Freshman Courses



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Global Trends Course Lecture on Nile Global Academia



What is the International System and its Structure?

You Tube Channel:- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkMlnenV8J1NgyUxzwtSFyA

What is International System in IR?

- **The International System (IS)** is concerned with the structure of the system, the interactions between states; the influence for peace and war, or cooperation and conflict of different types of states
- **The international system** reflects all aspects of economic, political, social, cultural, ecological, and other forms of interaction that exist among states
  - **It deals with the global political or economic setting, trends or power shifts among various international actors, mainly states.**

Related Concepts with ‘IS’

- **Power** is the ability to influence others to do something, usually, in favor of oneself
- ✓ Robert Dahl stated power as “A” has *power* over “B” to the extent that can get “B” to do something that “B” would not otherwise do
- ✓ German sociologist Max Weber, said that power is **the ability to exercise one's will over others** (Weber 1922)

So, what is power in IR?

- **Power** is, considered as, the currency of international politics
- In the international system, power determines the relative influence of actors and it shapes the structure as well
- For instance, Hans Morgenthau, a realist thinker of IR, argues that 'International politics is a struggle for power'
- Thus, power is the blood line of international relations
- In international politics, **no one has a monopoly of force,** and it is rather full of competition among States

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- **Authority**, on the other hand, is a legitimate, acceptable and legal power, it is about the right to give orders
- **Sovereignty** can be defined as (a) a state's ultimate authority within its territorial entity (internal sovereignty)
- (b) the state's involvement in the international community (external sovereignty)
- In short, sovereignty is states' claims of autonomy in foreign policy and freedom in its domestic affairs

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- **Anarchy** is a condition of lawlessness or disorder; or a break down of law and order/rule
- ✓ Anarchy is a situation where there is absence of authority either in national or international level
- ✓ Domestically, **anarchy** refers to a breakdown of law & order
- ✓ Whereas, in relations between states **anarchy** refers to a system where power is decentralized and there are no shared institutions with the right to enforce common rules

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- In an anarchical world states ‘had’ to rely on their own resources
- Or to form alliances so that the power of one alliance of states could be balanced against the power of another alliance
- However, such alliances attributed the international system to be in a constant tensions and threats of war

➢ **Whereas, Hierarchy** refers a series of order or ranks in administration, usually within a state

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- **Balance of power** a means of creating an equilibrium of power sufficient to discourage or prevent one nation or party from imposing its will…
- It is the process of matching some states' powers against those of other states
- **Security dilemma** entails the increase in one state's security (such as increasing its military strength) leads other states to fear for their own security

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- **Deterrence** is a mechanism or weapon or set of weapons designed to prevent enemies from attacking by making them afraid to do so
- It refers a threat of force in order to discourage an opponent from taking an action

Polarities in IR

- The concept of polarity in international relations is used to describe the presence of one or more great powers dominating the international system
- Or the existence of dominant states who influences the global politics, security or economy, culture, etc.
- The great powers which have enormous capability are divided into several poles from different periods

Types of Polarity or the Structure of IS

- Scholars have divided the structure of international system as follows:

1. **Uni-polar**
2. **Bi-polar**
3. **Multi-polar**

- In addition to this classification, we can still have **Tri-polarity** to refer the existence of three dominant states in the international politics

Uni-polarity

1. **Uni-polarity** is a condition in which one state under the condition of international anarchy enjoys power and faces no competitor states

- A uni-polarity is when there is mono or single powerful state that dominates or influences the international system as a whole

Bi-polarity

2. Bi-polarity is a system of world order in which the majority of global economic, military and cultural influence is held between two states

- The classic case of a bipolar world is that of the Cold War between the **USA and the United Soviet Socialist Russia (USSR)**
- Where the international system, foreign policy and IR of other states was under the influence of the two powerful blocs
- The liberalism/capitalism Vs. Socialism/communism dichotomy
- During the cold war, USA enforced **'Containment policy'**
- The two powers involved in **the Korean War, the Vietnamese War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Afghan-Soviet War**

Cold war era 1947-1991



Multi-polarity

3. Multi-polarity is when there exists a distribution of power between three or more countries, alliances, parties, etc.

- Thus, it refers the existence of multiple competing and powerful states across the globe,
  - The two WWs are good examples!
- During the WWI war, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire **(the Central Powers)** fought against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Canada, Japan and the United States (the Allied Powers)
- WWII was fought between the **Axis powers** such as Germany, Japan and Italy; and the UK, the USA and the Soviet Union from Allied powers

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- The existing international system is characterized by a diffusion of power among different state and non-state actors
- There exists a “shift” in a balance of regional and global powers, and **a relative weakening of established Western nations and emerging of new centers of power**, increasing importance of regional integration
- States such as India, China or the BRICS in general are emerging powers today, which makes the system **multi-polar**

USA Vs. Russia

- Then



- Now



The next lecture video will be on Theories of IR

Thank you for watching!

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