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Introduction to international relations

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LSE THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE ∎

This guide was written for the University of London International Programmes by Professor Michael Cox, Emeritus Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Professor Michael Cox is also director of LSE IDEAS, which, in 2015, was ranked third in the world of the best university-affiliated think tanks. The author and editor of over 25 books, he has held appointments at universities across the world. He is currently visiting professor at LUISS School of Government in Rome and the Catholic University of Milan. Professor Cox has also held several senior professional positions in the field of international relations, including director of the David Davies Memorial Institute for the Study of International Politics, University of Aberystwyth; chair of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR); associate research fellow at Chatham House, London; and senior fellow, Nobel Institute, Oslo. He also serves on the editorial board of several academic journals and has been editor of several leading journals in IR, including: *The Review of International Studies* and *International Relations*. He is now editor of *Cold War History, International Politics* and two successful book series: Palgrave's *Rethinking World Politics* and Routledge's *Cold War History*. Professor Cox is a well-known speaker on global affairs and has lectured in the USA, Australia, Asia and countries in the EU. He has spoken on a range of contemporary global issues, though most recently he has focused on the role of the USA in the international system, the rise of Asia, and whether or not the world is now in the midst of a major power shift.

The alterations made to 2016 edition of this guide were spearheaded by Dr Richard Campanaro, based on feedback from past students of IR1011. Dr Campanaro currently splits his time between providing online educational support for the University of London International Programmes and lecturing in the Political Science Department of the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), Canada. He is an adjunct faculty member of the UPEI Institute of Island Studies, and continues to work on a variety of projects in international relations and public education.

This is one of a series of subject guides published by the University. We regret that due to pressure of work the authors are unable to enter into any correspondence relating to, or arising from, the guide. If you have any comments on this subject guide, favourable or unfavourable, please use the form at the back of this guide.

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Introduction

'Of all the students of the social sciences taught in universities, those concerned with IR probably encounter the greatest degree of misunderstanding and ignorance, and engage in more ground-clearing, conceptual, factual and ethical, than any other.'

Halliday, F. *Rethinking international relations*. (London: MacMillan, 1994) p.5.

Introduction to the subject area

As you begin your study of international relations – often referred to simply as 'IR' – it is worth asking some basic questions. What do students of IR study? What distinguishes international relations from the study of history, law, economics or political science? When did it emerge as an academic discipline, with its own university departments and publications? How has international relations changed over time? What does IR contribute to the sum of human knowledge? And why has it become one of the most popular 21st century social sciences, despite the fact that – according to Professor Fred Halliday – IR students have to spend more time than most defending and defining their subject?

The purpose of this course is to help you answer these fundamental questions. It will do so by familiarising you with key international relations issues and introducing you to some of the specialised IR topics that you may choose to study in the coming years. We will look in some detail at both the real-world problems that IR addresses, and some of the essential theories it uses to understand the international system. You do not need any specialised knowledge of international affairs to start this course. On the other hand, you do need to have a genuine interest in world events and a willingness to expand your knowledge of global history and geography. This subject guide will help you to take full advantage of **IR1011 Introduction to international relations**. Its chapters have been organised to introduce you to a wide range of international issues that have preoccupied writers and policy-makers for years, decades – even centuries. It will help you to think about international events in a systematic and critical fashion, coming to well-reasoned conclusions based on a combination of empirical observations and conceptual clarity. The aim, in other words, is to inform and stimulate – to get you to ask questions and reach conclusions that you may never have thought of before.

Route map to the subject guide

This subject guide is divided into 20 chapters, covering a range of topics in international relations. It begins by looking at the academic and philosophical foundations of international relations, reaching back to the 17th century for concepts that remain indispensable in the 21st century. Chapters 2 to 5 investigate key moments and developments in international history from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the interconnected and highly uneven world in which we live in today. Chapters 6 to 11 are your gateway to the world of IR theories – models of international behaviour that answer specific questions about the world.

