surrounding warfare consist of five inter-related areas: military necessity, unnecessary suffering, proportionality, discrimination and chivalry. As a core element of international human rights law, the Geneva Conventions have been ratified by 196 states, including all 193 United Nations member-states.

A small number of institutions are responsible for the implementation of international human rights law. First and foremost, institutions such as the ICJ and the ICC have undoubtedly helped to advance the human rights agenda. Once considered the preserve of the domestic realm, such institutions provide a framework of global governance to uphold the universality of human rights. International institutions have imposed sanctions against those who might at one time have escaped censure due to their broader significance within the Cold War. It should also be acknowledged that some of these institutions are relatively new, which should be considered when reaching an assessment of the ICC.

The effectiveness of said institutions is dependent upon a number of factors. Of these, arguably the most significant factor is the role played by national governments. The role of international institutions cannot be viewed separately from the support (or lack of support) provided by national institutions in terms of protecting human rights. The successful protection of human rights requires action at the national and international level (Cassel 2001), and thus, in a realist frame, befall subject to the demands of national interest, as all else. There are also other applicable factors to consider, such as public awareness of human rights, the impact of NGOs and the political culture of those countries in question. There was, for instance, sufficient scope within the United States for the Biden administration to present the ICC as an unwelcome intrusion upon national sovereignty, following the policy of past administrations.

The UDHR remains the most important element of international human rights law. All signatories are obligated to protect and promote human rights for their citizens in accordance with the declaration. It also provides a global standard for all others to accept. This however needs to be balanced alongside the reluctance of certain states to uphold the declaration. The abuse of human rights can at times be the direct consequence of states pursuing their own national interests (such as Israeli military strikes against residents in Gaza). In all cases, the Westphalian conception of state sovereignty trumps international law. Indeed, Articles two through seven of the UN Charter protect such claims and thereby limit external intervention (even on humanitarian grounds). Thus, international law in relation to human rights can be considered somewhat contradictory. The Human Rights Committee of the UN has also been subject to criticism for its lack of effectiveness. As with any assessment of the UN, the reluctance of the international community to transfer power and authority is a key factor.

Key Issues in Dealing with Human Rights

The Impact of Human Rights on State Sovereignty

There is an inescapable conflict between the sanctity of state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention in order to protect human rights. The institutions of global governance clearly have the capacity to implement decisions that undermine the sovereignty of the state. However, in

regards to a failed (or failing) state, action taken by the international community may actually restore the sovereignty of the ruling regime. For instance, the UN mission in Sierra Leone from 1999 to 2006 helped bring stability and re-establish normality after a lengthy civil war. It should also be noted that some governments actively seek the involvement of external forces in order to restore the territorial integrity of the state.

Violation of human rights inevitably leads towards a consideration of humanitarian intervention from the international community. Given the universal character of human rights, a rogue state places its sovereignty under threat when acting in a manner contrary to international human rights law. The very existence of legal precedent in this area underlines the porous nature of state boundaries (Guillaume 2011). Authoritarian regimes in particular are more likely to ignore the rules, norms and conventions surrounding the universal character of human rights. In contrast, those countries with a political culture that respects human rights and associated liberal-democratic values are least likely to experience outside interference from the international community. Having said this, the charge of Western hypocrisy is often valid in the case of human rights abuses in countries based in North America and Europe. The United States and their allies have been reluctant to address human rights abuses in several Western countries, placing political reality above abstract normative rhetoric concerning human rights.

States that continually violate human rights are more likely to face sanctions from international institutions. For instance, in the context of the ECHR, both Russia and Turkey have been frequent visitors to the courts in Strasbourg. Nonetheless, exhibiting a tradition of liberal democracy does not necessarily mean that the government in question will fully adhere to human rights legislation. As a result of its draconian measures against terrorist organisations, the UK government has at times found itself in contravention of the ECHR.

In terms of international courts, the inability to impose effective sanctions upon rogue states such as North Korea and Venezuela underlines the undoubted significance of national sovereignty. Although there has been a great deal of progress in terms of global governance since the establishment of the UDHR, there's only so much that international institutions can do without impeding upon the sovereignty of states. This observation is central towards an understanding of the selective character of humanitarian intervention and its relative success. Academic research suggests that international human rights legislation has the least effect on those states that need it the most (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005).

The Rise of Humanitarian Intervention in the 1990s

Humanitarian intervention has proved an increasingly marked feature of global politics since the end of the Cold War. The landscape of international relations changed dramatically after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The international community gained greater scope to intervene

without provoking a Soviet reprisal. A unipolar world characterised by American hegemony presented an opportunity to establish a new world order based upon liberal values of democracy and the rule of law.

Humanitarian intervention may consist of: (a) military coercion against another state with the aim of bringing any violation of human rights to an end in a given territory, or (b) the use of non-military intervention such as economic sanctions or forceful aid provision. The target of humanitarian intervention via the international community has typically been rogue states and/or failed states, although this is not always the case. Non-state organisations with global ambitions may also be targeted by the international community.

There are several factors that determine the effectiveness or otherwise of humanitarian intervention. In an era characterised by an increasing reliance upon soft power, official authorisation from the United Nations undoubtedly confers a degree of legitimacy upon the intervention. However, this alone is insufficient for the intervention to secure legitimacy from the stakeholders affected. In many cases, the warring parties have chosen not to recognise the legitimacy of external interference from the UN. Other factors include the relative capacity of the actors concerned, the political will to act and the existence of an exit strategy.

In terms of a successful intervention, one illustration to consider would be the 1994–95 intervention in Haiti. In the mid-1990s, Operation Uphold Democracy was designed to remove the military regime that seized power after the election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991. The US-led intervention had the necessary political will, capacity and legitimacy to secure a clear objective (namely the restoration of democracy). The UN Mission in Haiti sent peacekeeping troops in order to maintain law and order until their eventual withdrawal in the year 2000. A similar observation applies to the actions of the international community in East Timor. The UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) provided an interim civil administration and a peacekeeping presence for three years until national independence was secured in 2002.

In stark contrast, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) is widely regarded as an abject failure. The international community was highly reluctant to intervene in the ethnic cleansing that ensued between Hutus and Tutsis. Right from the very beginning, there was a lack of clarity concerning UNAMIR's rules of engagement and overall mandate. After the initial intervention by Belgium, and the collapse of any international will to intervene; realists claimed that Rwanda was yet another illustration of power politics. Despite the liberal rhetoric of the UN, national interest triumphed over any moral considerations. The total death count in the Rwandan Civil War ranges from half a million to just over a million (about 70% of the Tutsi population). Estimates of sexual violence against women vary from around a quarter to half a million incidents (Human Rights Watch 1996).

