Course Name: Global Trends

Chapter One

Understanding International Relations

- ***Conceptualizing Nations, Nationalism and States***
- ***The Nature and Evolution of International Relations***
- ***Actors of International Relations***
- Power, Anarchy and Sovereignty in the International System

1.1. Conceptualizing Nations, Nationalism and States

- **Nation**

- For nationalists, a nation is a collective group of people who share a number of common social, cultural and ethnic characteristics.
- It is a social collective involving various criteria and characteristics that are unique to each nation. These characteristics can include language, tradition, ethnicity, religion, myths, beliefs, symbols and blood ties.
- It can also be deemed as persons Ethnic Origin.

- The idea of the nation is largely **subjective and is self-selective** in the sense that each nation defines what it is to be part of that nation.

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- ***Nationalism***
- Nationalism is the doctrine that asserts the nation as the basic political unit in organizing society.
- As a ***political doctrine***, nationalism is the belief that the world's peoples are divided into nations, and that each of these nations has the ***right to self-determination***, either as governing units within nations or as nation states of their own.
- As a ***cultural ideal***, nationalism is the claim that while men and women have many identities, it is the nation that provides them with their primary form of ***belonging.***
- As a ***moral ideal***, nationalism is an ethic of ***heroic sacrifice***, justifying the use of violence in the defense of one's nation against enemies, internal or external.

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- It is the most influential force in international affairs which is deemed as a factor for the collapse of ***age old empires***, marker for new borders, a powerful component for the ***emergence of new states*** and it is used to reshape and reinforce regimes in history.

- Consequently nationalism is often cited as a source of ***wars, ethnic conflict, persecution of minorities and belligerence.*** ***While the nationalism of the nineteenth century was perhaps viewed as a positive phenomenon that brought people together, as in the case of Germany.***

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- **MAIN TYPES OF NATIONALISM**

- ***Civic nationalism:*** A 'social contract' between citizens and the state
- ***Ethnic nationalism:*** Often involving a strong hereditary principle
- ***Cultural nationalism:*** The nation is bonded together through a sense of shared culture.
- ***Liberal nationalism:*** Nationalism based upon the principles of equality, freedom, tolerance, individual rights and identity
- ***Pan-nationalism:*** Form of ethnic and cultural nationalism in which various groups in different states shares similar features or characteristics
- ***Diaspora nationalism:*** National grouping of ex-patriots who live outside their homeland or home state

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- **STATE**
- Is a political entity of the society.
- Throughout history states have existed in many forms, from the city states of ***ancient Greece to the feudal states of the medieval period to the modern system*** of states in place today.
- The modern system of states originates from ***the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.*** A number of important principles or elements emerged from the Westphalian settlement such as:

  * ***Population***
  * ***Territory,***
  * ***Government***
  * ***Sovereignty and***
  * ***Reciprocal recognition.***

Therefore, In common parlance, the words 'nation', 'state' and 'nationality' are used interchangeably and this is not correct

1.2. The Nature and Evolution of International Relations

- Originally, the study of international relations (a term first used by ***Jeremy Bentham in 1798***) was seen largely as a branch of the study of ***law, philosophy or history***.

- Until the 1970s the study of international relations centered mainly on international ***security studies*** that is, questions of ***war and peace.***

- Today, international relations could be used to describe a range of interactions between people, groups, firms, associations, parties, nations or states or between these and (non) governmental international organizations.

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- International Relation [IR] is the study and practice of political relationships among the world's nations, especially their governments.
- Participation in international relations or politics is also ***inescapable.*** No individual, people, nation or state can exist in splendid isolation or be master of its own fate.
- On the other hand, there are legal, political and social differences between domestic and international politics.

✓ ***Domestic law*** is generally obeyed, and if not, the police and courts enforce sanctions.

✓ ***International law*** rests on competing legal

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- Scholars and practitioners in international relations use concepts and theories which lad to major philosophical disputes about the fundamental nature of international relations:

✓***The Hobbesian*** versus ***the Lockean*** state of nature in the 17th century.

✓***Thomas Hobbes***, writing in 1651, interpreted the state of society to be: 'continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. ***(Pessimistic Approach).***

✓Whereas, ***John Locke*** took a more optimistic view and suggested that sociability was the strongest bond between men & men were equal, sociable and free; but they were not licentious because they were governed by the laws of nature. ***(Optimistic Approach)***

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- International politics is also about maintaining ***international order*** through different international organization like UN by the mean's of ***power, coercion and bargaining***.

✓ ***Evolution of IR***

- In medieval Europe there were two institutions with pretensions to power over the continent as a whole i.e.

A. ***The (Catholic) Church and***

B. ***The Empire.***

- The Church was the spiritual authority, with its centre in Rome.
- The Empire known as the Holy Roman Empire (includes todays Italy, France Netherlands and Belgium.

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- In this climate of Medieval period, the increasingly self-assertive states were not only picking fights with universal institutions but also with local ones and leads to break out different driving forces/revolutions like:

✓ ***French revolution***

✓ ***Industrial revolution***

✓ ***Reformation***

- The European states emerged in the midst of struggle and strife, and the ***Treaty of Westphalia, 1648,*** which concluded the 30 years of bloodiest warfare (1618-1648), has come to symbolize the new way of organizing international politics.

