

Global Trends

Ayenw Birhanu (PhD)

Outline

Chapter One: International Relations

Chapter Two: understanding Foreign policy and Diplomacy

Chapter Three: International Political Economy

Chapter Four: Globalization and regionalism

Chapter Five: Major contemporary Global issues

Understanding International Relations

- ❖ relationships among the world's governments
- ❖ a range of interactions between people, groups, firms, associations, parties, nations or states or between these and (non) governmental international organizations.

Understanding ... Cont'd

- legal, political and social differences between domestic and international politics.
- Domestic law is generally obeyed, and if not, the police and courts enforce sanctions.
 - ✓ Domestically a government has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.
- International law rests on competing legal systems, and there is no common enforcement.
 - ✓ In international politics no one has a monopoly of force, and therefore international politics has often been interpreted as the realm of self-help.

The Nature and Evolution of International Relations

- ❖ The rise of the sovereign state in medieval Europe consisted of a complicated pattern of overlapping jurisdictions and loyalties.
- ❖ Most of life was local and most political power was local too.
- ❖ In medieval Europe there were two institutions– **the Catholic Church and the Empire.**
 - ✓ The Church was the spiritual authority, with its centre in Rome.
 - ✓ Apart from a small Jewish minority, all Europeans were Christians and the influence of the Church spread far and penetrated deeply into people's lives.
 - ✓ the Church occupied a crucial role in the cultural and intellectual life of the Middle Ages.

The Nature and ... Cont'd

- As a result of this religious domination, the **Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648**, which was the bloodiest and most protracted military confrontation of the era fought among European nations
 - ✓ As a result of the war, Germany's population was reduced by around a third.
 - ✓ The Swedish troops destroyed and many of the people who did not die on the battlefield died of the epidemic.
- The Thirty Years' War is often called a religious conflict since Catholic states confronted Protestants.
 - ✓ The war was ended after thirty years by the **Westphalian Treaty**
 - ✓ The Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, which concluded the 30 years of warfare, has come to symbolize the new way of organizing international politics

The Nature and ... Cont'd

- ❖ From this point onwards, international politics was a matter of relations between states and no other political units.
 - All states were sovereign, meaning that they laid claims to the exclusive right to rule their own territories and to act, in relation to other states
 - All states were formally equal and they had the same rights and obligations
 - The states interacted with each other in a system in which there was no overarching power.
- ❖ Once these states had made themselves independent both of the pope and the emperor, they soon discovered that their relations had become vastly more complicated.
- ❖ In order to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts, the different rulers began dispatching ambassadors to each other's countries

Actors in International Relations

- There are two types of actors: **state actors** and **non-state actors**

A. State Actors

- ❖ International Relations (IR) traditionally focused on interactions between states.
- ❖ However, this conventional view has been broadened over the years to include relationships between all sorts of political entities ('polities'), including international organizations, NGOs, multinational corporations, societies and citizens.

Actors in ... Cont'd

- States are the leading or primary actors in IR.
- The 'international' is structurally differentiated from the 'domestic' in that where the former, according to this 'realist' perspective, is defined as 'anarchical', the latter is hierarchical.
- State sovereignty comes to be the defining element in the study of international relations

Actors in ... Cont'd

B. Non-State Actors

- IGOs, NGOs and multinational corporations (MNCs) are non-state actors.
- MNCs(TNCs) have headquarters in one state and operational capability in a range of others – contribute significantly to international relations.
- ❖ state remains, for many, the primary actor in international politics.

Actors in ... Cont'd

- ❖ The state as the main actor in IR has now lost its importance.
 - ✓ State borders do not seem to accurately delimitate global affairs.
 - ✓ The majority of global interactions – be they related to global finance, production, education, personal and professional travel, labor migration or terrorism – no longer occur via state channels the way they once did.
- ❖ We could say that the increased focus on non-state actors and cross-border issues has marked a close-to-revolutionary turn in IR; something that could be interpreted as a shift away from the international ('between-states') to the 'trans-national' ('across/beyond-states' and their borders).

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

- ❖ Kenneth Waltz's Man, distinguishes between three levels of analysis: the system, the state and the individual-but the group level is also important to consider as a fourth

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

A. The individual level

- the very personalities, behaviors, motivations, beliefs and orientation of the individual leaders shape foreign policy
 - ✓ The most obvious example of individual level analysis is explaining WWII through Adolf Hitler's leadership; an other would be when scholars attribute the end of cold war to the relationship between president Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachew
 - ✓ An individual level also examine the character and ideology of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and other key players in influencing the US military action

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

B. The group level

- ❖ A group level analysis would try and break the analysis down into certain kinds of groups, how they relate to the state level and where they position themselves with respect to the global dimension of the issues they are dealing with.
- ❖ A group-level analysis focusing on foreign policy would look, for example, at the role of lobbying groups and the way they influence national decision-making on an issue.
- ❖ In this sense, a group-level analysis would be more interested in the actions of groups of individuals, such as all voters of a country and the way they express their views in the general election, political parties picking up on the issue in their campaigns or social movements forming to counter the effects of the crisis on society.