It is too early to reach an accurate judgement about some of the on-going illustrations of humanitarian intervention. For instance, the UN is currently engaged in combat with what remains of ISIS. The international community has become involved due to human rights violations within territory controlled by Islamic extremists. There are also justifiable concerns as to the spillover implications within Syria. Fourteen countries led by the United States have executed airstrikes on Islamic State forces. With the support of the Syrian government, Russian forces have also launched bombing raids against Islamic State fighters located in Syrian territory. Whilst Islamic State has been driven back from areas in Iraq and Syria, the organisation remains a threat to international security and it would be too early to declare victory over them. If this does eventually occur, it will be one of the most successful interventions in recent years, albeit staggered and lacking in widespread mutual conduction.

Reasons for Selective Interventionism, Development of Responsibility to Protect and Conflict with State Sovereignty

There are many reasons for the reluctance of the international community to intervene when faced with a humanitarian crisis. Of these, perhaps the most important is the centrality of national interests. For instance, the cause of a humanitarian crisis may be a strategic ally of the United States. This is often couched within the charge of Western hypocrisy. Similarly, the perpetrating regime may be an important ally of China or the Russian Federation. This can often lead to criticism of double standards from the permanent five of the UN Security Council, potentially blocking a resolution that would allow for intervention in the name of their own interests, and as such, wilfully undermining international security.

Secondly, humanitarian intervention may prove difficult to achieve due to the power balance between various states. During the Cold War, there were clearly defined spheres of influence within the liberal democratic and communist world. Humanitarian intervention within that defined sphere of influence could have instigated all-out war between the US and the Soviet Union. As a consequence, intervention was always on a selective basis. Dictatorial regimes committed several atrocities with the support of either Washington or Moscow.

Another plausible explanation for selective intervention is the inability of the international community to reach a common position. Any member of the P5 can impose a technical veto upon possible UN intervention stemming from Article Seven. Selective intervention is also the result of the international community's reluctance to address violations of human rights by powerful states. For instance, human rights violations by the Chinese government against dissidents have been met with a muted response from the international community. It seems highly improbable that territory controlled by The People's Republic of China would be subject

to any form of humanitarian intervention. This observation also applies to other great powers on the world stage, and those states supported by a powerful ally (such as Israel with the US).

Martin Binder (2015, 2017) argues that the response from the UN is based upon four factors. The first of these is the extent of human suffering and the pressure generated by such violations. UN intervention also depends upon the threat to neighbouring countries and regions. This may derive from the spread of terrorism, civil strife and an influx of refugees (as in the case of Bosnia during the 1990s). The UN must also consider the ability of a target state to resist such intervention. This was certainly a consideration in the case of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, prior to the 2011 intervention. Finally, humanitarian intervention can be further understood by the level of material and reputational resources available to the UN (as in the case of the Ivory Coast in 2004). The combination of such factors offers a valid explanation of selective intervention.

The actual consequences of selective intervention are debatable. On the downside, it could be argued that it undermines the entire legitimacy of the United Nations. Successful intervention on humanitarian grounds requires this crucial element of soft power (Nye, 1990), and legitimacy is undermined when intervention is designed to serve the economic interests of the powerful. However, it could also be argued that selectivity is desirable because it prevents the UN becoming embroiled in poorly thought-out commitments (Roberts and Zaum, 2008). For instance, the UN has been reluctant to intervene in the Syrian Civil War due to its sheer complexity. It must also be acknowledged that the Assad regime has support in the Security Council from both Russia and China.

The relationship between state sovereignty and the responsibility to protect (R2P) is a fascinating issue to consider. It is based upon the principle that sovereignty comes with certain duties and obligations that broadly match with the most basic predicates or norms of liberal democracy. These are based upon the norms and values inherent within international law (most notably over human rights). The principle has formed debate over planned intervention in countries such as Libya, Kenya and Sudan.

It is often claimed that the doctrine of R2P is an infringement upon the sovereignty of the state. This seems a relatively uncontroversial judgement given that it enables the UN and the wider international community to intervene as an act of last resort. However, the former Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, argues that R2P actually reinforces sovereignty. This is because the international community intervenes without consent only when that state concerned is allowing (or committing) mass atrocities. In these situations, the state no longer upholds the duties and in certain cases may be unable to do so. Intervention thereby supports – rather than undermines – the sovereignty of the state.

In order to properly assess the relationship between state sovereignty and the R2P doctrine, it is useful to consider real-life examples. Although authorisation was secured in the case of Libya in 2011, there was criticism of the selective character of humanitarian intervention and as a means to achieve regime change. The notion of R2P was therefore undermined due to the phenomenon of 'mission creep' within a failed state. This term is used to describe an unplanned long-term commitment arising during the course of a military campaign. In the same year, both China and Russia vetoed an attempt by the United States to gain a resolution invoking R2P within the Syrian Civil War. The Russian Federation and the Chinese government claimed that Washington had abused the doctrine within Libya and therefore acted contrary to the notion of upholding state sovereignty.

The most controversial aspect of the R2P is the third pillar and the use of military intervention. The use of military instruments as a necessary adjunct to successful intervention on humanitarian grounds has its detractors and supporters. The deployment of troops and other military hardware undoubtedly raises the stakes in the debate concerning R2P and the sovereignty of the state. Given the complexity of cost-benefit analysis, the international community will always have to balance a number of variables when considering military intervention on humanitarian grounds.

Western Double Standards / Hypocrisy

As far as humanitarian intervention is concerned, the charge of Western hypocrisy is based upon two factors. Firstly, the 'West' adopts a selective approach towards humanitarian intervention. Some of the most powerful countries within global affairs have opposed humanitarian intervention against an important ally. For instance, Israel is a long-term ally of the United States and repeated human rights violations against the Palestinians have been largely ignored by the UNSC, of which the US is a permanent member. In contrast, the actions of rogue states, as classified by Washington, have been dealt with on an effective and co-ordinated basis. The 'West' has also been complicit in turning a blind eye to the actions of human rights abuses in supportive states. For example, violations against journalists and members of minority groups within Saudi Arabia have been largely ignored. To take just one example, in 2018 the journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey after his criticism of the Saudi government.