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- From this point onwards, international politics was a matter of relations between states and no other political units which separates the state from the pope and the emperors. ***(Turning point in the International relations).***

- Towards the end of the nineteenth century, other European countries joined in this scramble for colonies, not least in Africa. ***Colonial possessions*** became a symbol of 'great power' status, and the new European nation-states often proved themselves to be very aggressive colonizers since ***the colonized peoples had no nation-states and enjoyed no self-determination.***

1.3. Actors in International Relations

- The participants in international relations, often called ***actors,*** have a great influence on the relationships between nations and on world affairs.
- The major participants include:

✓ ***The state*** (nations themselves, the leaders of those nations)

✓ ***Sub-state actors*** (groups or organizations within a nation),

✓ ***Transnational actors*** (organizations operating in more than one country), and international organizations

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- ***The State Actors***

✓ All states have their own capitals, armies, foreign ministries, flags and national anthems.

✓ International politics come to be defined in terms of interactions between states in an international system of states where these are ***'sovereign' entities, territorially bound, and independent ultimately of any external authority***.

✓ Nations vary in size and power

✓ The ***great powers*** include the United States, Great Britain, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), France, China, Germany, and Japan.

✓ These powers are the most important actors in international relations.

✓ ***Leaders*** (The most important individual actor within a

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- ***Non/Sub-State Actors***

✓ Are groups and individuals within that nation that influence its international relationships. These ***domestic actors***, include particular industries with distinct interests in foreign policy (such as the automobile or tobacco industry) and ethnic constituencies with ties to foreign countries, as well as labor unions, cities, and regions.

✓ These groups can influence a nation's foreign policy in several ways, such as by lobbying political leaders, donating money to political candidates or parties, or swaying public opinion on certain issues.

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- ***Transnational Actors***

✓Are Organizations/firms which are operating in more than one country.

✓Transnational actors include

A. ***Multinational corporations***
B. ***Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),***
C. ***Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like; EU***

✓They are usually created to promote cooperation between different nations on a particular issue or in a particular geographic region.

1.4. Levels of Analysis in International Relations

A. The individual level

- International relations can be analyzed from the perspective of individuals. Here we would look at the behaviors, motivations, beliefs and orientation of the individual in affecting a particular international phenomenon.
- This can be seen in the psychology and emotions behind people's actions and decisions, their fears and their visions as well as their access to information and capacity to make a difference.

B. The group level

- ✓A group-level analysis focusing on foreign policy would look at the role of lobbying groups, special interest groups and the way they influence national decision-making on an issue.

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c. The state level

- ✓Also known as *'state-centrism'* .
- ✓In this level of analysis the state acts as the arena in which state officials, politicians and decision-makers operate.
- ✓The state is seen as the framework that encapsulates society and as the main point of reference for the individual.
- ✓A state-level study would also require careful consideration of what kinds of states we are looking at

- ❑ *How they are ordered politically,*
- ❑ *Their geographical position,*
- ❑ *Their historical ties and experiences and their economic standing.*

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D. *The system level*

- ✓ This level of analysis conceive the global system as the structure or context within which states cooperate, compete and confront each other over issues of national interest.
- ✓ It is a level above the state.

- ✓ It is usually distributed into three main types of systems i.e.

i. ***Uni-polar system***
ii. ***Bipolar system and***
iii. ***Multipolar system.***

- In a ***uni-polar international system*** there is one state with the greatest political, economic, cultural and military power and hence the ability to totally control other states.

- In the case of the ***bipolar system***, there are two dominant states (super powers) and the less powerful states join either sides through alliance and counter alliance formations. ***(E.g.. Cold war period).***

✓The problem with bipolar system is that it is vulnerable for ***zero-sum game politics*** because when one superpower gains the other would inevitably lose.

- ***Multipolar system*** usually reflects various equally powerful states competing for power.

✓In such system, it is possible to bring change without gaining or losing power.

1.5. Power, Anarchy and Sovereignty in the International System

Power

- ✓Power is the ***currency*** of international politics. As money is for economics, power is for international relations (politics).
- ✓In the international system, power determines the relative influence of actors and it shapes the structure of the international system.
- ✓Power can also be defined as ***'A' s' ability to get 'B'.***

Anarchy

- ✓Anarchy is a situation where there is absence of authority (government) be it in national or international/global level systems.
- ✓Within a country 'anarchy' refers to a breakdown of law and order, but in relations between states it refers to a

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- An anarchical world is a world where everyone looks after themselves and no one looks after the system as a whole.

Sovereignty

- Sovereignty is another basic concept in international relations and it can be defined as an expression of:

i. A state's ultimate authority within its territorial entity ***(internal sovereignty)*** and,

ii. The state's involvement in the international community ***(external sovereignty).***

- In short, sovereignty denotes double claim of states from the international system, i.e., autonomy in foreign policy and independence/freedom in its domestic affairs.