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

C. The state level

- ❖ IR scholars would generally regard states as the primary actors in IR
- ❖ This predominant focus on the state is strongly related to fact that state is the main location of power within the international sphere.
- ❖ This idea that the state is where power is primarily concentrated and located has to be seen against the historical context within which some of the most prominent IR scholars operated – the Cold War.
- ❖ It was an era in which much of international affairs appeared to be run via state channels and in line with particular state interests.

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

- ❖ A lot of today's political life remains managed in the state framework, based on issues like national security, internal stability.
- ❖ States form the primary kind of actor in major international organizations such as UN.
- ❖ States still hold the monopoly on violence – the exclusive right to the legitimate use of physical force.
- ❖ A state level analysis might be interested to look at any one of the following:
 - ✓ it may look at how states interact with each other to deal with the crisis
 - ✓ how they cooperate in the framework of international organizations

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

D. The system level

- ❖ System level analysis argues that all foreign policy can be understood without even looking at internal characteristics of nations or individuals.
- ❖ It conceives the global system as the structure or context within which states cooperate, compete and confront each other over issues of national interest.
- ❖ Particularly important in that context is the distribution of power amongst states, meaning, whether there is one main concentration of power (uni-polarity), two (bipolarity) or several (multi-polarity).
- ❖ International system is anarchic that lacks a central government that regulates and controls what happens to states in their dealings with each other

Levels of Analysis in International Relations

- ❖ A system-level study would need to consider global linkages that go beyond single interactions between states.
- ❖ It would need to look at such things as the balance of power between states and how that determines what happens in global politics.
- ❖ This could include developments that are even outside the immediate control of any particular state or group of states, such as the global economy, transnational terrorism or the internet.

The Structure of International System

- ❖ IR scholars maintain that political power is usually distributed into three main types of systems namely: (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.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ One typical historical example where the world was under bipolar system is the cold war period.

The Structure of International System

- ❖ Multipolar system is the most common throughout history.
- ❖ During the period around World War I it was a typical world system.
- ❖ It usually reflects various equally powerful states competing for power.

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.

The Structure of International System

- ❖ For Hans Morgenthau, a famous thinker of realism theory in IR, International politics, like all other politics, is a struggle for power.
- ❖ It thus follows from this that power is the blood line of international relations.
- ❖ Power can be defined in terms of both relations and material (capability) aspects.
- ❖ The relational definition of power is formulated by Robert Dahl as 'A's' ability to get 'B' to do something it would not otherwise do.
- ❖ To better understand this definition, consider this historical example: USA and USSR had roughly balanced capabilities during the cold war era.

The Structure of International System

- ❖ With the demise of the Soviet Union, for instance, the power balance between Russia and the United States has changed in favour of the latter, i.e. the United States emerged as more powerful than Russia and in consequence managed to exercise power over Russia—meaning the USA owned the ability to get Russia to do what Russia would not otherwise do.

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 system where power is decentralized and there are no shared institutions with the right to enforce common rules.
- ❖ An anarchical world is a world where everyone looks after themselves and no one looks after the system as a whole.
- ❖ Instead, states had to rely on their own resources or to form alliances through which the power of one alliance of states could be balanced against the power of another alliance.
- ❖ the two world wars were fought because of lack of world government that enforce common rules

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.

1.7. Theories of International Relations

- ❖ Theories of international relations allow us to understand and try to make sense of the world around us through various lenses, each of which represents a different theoretical perspective.
- ❖ This section introduces the traditional theories, middle-ground theories and critical theories of international relations. Examples are used throughout to help bring meaning and perspective to these positions

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- ❖ Liberalism in IR was referred to as a 'utopian' theory and is still recognized as such to some degree today.
- ❖ Liberalism depicts optimism by arguing that human beings are good, cooperation is possible and conflict can be resolved peacefully
- ❖ Immanuel Kant developed the idea in the late 18thC that states that shared liberal values should have no reason for going to war against one another.
- ❖ Democratic values such as respect for human rights, rule of law, accommodation of multiple interest groups inside the state as well as a belief in reconciliation, makes compromise with and between democracies unproblematic as the democratic states appears to be non-violent.