As a consequence of Western hypocrisy, the international community has often refused to intervene, regardless of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding. This usually occurs either because: (a) an ally of the West has been involved in some manner (such as Saudi Arabian forces in Yemen), or (b) there were no vital national interests involved. The latter is the more common of the two and can be applied to humanitarian crises in Darfur (2003–2009) and Sri Lanka (1983–2009). In the case of the former, attempts by the Sudanese government to defeat separatists

have contributed to thousands of casualties. Rather, in the case of the latter, the Sri Lankan government had a hand in the murder of thousands in their conflict against the Tamil Tigers. The 'West' have also been accused of hypocrisy in their failure to deal effectively with the quagmire of the Syrian Civil War, which began during the Arab Spring.

Accusations of hypocrisy were particularly noticeable during the Cold War. In order to defeat the threat and spread of Soviet Communism, the United States and its Western allies supported a number of right-wing dictatorial regimes. Human rights violations were a feature of several Western allies, including the Shah of Iran and General Pinochet in Chile. However, the West was prepared to ignore such violations in order to keep on friendly terms with important strategic allies – gaining both political and financial capital in the process. After the end of the Cold War, former allies did on occasion become enemies. In such cases, they were able to use military hardware previously purchased from Western powers.

A particularly clear illustration of this argument concerned Iraq under Saddam Hussein. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), the US and the UK provided arms to Iraq. However, during both the Gulf War (1990–91) and the Iraq War (2003), US-led invasions of Iraq saw these exact same arms used against the US. Despite claims of humanitarian intervention in the 2003 instance, the US Bush administration and the Blair-led British government were accused of seeking international authorisation and legitimisation for the invasion of Iraq in order to impose regime change. The appearance of ulterior motives in the 2003 American-led intervention in Iraq remains one of the most controversial military conflicts of the twenty-first century.

6.2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition

and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

6.3 Some International Human Rights Treaties

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, click [here](#)

International Covenant on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights, click [here](#)

Core International Human Rights Treaties in one pdf, click [here](#)

	Treaty Title	Date	Monitoring Body
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	21 Dec 1965	CERD
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights	16 Dec 1966	CCPR
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	16 Dec 1966	CESCR
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	18 Dec 1979	CEDAW
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	10 Dec 1984	CAT
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	20 Nov 1989	CRC
ICMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	18 Dec 1990	CMW
CPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	20 Dec 2006	CED
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	13 Dec 2006	CRPD

Transnational Issues

Some issues are by their very nature transnational. Water, weather, and microbes do not stop at state borders, but the people they affect can be either harmed or aided by the international and transnational actors we have examined this semester. In this final unit, we will take a closer look at three areas of transnational issues: the environment, food, and disease.

7.1 The Environment¹²

By Raul Pacheco-Vega

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Today, our planet carries almost eight billion people. Yet its capacity to provide for each one of these individuals is threatened by population growth, climate change, deforestation, collapse of fisheries, desertification, air pollution and scarcity of fresh water. The full extent of our shared global environmental problems goes far beyond the well-publicised challenge of global climate change (or global warming). In fact, one of the elements often forgotten is the complicated relationship between human beings and their environment. In the early years of the conversation around environmental protection, some argued that the planet’s resources were there for our collective consumption. However, there are limits to growth and this raises a range of important issues for international relations. Our population quadrupled between 1900 and 2000. This growth, coupled with abrupt climate change events and further compounded by rapid industrialisation and fast urban expansion, have combined into a perfect storm of negative environmental processes that put pressure on the capacity of Planet Earth to sustain life. As students of IR, we ought to recognise that the environment is one of the areas where much work remains to be done, particularly because cooperative approaches to environmental protection have had a very mixed record despite the grave implications of failure.

The relationship between international relations and environmental problems

It is often hard to assess whether international cooperation efforts have had any real effect on society’s wellbeing, the quality of our environment, or even the construction of long-term relationships between states. One form of evaluation takes place through the study of

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environmentally focused 'megaconferences'. These large-scale events bring together representatives of national governments, intergovernmental secretariats, non-governmental organisations, academics and industry actors to engage in conversations about the state of the environment. They usually focus on a particular issue at hand. What makes these megaconferences interesting is that their goal is to engage in productive collaborative efforts to reach agreement and consensus on specific strategies to protect the environment and solve global challenges.

Historically, the two environmental issues that have gained the most attention have been climate change and biodiversity. Both of these issues came up at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – formally called the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Nevertheless, most scholars will recall the 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment as the first large-scale environmentally focused megaconference. The Stockholm Conference was also the starting point for the first global coordination mechanism for environmental protection, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This conference was also the first one where participants explicitly linked human health with environmental and ecosystem health in their discourses.

The second milestone in global environmental governance is the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987. This report outlined the need for a new model for development that brought into play the notion that we cannot simply use (and misuse) the resources we have at our disposal. The new model, coined sustainable development, became an enduring part of the global conversation about environmental protection. The Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as having three main components: economic, environmental and social – an idea that was then put forward for implementation at the Earth Summit.

The third milestone was the 1992 Earth Summit. A major outcome of this meeting was the recognition of two of the most important environmental issues – the loss of biodiversity and rapid climatic change – and the need for intergovernmental secretariats and agreements to respond to these twin challenges. The bulk of the world's states, 161, signed a declaration on the need for a model of global development that enabled future generations to live within their means but also facilitated current generations' livelihoods. The fact that so many states reached an agreement on the concept of sustainable development, and the need to operationalise it, became the key contribution of the Earth Summit. Activist involvement became the norm in international conferences on environmental issues starting with the Rio Summit. Nongovernmental organisations were considered part of the negotiations from the very beginning and over 2,000 non-governmental representatives attended.

The fourth milestone was the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The goal was to establish collaborative intergovernmental, cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships. In theory, this would strengthen the way in which environmental activists interact and partner with national governments. Different types of partnerships were elucidated and non-state actors were considered from the design stage up to implementation. However, following the summit there was a widespread perception that there had been very little progress on the implementation side, leading to a feeling of megaconference fatigue. To remedy this, the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+20) created mechanisms for follow-up of commitments to sustainable development. It also highlighted the relevance of specific targets for development and the need for transition towards broader-reaching sustainable development goals. Moreover, the outcome document of this conference defines specific regional initiatives towards the implementation of sustainable development.

The 2015 Paris Agreement represented consensus among a number of countries that something needed to be done to maintain the level of global warming below two degrees centigrade. The fact that an agreement was reached was groundbreaking for the global climate negotiations community. Prior negotiations were marked by disagreements and lack of consensus on a strategy to compel nations to reach internationally agreed targets in their carbon emissions. This is important as carbon dioxide, released primarily by burning fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal for energy, is the main cause of global warming. Nevertheless, Paris showed that many countries were able to agree on specific goals, targets and policies needed to combat rapid and impactful global environmental change. The process it established is yet to be fully realised, but in the years to come the expectation is that states will comply.