Each chapter will illustrate its ideas by analysing the causes and effects of the First World War – a decisive event in international history and a convenient laboratory for your theoretical experiments. Chapters 12 to 15 delve more deeply into the state, war, peace and power – four concepts that continue to shape world events in powerful and unexpected ways. Chapters 16 to 19 consider global governance, new security and the rise of China. Chapter 20 concludes the course by using IR's theoretical tools to think about the future, giving you a jumping off point for your next course in international relations.

Syllabus

This course introduces students to the study of international relations (IR), focusing especially on the international actors and systems at the heart of the discipline. In doing so it considers several topics of interest. These include the evolution of IR during the 20th century; the impact of key historical events on the development of the discipline, including the Peace of Westphalia, European imperialism, and the First World War; changes to the international system since the end of the Cold War; the history of globalisation and its influence on the evolution of the discipline's main theories and concepts; the meaning of anarchy and systems in IR's understanding of the world; some of the similarities and differences between mainstream approaches to IR – particularly Liberalism, Realism, and Marxism; alternative theories of world politics presented by some of IR's newer theoretical schools – particularly Constructivism, post-colonialism, and international political economy; the difficulties implicit in defining and limiting **war** between and within states; the contentious place of **peace** in international society; the role and responsibilities of the **state** as one actor among many in the international system; our changing understanding of international **power**; the impact of globalisation and the end of the Cold War on actors' definitions of **security**; the difficulties of global governance in an anarchic international society; and the likely impact of Asia's (especially China's) rise on the units, processes, and structures of the international system.

Aims of this course

This course aims to:

- explore the evolution of the discipline of international relations (IR) over the past century by examining our changing understandings of **order** in the modern world

- consider the impact of major historical events on the evolution of IR, including the treaties of 1648, Europe's imperial expansion, the First World War and the ongoing influence of globalisation

- introduce you to a range of theoretical tools that will help you to analyse the behaviour of international actors and the nature of international systems

- define and discuss some main concepts within the discipline, including war, peace, the state and power

- critically assess challenges facing contemporary international society, including security, global governance and the rise of East Asian actors.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, and having completed the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- describe the evolution of international relations as an academic discipline
- explain the relevance of key terms in international relations
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of IR's various theoretical approaches
- analyse contemporary and historical international events from a variety of theoretical viewpoints.

The structure of this guide

Chapters in this subject guide follow a standard format. Each begins by listing its intended Aims and Learning outcomes. Read these carefully. Since international relations (IR) is too big a subject to cover in a single course, every chapter of this guide covers a very broad range of topics. The Aims and Learning outcomes will help you to focus on the most important parts of each lesson. After these, you will find a summary of the chapter's Essential reading. It is recommended that you do these readings when prompted by the Essential reading boxes in every chapter of this subject guide. Each Essential reading box includes a set of questions or activities designed to help you connect with the material, along with explanatory material before and afterwards. The vast majority of your Essential reading will be in the textbook for this course: Baylis, Smith and Owens' *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations* (see Essential reading below), with a few selected journal articles that you will be able to access via the Online Library in the Student Portal (see Overview of learning resources below). **Unless otherwise stated, all reading for the activities is taken from this textbook**. Each chapter will also include a list of Further reading taken mainly from scholarly articles that address specific points raised in this subject guide. You can read one or more of these once you have worked your way through an entire chapter, including its Essential readings and Activities. The Further readings will give you additional sources from which to draw as you prepare essays and examination questions. You are not expected to do all of them, so make strategic choices about which will be the most useful when considering a key IR question.

Throughout this subject guide, you will find key terms highlighted in **bold** and listed in the Chapter vocabulary section at the end of each chapter. Note down these terms in a glossary and keep track of their definitions throughout the course. Many terms used in IR are heavily contested. That is to say, there is no single agreed-upon definition that you can memorise and apply every time a word is used. You have two ready-made sources from which to draw your definitions: your textbook and Griffith, O'Callaghan and Roach's dictionary of IR concepts (see Essential reading below). One purpose of your glossary is to keep track of how the meaning of a term changes as you become more familiar with the subject, so note down competing definitions and think about their strengths and weaknesses. Language is a powerful tool in IR and it is worth investing your time in understanding the multiple meanings of terms and concepts.