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- ❖ democracies are transparent and accountable systems of government which work towards “free flow of information” and thus reduce the risk of being misunderstood
- In Kant’s eyes, therefore, the more liberal states there were in the world, the more peaceful it would become,
- His ideas have resonated and continue to be developed by modern liberals, most notably in the democratic peace theory, which posits that democracies do not go to war with each other

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- ❖ Democratic theory argues that democracies(liberal states) rarely go to war b/c of the following reasons
 - ❖ people learn from their past mistakes and eventually come to cooperate with one another by leaving war and conflict behind
 - ❖ Democracies are inherently peaceful as the people are indirectly ruling their own country through a representative government
 - ❖ The power is not concentrated into the hands of a single autocratic leader and that there is several veto groups which prevent a hasty decision to go to war with other states.

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- ❖ the permanent cessation of war is an attainable goal according to liberalism
- ❖ Kant focused on harmony between people overseen by institutions such as judiciary and the representative form of the government where leaders exercise their authority with the consent of the people
- ❖ One particular brand of liberalism, which is known as **liberal institutionalism** came into prominence after the WWI when the President of the USA, Woodrow Wilson laid down the foundation for the League of Nations
- ❖ As he presented his ideas for a rebuild world beyond the war, the last of his points was to create a general association of nations, which became the League of Nations.

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- the League of Nations was created largely for the purpose of overseeing affairs between states and implementing, as well as maintaining, international peace
- In the early years, from 1919 to the 1930s, IR was dominated by liberal internationalism.
- The primary concern of this approach was that conditions which had led to the outbreak of the WWI and the devastation which followed should not be allowed to occur in the future.
- liberal internationalism suggested that 'the prospects for the elimination of war lay with a preference for democracy over aristocracy, free trade over autarky, and collective security over the balance of power system

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- states can be made to cooperate with each other in economic terms even if they exist in a system where there is security competition
- The two interrelated ideas that emerge from Kant's reflections centered on democratic governance and institutionalized law-governed relations of cooperation between states.
- The two influential pillars of liberal internationalism, **democracy and free trade**, required the establishment of international relations which would promote collectivist aspirations in place of the conflictual relations which formed the basis of balance-of-power.

1. Idealism/Liberalism

- ❖ the league of Nations was created to keep international; peace and security.
- ❖ However, the League collapsed due to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939
- ❖ The failure the league seemed to contradict their theories.
- ❖ Therefore, despite the efforts of prominent liberal scholars and politicians such as Kant and Wilson, liberalism failed to retain a strong hold and a new theory emerged to explain the continuing presence of war.

2. Realism

- ❑ The 'idealism' of the interwar period replaced by realism, and it is this school of thought which remains dominant in the discipline
- ❑ One central area that sets realism and liberalism apart is how they view human nature.
- ❑ Realists do not typically believe that human beings are inherently good, or have the potential for good, as liberals do.
 - ❑ Instead, they claim individuals act in their own self-interests.
 - ❑ For realists, people are selfish and behave according to their own needs without necessarily taking into account the needs of others.
 - ❑ Realists believe conflict is unavoidable and perpetual and so war is common and inherent to humankind.
 - ❑ Realism depicts pessimism by arguing that human beings are bad, conflict is inevitable and war is the most prominent instrument of resolving conflict

2. Realism

➤ The basic assumptions of realism are presented as follows:

1. Traditional realists,

- ❖ International politics is an unethical exercise which is destroyed by war and conflict because of human nature
- ❖ One of them was Thomas Hobbes who believed that man operated in a state of nature where no law existed above him to prevent him from acting immorally or according to a specified set of rules.
- ❖ State of nature was characterized by “competition, diffidence and glory” amongst humans

2. Realism

2. neo-realists

- International relations are anarchic due to the absence of sovereign authority, not b/c of human nature
- States serve their own interests in the international system by following a strict code of self help due to the absence of any authority above them
- They often pursue self interest; maximize their power to protect themselves from any threat.
- Because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so
- No one state can trust another therefore cooperation is limited and unstable when it occurs

2. Realism

- Hans Morgenthau asserts that 'realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all'.
- According to Morgenthau, who is the prominent scholar in the field 'international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power'.
- the realism expressed by Morgenthau purports to be scientific and explanatory when compared to liberalism
- Theories of international relations must, according to Morgenthau, be consistent with the facts and it is these which must be the ultimate test of the validity of theoretical statements.