Climate change isn't the only ecological issue facing our planet. But its role in catalysing global action to protect the environment cannot be overstated. One of the most neglected issues is water. While the earth is two-thirds covered by water, the proportion that is fresh (drinkable and useable for agriculture) is sometimes highly contested by neighbouring states and in short supply for growing populations. When added to the effects of climate change, access to water is an issue of real concern. While many other challenges remain in the areas of climate and environment, it is likely that a framework for global water governance will be a major issue on the agenda in the near future.

Common pool resource theory

With a brief history of megaconferences now complete, we can move on to discussing the substance of the debates on climate and the environment. The notion of public goods comes from the original definition of a good that is nonexcludable and non-rivalrous. Think of it as something that anyone can access at any point in time without making it any less available for

anyone else to consume. The best example of a public good is knowledge; in this case we can use the example of information that we find on the internet. All knowledge, once freed and put online for public consumption, is nonexcludable and non-rivalrous in consumption. You cannot exclude anyone from consuming knowledge and learning, unless they do not have access to the means for knowledge transmission, which may be the case in some countries where specific websites are banned. You also experience nonrivalry in consumption. Air is another example of a public good. Under normal circumstances nobody can stop you from breathing air into your lungs, and the fact that you breathe air does not stop someone else from having the opportunity to enjoy it. This is the definition of a perfect public good: one that is always non-rivalrous in consumption and non-excludable in access.

Common pool resource theory derives from Garrett Hardin (1968), who said that if left to our own devices we would exhaust all the resources available for our consumption. Imagine if you were a shrimp fisher. You need to fish and sell your catch to sustain your family. Let's say that there are 10,000 shrimp in the small catchment that you fish in. But there are 99 other fishers in the sea at the same time as you. If everyone cooperated and consumed only 1/100th of the total available shrimp, each would have 100 shrimp to sell. If at any point any fisher catches more than 1/100th, there will be other fishers negatively affected. Hardin used a similar metaphor to make the point that if resource consumers behave selfishly, they would exhaust the resources they were supposed to preserve. Hardin called this the tragedy of the commons. Closed bodies of water, plots of land and large-scale areas of forests are all common pool resources. They are rivalrous in consumption, but nonexcludable.

One can summarise the theory of common pool resources by placing goods in four specific categories: private goods, common goods, club goods and public goods. This categorisation framework has two dimensions. The first dimension is excludability. If you can prevent someone from accessing a good, that good is excludable. The second dimension is rivalry in consumption. Goods that are depleted are rivalrous in consumption. If I consume an apple, you cannot consume that same apple because I have already eaten it. Private goods, such as food, clothing and other material objects, can be purchased and acquired because they are tradable. As a result, these goods are both rivalrous in consumption (if I buy a car, nobody else can buy that exact same car) and excludable (you cannot buy a car unless you have the money to purchase it).

Goods that are non-rivalrous in consumption and non-excludable are called public goods. These are the things that everybody can enjoy. Consuming them does not reduce the possibility of someone else having the same opportunity of consumption. Air is a public good. Everybody can breathe air without worrying that at some point they will not be able to breathe simply because somebody else is also breathing. Finally, common goods, which are also called common pool resources, are those goods that are non-excludable but rivalrous in consumption. Fish in a

fishery, trees in a forest, water in an aquifer or a lake. All these natural resources are common goods and, therefore, common pool resources. What makes common pool resources so interesting is that the theory, developed by Elinor Ostrom (1990), argues that despite the fact that humans are supposed to be selfish, faced with conditions of scarcity we are able to self-organise and govern our common pool resources (our 'commons') in a sustainable manner. One of the reasons why Ostrom's work had such an impact was because her theory of cooperative approaches to resources governance contradicted Hardin's tragedy of the commons model. Instead of being so selfish that they would want to fish all the shrimp (for example), Ostrom found that fishers would build a shared agreement to reduce their own consumption for the wellbeing of the collective. Obviously, this is an example on a relatively small scale. What remains to be seen is whether we can achieve global cooperation to protect our global commons. One way to think about this is through the lenses of global public goods, as discussed below.

The global environment as a global commons

Perhaps you would agree that a shared environment would be a resource community and individuals would work collaboratively to protect. But there is another view, which is that responsibility for care of the environment rests with governments. One way of thinking about this is to use the concept of the global environment as a global commons. After all, global environmental problems are by their very nature global. However, international cooperation is hard to achieve. As the example of the US shows, there are powerful countries that will avoid cooperation for various reasons. For many years the US refused to sign the international agreement on climate change, the Kyoto Protocol (the forerunner to the 2015 Paris agreement), thus blocking many international efforts to reduce global carbon emissions. There are several other examples that can be cited, but suffice it to say that a powerful country's refusal to collaborate to solve a global issue is concerning. It is hard to make countries commit to specific conservation goals (in forest policy) or emission reduction targets (in climate policy) or standards for pollution in rivers (in water policy) because each nation has its own national development objectives that may conflict with other countries' goals, thus making it hard to find common ground for collaboration.

Given that cross-national collaboration is so difficult, we create international environmental agreements that build a framework to help these countries talk to each other and agree on specific targets for environmental protection. Some of the most popular international environmental agreements are specific to the area of climate change (like the Kyoto Protocol), but other, less well-known examples – such as the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters – are equally relevant. One of the biggest problems for human beings acting at the individual level on environmental issues is the lack of information. Countries that are signatories to the Aarhus

Convention make an agreement to share data that will enable citizens of a country to understand the potential risks that they face with regard to chemicals' processing and emissions. This information also helps environmental activists bring industries to account and ensure that they reduce their polluting emissions.

Global rights and domestic environmental politics and policy

The right to a healthy environment and the global commons are ideas that suggest that it is our shared duty to take care of our collective environment because everyone has a right to enjoy their environment and use some of its resources for their survival. It is possible to link human rights with global environmental regulation through the implementation of the international norm of a right to a healthy environment. This is a new avenue of research for scholars of international relations, and it is founded on the basis of a popular idea, or norm, that every individual on the planet has a right to a healthy environment. Despite states having different abilities and varying degrees of technical expertise to implement the norm, the number of countries with constitutional environmental rights has expanded radically (Gellers 2015). Eighty states now have such legislation in their constitutions, but we are still quite a long way away from having this norm as a fundamental human right.

There are also, of course, many other concerns that divert government focus from environmental issues. Increasing regulation on certain heavy-polluting industries, such as steel and coal, can have a negative effect on jobs. Setting 'green' taxes, either directly or through such things as energy tariffs, can also cause a burden on taxpayers and businesses. Thus, there has sometimes been a tendency to see environmental legislation as damaging to economic growth and prosperity. By extension it can also be unpopular in domestic settings, making legislation difficult to pass – or even propose in some cases. It is consequently encouraging to see so much domestic legislation gaining traction. The number of countries where the human right to a healthy environment is enacted constitutionally may help build collaborative transnational networks to protect the global commons. The starting point would be a shared understanding of the need to reduce human impact on national and global ecosystems. Sharing a paradigm that pushes the human right to a healthy environment may also induce national governments to actively seek participation in international environmental agreements. Nevertheless, it is important to find a way to coordinate these agreements, and this challenge raises the question of whether we need a global environmental organisation to make sure states comply.

The best situation for Planet Earth's citizens are solutions that are made not just in each state, but internationally. And, most importantly, complied with. IR is often concerned with the phenomenon of states cheating on, or withdrawing from, agreements. Perhaps nowhere is

compliance more important for our long-term prosperity and security than in the areas of climate and environment.

Do we need a global environmental organisation?

Who is in charge of protecting our global environment? To answer this question, you may recall from previous sections that there is now a consensus regarding one specific tool that may help achieve the lofty goal of providing global public goods: international environmental agreements. These agreements, often produced at megaconferences, help protect our global commons by requiring nations to acknowledge and respect the human right to a healthy environment. However, the next big question is an equally important one – who is in charge of implementing these international environmental accords? Some have argued that in order to force countries to cooperate in the protection of our shared environment, we need a global intergovernmental secretariat. This would take the form of a far-reaching international institution whose sole purpose would be coordinating efforts to improve environmental quality.

For many years there was a collective belief that the United Nations Environment Programme had been tasked with the challenge of protecting our global network of ecosystems and shared resources. This may have been true in the early stages of its creation following the 1972 Stockholm Conference, but protecting our global environment has proved to be an impossible task for a small agency with a limited budget and no power to compel states to act in a particular way. The reality is that even though there is increasing interest in strengthening international cooperation across countries to protect the global environment, it is the number of institutions, agencies and programmes dealing with environmental issues at other levels that grows in size and complexity. Regrettably, the frequent mention of abrupt climate change events, increasing deforestation and growing levels of pollution in oceans, rivers and lakes makes it clear that we have yet to solve these complex global environmental problems. And while there is still no agreement as to whether the United Nations Environment Programme is the agency that should be tasked with protecting the global environment or whether we should create a new global environmental organisation (see Biermann 2000), we must ensure that we focus on collective solutions at the international level rather than state, regional or local level – we all share the earth.

To strike an optimistic note, we can find at least one instance of global environmental cooperation, the Paris Agreement of 2015. This was led by the chair of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, Christiana Figueres, and is an example of what can be achieved in global cooperation for environmental protection by just one intergovernmental secretariat. The fact that the majority of the world's states were able to reach agreement on the specific tactics and strategies that every state needs to undertake in order to

reach the stated goal of holding increases in the earth's temperature below two degrees centigrade is to be lauded. Even more important is that the agreement has secured the support of the world's two biggest state polluters, the US and China. The Secretariat is probably not the global environmental organisation we need right now, but it played a pivotal role at a crucial time.

The debate around whether or not we should have a global environmental organisation may never be settled. However, if we were to establish such a thing it would need full and complete cooperation from all states to stand any chance of success. The example of Paris, which built on the example of earlier megaconferences and movements, suggests that international collaboration to protect our environment is on the rise. This offers hope for the future despite rising political tensions in some nations over the nature of climate agreements.

Conclusion

It is clear that we still have a lot of work to do with regard to our shared understanding of what constitutes strong, robust, effective and efficient global environmental governance. We need to better integrate regional and transnational initiatives with domestic policy strategies to tackle environmental problems. This means creating the conditions for a model of governing the environment that is flexible and cuts across different levels, from the local to the global. It is also clear that frameworks based on ideas of global public goods and global commons are very useful. However, at the same time they are daunting, since collective action on any scale is clearly an enormous challenge. Trying to find mechanisms, models and strategies to ensure cooperation across different levels of government, across a broad variety of issue areas and across a range of political and policy actors is a problematic and difficult process, as experience has shown. Today, the world's states have been able to find common ground in relation to certain goals for environmental protection, including the flagpole issues of global warming and climate change. The hope is that this trend continues so we can continue to live healthily and happily on Planet Earth.

7.2 Feeding the World¹³

By Ben Richardson

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How should we think about global food politics? It is tempting to start with big moments on the world stage such as the United Nations discussing famine in Ethiopia or Syria. But this approach can be alienating. It locates global politics far away from daily life and sees food as just another issue that international leaders address on our behalf. So rather than this top-down approach, this chapter offers a bottom-up approach, beginning with everyday people like you and me. Through this perspective we can better appreciate the meaning of ‘big’ statistics like the estimate of the United Nations that approximately 800 million people in the world are undernourished. What kind of lives do these individuals lead, and what is it like to go without food? We can also see that it is not just problems of hunger that food politics concerns itself with, but those relating to food safety, nutrition and livelihoods as well. Being attentive to everyday voices shows that these issues affect people in developed countries just as much as those in developing countries. Who in the world gets fed, with what, and by whom are fundamental questions that concern us all.

The bottom-up approach

When I started writing this chapter I was sitting in my local café, a Cuban-themed place with Latino music on the stereo and pictures of Communist revolutionary Che Guevara on the wall. In the newspaper was a story about the multinational drinks company SABMiller avoiding taxes in Africa. Visiting the supermarket later on with my family, we picked up sausages from Ireland, tinned tomatoes from Italy and peppers from Morocco. For dinner we cooked up a casserole, a dish with French roots, and sat in front of the television to eat. A celebrity chef was presenting a programme about diets in Japan and how the British could learn a lot from their healthy lifestyles. We wondered whether we might try sushi for our next family meal.

These encounters with national cultures, current affairs and global supply chains can be thought of as the social foundations of international relations. They are foundational in two senses. First, they create the cross-border flows of ideas, people and goods that make international relations, or how people in different nations see and relate to one another. For example, debates about how to govern the international trade of food wouldn’t exist if people didn’t buy foreign products to begin with or care about the effects of doing so. Second, it is through these interactions that

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individuals come to know their political community and form opinions about what is best for it, helping to construct 'the national interest'. This happens through multiple subject positions. In the story above, for instance, I was sometimes thinking from the perspective of a consumer, but at other times as a worker, a citizen, a cook, or a family member. This is important because different subject positions create different political priorities. Thinking as a consumer, I would prefer supermarkets to stock a wide variety of foods and keep prices as low as possible. But thinking as a citizen, I would prefer them to supply more food from local farmers and make sure everyone earned a decent living out of it. The bottom-up approach thus provides an alternative way of thinking about global food politics by analysing its social foundations. It recognises that important political decisions do not happen 'above' society, separately from it, but rest on the beliefs, opinions and actions of those who would be governed.