2. Realism

- Realism gained momentum during the Second World War when it appeared to offer a convincing account for how and why the worst conflict in known history originated after a period of supposed peace and optimism.
- By the late 1950s and into the 1960s we see a discipline dominated by realist conceptions of international relations
- As its name suggests, advocates of realism purport it reflects the 'reality' of the world and more effectively accounts for change in international politics.

2. Realism

- ❖ when viewing that world through the realist lens, the world appears to be one of domination.
- ❖ Liberals, when looking at the same world, adjust their lenses to blur out areas of domination and instead bring areas of cooperation into focus.
- ❖ It is important to understand that there is no single liberal or realist theory.
- ❖ Scholars in the two groups rarely fully agree with each other, even those who share the same approach.
- ❖ Each scholar has a particular interpretation of the world, which includes ideas of peace, war and the role of the state in relation to individuals.
- ❖ And, both realism and liberalism have been updated to more modern versions (neoliberalism and neorealism) that represent a shift in emphasis from their traditional roots

2. Realism

- ❖ Both liberalism and realism consider the state to be the dominant actor in IR, although liberalism does add a role for non-state actors such as international organizations.
- In terms of liberalism, its proponents argue that organizations are valuable in assisting states in formulating decisions and helping to formalize cooperation that leads to peaceful outcomes.
- Realists on the other hand believe states partake in international organizations only when it is in their self-interest to do so.

3. Structuralism/Marxism

- Marxism is an ideology that argues that the main source international instability would be the conflict between two classes (a capitalist society is divided into two contradictory classes – the business class (the bourgeoisie) and the working class (the proletariat).
- The proletariats are at the mercy of the bourgeoisie who control their wages and therefore their standard of living.
- Marx hoped for an eventual end to the class society and overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.
- The source of international instability is not anarchy, but the capitalist mode of production which defines the unjust political institutions and state relations

3. Structuralism/Marxism

- ❖ The structuralism paradigm which emerged as a critique of both realism and pluralism concentrated on the inequalities that exist within the international system,
- ❖ inequalities of wealth between the rich 'North' or the 'First World' and the poor 'South' or the 'Third World' are the main sources of instabilities at global level
- ❖ Inspired by the writings of Marx and Lenin, the structuralism paradigm focused on **dependency, exploitation and the international division of labor** which downgraded the vast majority of the global population to the extremes of poverty, often with the complicities of elite groups within these societies.

3. Structuralism/Marxism

- As many in this tradition argued, most states were not free.
- Instead they were subjugated by the political, ideological and social consequences of economic forces.
- Imperialism generated by the strength of free enterprise capitalism in the West and by state capitalism in the socialist bloc imposed unequal exchange of every kind upon the Third World (Banks, 1984)
- The basis of such manifest inequality was the capitalist structure of the international system which accrued benefits to some while causing, through unequal exchange relations, the impoverishment of the vast majority of others.

3. Structuralism/Marxism

- The class system that pre-dominated internally within capitalist societies had its parallel globally, producing centre-periphery relations that permeated every aspect of international social, economic and political life.
- Thus, where pluralism and its liberal associations had viewed networks of economic interdependence as a basis of increasing international cooperation founded on trade and financial interactions, neo-Marxist structuralism viewed these processes as the basis of inequality, the debt burden, violence and instability.

3. Structuralism/Marxism

- Major writers in the structuralist perspective emerged from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, primary among which were Andre Gunter Frank and Samir Amin, both of whom concentrated on dependency theory.
- According to dependency theory, resources flow from the “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “core” of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former
- Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems analysis provided a historicist account of the spread of capitalism from the sixteenth century to the present, providing a definitive statement on the impact of this structure on interstate, class and other social relations

4. Constructivism

- ❖ Unlike scholars from other perspectives, constructivists highlight the importance of **values and shared interests** between individuals who interact on the global stage.
- ❖ Alexander Wendt, a prominent constructivist, described the relationship between agents (individuals) and structures (such as the state) as one in which structures not only constrain agents but also construct their identities and interests.
- Constructivists disagree with realist position that anarchy inherently leads to competition and war
- As one of the foremost scholars on constructivism, Alexander Wendt, argued that competition and war is not the result of anarchy, but due to process

4. Constructivism

- There is no reason that anarchy brings about war and peace
- The way International system will look depend on interactions among different actors
- Emphasis the importance of normative as well as material structures, and the role of identity in the constitution and action