Sudden food shortages and the disenfranchised citizen

In 2007/8, and again in 2011, the world market prices of cereals, meat and dairy products, vegetable oils and sugar all began to increase rapidly. This was blamed on a variety of causes. These ranged from poor harvests in agricultural producing countries like Australia and Russia; policies in the United States and Brazil that encouraged food crops to be replaced by biofuel; rising gas prices that pushed up the cost of fertilisers; and financial speculation leading to volatile prices. Commentators spoke of a 'global food crisis' as the effects were felt in every country, albeit to differing degrees. In the United Kingdom (UK) the average cost of a loaf of bread doubled from £0.63 in January 2005 to £1.26 just four years later; an increase way ahead of inflation and an unwanted burden for those on lower incomes. In states with greater dependency on food imports and higher levels of poverty, though, the impact was felt even more deeply. These states could mainly be found in the Middle East and Africa, and in city after city riots broke out as people found it difficult to access basic staples at prices they could afford.

One of these cities was Algiers, the capital of Algeria. As elsewhere, people took to the streets not simply because food was hard to get hold of but also because of the injustice they perceived in the way their country had been run.

Demands for affordable food ran alongside calls for jobs, political freedoms and an end to government corruption. Banners were written saying things like 'Give us back our Algeria' and 'No to the police state'. At first the Algerian government responded to these events with repression. The police fired tear gas and water cannons at youths who had angrily taken to the streets and set up roadblocks. Football matches were suspended as it was thought the crowds might turn political and become a threat to public order. However, aware of the Arab Spring revolutions and fearful that the uprisings seen in Egypt and Tunisia would be repeated in Algeria, the government soon relented. Import taxes on sugar and cooking oil were slashed and prices

capped for flour and vegetables. The government also renounced the 19-year-old State of Emergency law that had prohibited peaceful protest in the country. The forcible removal of long-standing president Abdelaziz Bouteflika was thus averted, although widespread disapproval of his autocratic regime continued to simmer.

What effect did these food riots have on international relations? First of all they created the sense that there was a 'global food crisis' to resolve. It is important to note here that if a food crisis were to be simply defined as the existence of widespread hunger, then the situation would have been nothing new. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s there were consistently between 800 million and 1 billion people in the world who were chronically undernourished. Living largely in rural areas in Asia and Africa, these people suffered away from the spotlight. However, based on the position of the disenfranchised citizen, the food riots that broke out in volatile urban areas directly challenged the legitimacy of political leaders and forced a response (Bush 2010). This kind of hunger could not be ignored.

Attempting to manage the food crisis, world leaders gathered at the United Nations' High-Level Conference on World Food Security. They produced a declaration to provide more emergency aid, prevent international agricultural trade from being disrupted, and increase global agricultural production. Critics saw this as a conservative response that did not address the root causes of the crisis. Instead of ensuring people had decent incomes and accountable leaders, reflecting the demands of the protestors, the focus was simply on bringing down world market prices. This also reproduced the misleading idea that hunger is best dealt with by growing more food rather than changing existing power relations. Oxfam, a confederation of charitable organisations, made this point when they said that there was already enough food to feed everyone. For Oxfam the problem unveiled by the riots was not so much lack of supply but unequal distribution (Oxfam 2009). During 2008, the height of the food crisis, there was a global average of 2,826 calories produced, per person, per day according to official United Nations data. The recommended intake for an adult is between 2,000–2,500 calories. So, if the data is taken at face value, there was no actual shortage of food. Rather, political decisions had created a situation where some people could acquire food more easily than others.

Chronic hunger and the civic participant

A different approach to governing hunger can be seen in Brazil. Although the country was for a long time a net exporter of agricultural products, it also had huge numbers of undernourished people living within its borders. This reaffirms the point that, in and of themselves, food surpluses do not prevent hunger – even at state level. So, when the left-wing Workers' Party was elected to power in 2003, their leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva made the Zero Hunger programme a cornerstone of his government's social policy. He declared in his inauguration speech: 'We are

going to create appropriate conditions for all people in our country to have three decent meals a day, every day, without having to depend on donations from anybody' (cited in da Silva et al. 2011, 9).

This commitment came out of the country's re-democratisation process in the 1990s, when civil society began to exert a greater influence in national politics after two decades of oppressive military dictatorship. The Council on Food and Nutritional Security, which was supported by Lula, was a particularly important institution in this respect. Composed of 54 representatives, two-thirds from civil society and one-third from federal government, the Council drove forward a number of policies, including increased funding for school meals and support for family farmers. It also promoted the National Law on Food and Nutrition Security, which obliged the federal government to uphold people's right to food and create food councils at more localised levels. Along with cash transfers given to poor mothers and an increase in the minimum wage, these reforms lifted millions of people out of chronic undernourishment. The Zero Hunger programme could claim real success. In contrast to Algeria, diverse groups in Brazilian society – including teachers, farmers, clergy and health professionals – were able to play a more proactive role in national food politics. Indeed, their collective contribution also reshaped international policy. When the minister for food security in the Lula government, José Graziano da Silva, was elected to the head of the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation in 2011, he began to promote many of the same policies that had been developed in Brazil. A twin-track strategy based on investments in rural areas to boost the incomes of farming families and basic welfare payments to protect the most vulnerable in society was advocated.

Backed by other United Nations agencies and the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, over the next three years Zero Hunger Challenge programmes were launched in a number of countries including St. Lucia, Laos and Zambia. This approach also informed the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals, which set out a roadmap for the end of world hunger by 2030. That said, it is a lot easier to make policies and plans than to achieve them. Key in the Brazilian case was the mobilisation of national civil society, which brought forward people willing to play a role in political affairs. In countries where this is not encouraged, it is hard to see plans for the reduction of poverty and hunger taking effect. Moreover, Brazil itself is far from perfect, with mass protests and political upheavals in 2016 reflecting the nation's slide into ever-deepening recession. Chronic hunger may have diminished but temporary hunger and poor diet remain, especially in the impoverished areas of Northeast Brazil and among indigenous communities. Ensuring their right to food is an ongoing struggle, and one that will have to overcome the significant domestic political and economic challenges that Brazil faces.

Adulterated milk and the protective parent

In September 2008 news broke that the industrial chemical melamine had been found in powdered milk infant formula in China. Within two weeks, more than 50,000 babies had fallen ill and developed kidney stones. The mass poisoning became a national scandal and within the space of a year the Chinese government had overhauled its food safety laws and inspection systems. Provincial courts also sentenced 21 people involved, ultimately executing two of the traders caught selling adulterated milk. On the face of it this was a sudden crisis that had been swiftly dealt with. In actual fact, the melamine milk scandal was long in the making and slow in the breaking.

Milk consumption had been encouraged in China from the late 1990s by the government and by dairy companies as a way for people to become healthy and 'modern'. Competition to supply this growing market thus intensified. Milk was watered down and melamine was added so as to make the protein content appear normal, but the practice was knowingly covered up – a fact disclosed by company executives in the subsequent trials. Neither the dairy industry nor government officials wanted the public to panic as this would be disastrous for sales and the country's reputation, especially while hosting the 2008 Olympic Games. It was largely thanks to the parents of affected children that the problem was finally acknowledged. Some took to the internet to raise awareness and vent their anger while others held impromptu press conferences to give their side of the story and gain assurances about their children's long-term health. In both instances there were cases of parents being detained or jailed by the police for inciting social disorder.

The scandal had profound international consequences. Government authorities in Asia and Europe began to pull Chinese dairy and baby food products from the shops, while the United States had so little faith in the Chinese food safety system that they installed their own officials in the country to check US-bound exports. Doubts about the safety of Chinese milk also spilled over into diplomatic tensions with Hong Kong and Taiwan. In Hong Kong, there was a public backlash against travellers and smugglers who began buying up infant formula to take back to China, leaving little for local consumption. In Taiwan, demonstrators used the milk scandal to publicly contest the wisdom of plans by the Taiwanese ruling party to forge closer ties with Beijing. Finally, the World Health Organization tried to agree on an international standard for safe infant formula at the same time as its director-general reinforced the message that breast milk is best for babies, implicitly criticising the Chinese government for promoting the use of powdered milk in the first place.

From the protective parent's point of view, then, ways of feeding the infant population had become criticised and politicised. However, Chinese parents should not be treated as a

homogenous group. For example, one response by richer parents worried about using unsafe infant formula was to hire other new mothers to breastfeed their children. Most of these 'wet-nurses' were migrants from the countryside and so poor that they chose to sell their breast milk for money, feeding their own babies potentially harmful formula instead. Another class dimension of the scandal was the fact that many of the Chinese businesses involved were part-owned by multinational companies. Sanlu, the Chinese company at the centre of it all, was in fact only able to expand its operations thanks to a large investment by a dairy cooperative based in New Zealand called Fonterra. A political question for global capitalism is thus to what extent such transnational companies should help protect consumers in other countries as well as profit from them.

Childhood obesity and the bad mother

Concerns over food safety can also be extended to include foods high in salt, sugar and fat. These do not cause immediate harm in the same way that melamine-tainted milk does, but their cumulative effects can still be dangerous. The World Health Organization has warned that unhealthy diets are a leading global risk to health because of their link to illnesses like heart disease and stroke. In fact, these are the two biggest killers in the world, each causing more deaths every year than HIV/AIDS, lung cancer and road accidents combined. This aspect of food malnutrition – 'mal' meaning bad rather than insufficient – should be just as worrying as the existence of food shortages. In the United Kingdom, the public debate about malnutrition has paid particular attention to children's diets. Some of the debate has focused on problems experienced during childhood itself. For example, in 2014 it was reported that the consumption of sugary foods and drinks had contributed to 25,000 children aged five to nine being admitted to hospital to get rotten teeth pulled out. But mostly it has focused on childhood obesity and the risk this poses for children later in life. Under pressure from campaigners, including doctors and other health professionals, successive British governments have introduced policies to promote dietary change. Restrictions have been placed on junk food adverts, minimum nutritional standards have been applied to school meals, families have been targeted with healthy lifestyle campaigns, and food manufacturers have been asked to lower the salt, sugar and fat content of their products. To cap this off, a 'sugar tax' on high-sugar soft drinks was announced in 2016.

Despite first impressions, these internal debates have actually had an international dimension. In this respect it is important to remember that the United Kingdom is a nation-state made up of four countries (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), with the latter three each having some devolved political powers of their own. As such, policy debates about diet have often become proxy wars over the further devolution of power away from the central state. This happened in 2014 when the first minister of Scotland declared that the Scottish policy to offer more free school meals to pupils showed that Scotland would be better off as an independent

country. International data has also been used to defend or discredit domestic policy proposals. The successful campaign to tax sugary drinks, spearheaded by the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, constantly referred to a similar policy introduced in Mexico to show that what worked there could work in the United Kingdom.

International comparison has also been used in depictions of national identity. British newspapers have run countless stories saying it has become a nation beset by increasing obesity. For some people, especially those with right-wing political views, this has been taken as evidence that the British are becoming lazy and that standards of parenting have worsened. Since childhood obesity is positively correlated with poverty, meaning that children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to be overweight, this interpretation also produced a divisive image of the nation. Put simply, it implied that poor parents were to blame for the country's moral failings. Moreover, since it is women that tend to be the primary caregivers, the figure of the bad parent inevitably assumed a female face.

Low wages and the deserving worker

So far in this chapter we have focused on food consumption, on what people eat. But how that food is produced and exchanged is important in its own right. Indeed, if we include all the jobs involved in providing food – from farming and fishing through processing and distribution, right up to retailing and cooking – then it is arguably the most important income-generating sector in the world. In the United States (US), there has been a long history of struggles over food work. John Steinbeck captured a slice of it in his 1939 book *Grapes of Wrath*, writing about a family of tenant farmers evicted from their home in Oklahoma and who end up working on a peach plantation in California for a pittance. This fictional book based on real events echoes in the lives of farmworkers in the United States today. Jobs like picking fruit and weeding vegetables are still tough and still done by migrants – only now they typically come from Latin America. In 2012, their average pay was less than \$19,000 a year. The US government's own statistics would place this income thousands of dollars below the minimum threshold for meeting the basic needs of a family of four. In other words, even though they were living in the world's richest nation, they were living in relative poverty.

There are some differences between Steinbeck's story and contemporary events, though. In *Grapes of Wrath*, a preacher called Casy tries to organise his fellow workers into a trade union and is murdered by the police for his troubles. For the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a group of immigrant tomato pickers based in Immokalee Florida, their initial meetings in a local church grew into something much bigger. They first used tactics like work stoppages and hunger strikes to demand higher wages from their employers, but as their public profile grew they sought to reorganise the food supply chain itself. In 2011 the Coalition launched the Fair Food Program.