4. Constructivism

- After all, states do not interact; it is agents of those states, such as politicians and diplomats, who interact.
- As those interacting on the world stage have accepted international anarchy as the defining principle, it has become part of our reality.
- However, if anarchy is what we make of it, then different states can perceive anarchy differently and the qualities of anarchy can even change over time.
- International anarchy could even be replaced with a different system if a critical mass of other individuals (and by proxy the states they represent) accepted the idea.
- To understand constructivism is to understand that ideas, or 'norms' as they are often called, have power.
- IR is, then, a never-ending journey of change chronicling the accumulation of the accepted norms of the past and the emerging norms of the future

5. Critical Theories

- Critical approaches refer to a wide spectrum of theories that have been established in response to mainstream approaches in the field, mainly liberalism and realism.
- In a nutshell, critical theorists share one particular trait – they oppose commonly held assumptions in the field of IR that have been central since its establishment.
- Thus, altered circumstances call for new approaches that are better suited to understand, as well as question, the world we find ourselves in.
- Critical theories are valuable because they identify positions that have typically been ignored or overlooked within IR.
- They also provide a voice to individuals who have frequently been marginalized, particularly women and those from the Global South.
- Critical theorists who take a Marxist angle often argue that the internationalization of the state as the standard operating principle of international relations has led ordinary people around the globe becoming divided and alienated, instead of recognizing what they all have in common as a global proletariat.
- For this to change, the legitimacy of the state must be questioned and ultimately dissolved. In that sense, emancipation from the state in some form is often part of the wider critical agenda.

5. Critical Theories

- Post-colonialism differs from Marxism by focusing on the inequality between nations or regions, as opposed to classes.
- The effects of colonialism are still felt in many regions of the world today as local populations continue to deal with the challenges created and left behind by the former colonial powers.
- Post-colonialism's origins can be traced to the Cold War period when much activity in international relations centered around decolonization and the ambition to undo the legacies of European imperialism.
- This approach acknowledges that politics is not limited to one area or region and that it is vital to include the voices of individuals from other parts of the world. Edward Said (1978) developed the prominent 'Orientalist' critique, describing how the Middle East and Asia were inaccurately depicted in the West.
- As a result, more focus within the discipline was placed on including the viewpoints of those from the Global South to ensure that Western scholars no longer spoke on their behalf. This created a deeper understanding of the political and social challenges faced by people living within these regions as well as an acknowledgement of how their issues could be better addressed. Postcolonial scholars are, therefore, important contributors to the field as they widen the focus of enquiry beyond IR's traditionally 'Western' mindset.

5. Critical Theories

- Generally, realists believe that international organizations appear to be successful when they are working in the interests of powerful states.
- But, if that condition is reversed and an organization becomes an obstacle to national interests, then the equation may change.
- This line of enquiry is often used by realists to help explain why the League of Nations was unsuccessful – failing to allow for Germany and Japan's expansionist desires in the 1930s.
- A contemporary example would be the United States invading Iraq in 2003 despite the Security Council declining to authorize it.
- The United States simply ignored the United Nations and went ahead, despite opposition.

5. Critical Theories

- On the other hand, liberals would argue that without the United Nations, international relations would likely be even more chaotic – devoid of a respectable institution to oversee relations between states and hold bad behavior to account.
- A constructivist would look at the very same example and say that while it is true that the United States ignored the United Nations and invaded Iraq, by doing so it violated the standard practices of international relations.
- The United States disregarded a ‘norm’ and even though there was no direct punishment, its behavior was irregular and so would not be without consequence. Examining the difficulties the United States faced in its international relations following 2003 gives considerable weight to the constructivist and liberal viewpoints.

5. Critical Theories

- In contrast to liberals and constructivists, who value the United Nations to an extent, critical theories offer different perspectives.
- Marxists would argue that any international body, including the United Nations, works to promote the interests of the business class.
- After all, the United Nations is composed of (and was built by) states who are the chief protagonists in global capitalism – the very thing that Marxism is opposed to.
- Likewise, the United Nations can be said to be dominated by imperial (or neo-imperial) powers.
- Imperialism, according to Marxist doctrine, is the highest stage of capitalism.
- The United Nations, then, is not an organization that offers any hope of real emancipation for citizens.
- Even though it may appear humanitarian, these actions are merely band-aids over a system of perpetual state-led exploitation that the United Nations legitimizes

5. Critical Theories

- Finally, post-colonialists would argue that the discourse perpetuated by the United Nations is one based on cultural, national or religious privilege. They would suggest, for instance, that, as it has no African or Latin American permanent members, the Security Council fails to represent the current state of the world. Post-colonialists would also point to the presence of former colonial powers on the Security Council and how their ability to veto proposals put forward by other countries perpetuates a form of continued indirect colonial exploitation of the Global South.