Major restaurant and supermarket chains were encouraged to pay a few cents more for a pound of tomatoes and to buy these tomatoes from suppliers who pledged to follow labour law and put the extra money in their workers' wage packets. The Coalition scored its biggest success when the biggest retailer in the world, Walmart, agreed to join the Fair Food Program and to extend it beyond just tomatoes.

But while Walmart made commitments to *these* workers, with its own workers it has been less forthcoming. In 2012 its regular employees like cashiers, cleaners and warehouse assistants were paid on average just \$8.81 an hour (Buchheit 2013). This meant that they, too, were paid a poverty wage and thus qualified for additional social security benefits like food vouchers, many of which were then spent by workers back in Walmart stores! This costs the government billions per year and is surely the grand paradox of the American economy. For all its wealth and Wall Street millionaires, the national minimum wage is so low that many people in full-time work still cannot make ends meet. Nor is it just Walmart where this happens. Supermarket cashiers, farm labourers, fast food servers, cooks, dishwashers, bartenders and waiting staff are all among America's lowest paid workers. The price of cheap food in the country has been gross inequality.

In both the Walmart case and that of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the position of the deserving worker has been crucial in contesting this inequality. We can see this first in the way that immigration policy has been conducted. For years US farm companies lobbied the government to allow them access to cheap foreign labour, which the government achieved by issuing temporary immigration visas and turning a blind eye to the use of additional undocumented workers. This created tensions with the general public, some of whom were worried about wages being undercut and others about the decline of 'American values'. A 2013 proposal by Republican and Democratic Party senators to offer permanent citizenship to undocumented farm workers thus had to cast them in a particular light. They were not called 'illegal immigrants', as was more usual in political discourse, but portrayed as 'individuals who ... have been performing very important and difficult work to maintain America's food supply' (Plumer 2013). What the politicians were implying was that these were honest and hardworking people that could and should be made into Americans.

A second example is the way that trade unions have tried to organise Walmart employees across national borders. The company's takeover of food retailers in other countries has given it a truly global workforce. Walmart now employs over two million people worldwide; only the United States and Chinese militaries employ more. Concerned that the labour standards in its American operations might be adopted in these supermarkets and their supply chains too, groups like the UNI Global Union have thus tried to link people together through the shared subjectivity of the deserving worker and create a sense of international solidarity between them. As a UNI coordinator put it: 'When I can connect a Chinese worker with a Mexican worker then it doesn't

become about a Chinese worker taking their job. Workers can see, “Oh they [Walmart] are screwing us both. We have to unite to win” (Jackson 2014).

Land dispossession and the traditional peasant

The examples from the United States were about waged work, but most of the jobs in the food sector are unwaged. People who farm, fish, herd, hunt or forage for food are effectively self-employed: they sell some of what they get for money and keep the rest to eat. As far as farming goes, there are an estimated 570 million agricultural plots in the world, the vast majority of which are small-scale family farms (Lowder *et al.* 2014). Whether these rural livelihoods will disappear as farming becomes mechanised and people migrate to cities is much debated (see Weis 2007 and Collier 2008). Either way, it is evident that the transition from small-scale peasant agriculture to large-scale industrial agriculture can be extremely violent. This can be seen in a case from Cambodia.

In 2006, large areas of land were granted by the Cambodian government to private holders to transform into sugar plantations so they could export this ‘cash crop’ to the European Union. However, the plan ignored the fact that many people already lived on the land and didn’t want to be evicted. But the protestations of the existing tenants fell on deaf ears. In part this was because they did not have legal title to the land as a previous government, the Khmer Rouge, had banned private property and burned land records. Things got worse still. Financial compensation and alternative land that the current government was meant to provide was either inadequate or not forthcoming. When people resisted, force was used to remove them. Buildings were burned, land was bulldozed and animals shot. Over 1,700 families lost their land (see Herre and Feodoroff 2014). Responding to these events, community groups and human rights organisations formed the Clean Sugar Campaign. Given that the Cambodian government was itself involved in the land sale, the campaign’s search for justice took on an international dimension. First of all they tried to pressure the investing companies by filing complaints with the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand. Then they turned their attention to the rules and relationships incentivising sugar export. They pressurised the European Union to suspend the free trade access it gave to Cambodia, began legal proceedings against Tate & Lyle in the UK for importing illegally produced sugar, and publicly shamed the project’s financial backers, Deutsche Bank and ANZ Bank, to make them withdraw their money. This can be described as a form of ‘boomerang activism’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998) – working through institutions in other countries meant that the campaign first left Cambodia but then came back.

In the course of their activism, campaigners did not just point out the breaches of law involved in the ‘land grabs’ but also made a political argument about why this way of producing food should be opposed. This turned on the fact that it was not just people’s livelihoods that were

being threatened but also their identity. The land that was lost was used not only to grow rice and collect water but also to worship ancestral graves. It was their home as well as their workplace. This is a common experience of people displaced by commercial agriculture – they are not just victims of dispossession but see their very way of life destroyed. The position of the traditional peasant adopted in the campaign thus gave it a broader resonance in global civil society. For example, the charity Oxfam has used the plight of the Cambodian peasants as an example of the dangers facing rural dwellers the world over, and has lobbied companies like Coca-Cola to make sure they source ingredients like sugar in a responsible fashion. However, there is still a long way to go for full restoration or compensation for the land loss, and unfortunately much of the damage has already been done.

Conclusion

The cases presented in this chapter show that political authority over food is globally dispersed. People in each case were affected by decisions taken in the state, in international organisations and in corporations. This constellation of institutions, sometimes referred to as global governance, reminds us that power does not lie in any one single site, even though in certain situations some actors take on greater significance than others. Thanks to our bottomup approach, we also saw how individuals outside these central institutions can inform and challenge the way that governance is organised. The chapter demonstrated how professional networks, charities, trade unions, political groups and even celebrity chefs all claimed their own kind of authority on the basis of expertise, morality, membership or personality. This allowed them to speak for large numbers of ordinary people; the kind of people often excluded from top-down accounts of global politics. The chapter also showed how looking at different subject positions can help explain how collective action happens. Some positions were based on political identity (the disenfranchised citizen, the civic participant), some on familial identity (the protective parent, the bad mother), and some on economic identity (the deserving worker, the traditional peasant). What is important about each of these is the way they spoke to people in a particular way, giving them a shared lens on the world and a common language to articulate it. These positions are also important in shaping international relations, along with class relations, race relations and gender relations. They show how global food politics are built from the bottom up, based on contested ideas about who we are and what is in our best interests.