Every chapter in this subject guide includes several Activities designed to help you think through important ideas in international relations. These Activities should be completed as you work your way through each chapter. Every chapter concludes with a set of Test your knowledge and understanding questions. Try to answer each of these in a short essay of between 500 and 1,000 words. Your answers can be shared with peers and an academic moderator on the VLE, where the questions will also form the basis for a set of podcasts and discussions.

Overview of learning resources

The subject guide

Part 1 of this subject guide provides a brief overview of how IR first came into being as an academic subject and its roots in political philosophy. One of the first things that you will notice is that IR is a relatively 'new' subject – only about 100 years old. That said, many of the questions that it tries to deal with are much older. IR therefore draws on much older ideas about human nature, society and power. Analysing international relations therefore requires more than a knowledge of current events, it also requires an understanding of history and some familiarity with important ideas about how the world works and why humans act the way we do.

Part 2 provides a thumbnail sketch of the history of contemporary IR, including the development of important concepts such as the state, war and human rights. Its chapters focus on key episodes in international history: developments in international society from around 1500 to 1914 (Chapter 2); the so-called 'short' 20th century that spanned the years between 1914 and 1991 (Chapter 3); the world that emerged from the Cold War after 1991 (Chapter 4); and the rising tide of globalisation that stretches back at least as far as Europe's overseas imperial expansion after 1500 (Chapter 5). Part 2 plays a double role: contextualising the ever-changing world of IR, and providing you with a set of historical cases that you can use to support your later analyses.

In Part 3 we 'go theoretical' by examining key IR theories. Don't be intimidated! Theories are just simplifying devices that we use in IR to draw general conclusions from a limited number of examples. Different theories answer different kinds of questions and emphasise different aspects of the world. This course will not waste your time arguing that any one theory is absolutely correct. Just as different problems around your house require different tools, different questions in international relations require different theories. Relying on one theory to the exclusion of all others is rather like a plumber arriving to fix a problem at your house armed only with a hammer! Chapter 6 looks at the English School – a broad approach to international relations that embraces the idea of an international society and the importance of history. Chapter 7 looks at what used to be the dominant theory of international relations: Liberalism. This focuses on ways in which we can manage international conflict and cooperation in a highly interdependent world. Chapter 8 discusses Realism, which focuses on why conflicts persist in international affairs. This single-minded focus has led to a compelling model of international behaviour, but one that ignores many aspects of IR that are not concerned with conflict and war. Chapter 9 introduces Marxist theories of international relations. Marxism focuses on the relationship between economic and political power, opening the way for new types of analysis that neither Liberalism nor Realism can achieve. Chapter 10 looks at Constructivism and gender theory, two newer theories of IR which focus on aspects of IR that mainstream

models like the English School, Realism, Liberalism and Marxism tend to ignore. Finally, Chapter 11 introduces international political economy, a relatively new sub-discipline of international relations that focuses on the relationship between politics and economics and includes – but is not limited to – ideas introduced by Marxism.

Part 4 looks at some of the key global concepts in international relations: the state, war, peace, power, global governance and new definitions of security. Each of these concepts has been central to the history of IR and continues to have a very real impact on current events around the globe. Chapters 12 to 15 will look at the state, war, peace and power in turn by tracing their historical development, defining them in the modern world and considering their impact on the world in which we live. Chapter 16 considers the best ways to manage the increasingly complex network of local, regional and global relationships that define modern IR. Chapter 17 turns to the new security threats facing international society, moving beyond state security to think about instability stemming from climate change, disease, energy insecurity and demographics.

Part 5 concludes this course by asking you to use your newfound skills to analyse IR literature, a set of ongoing territorial disputes and the overall order of international society. Chapter 18 features an essay by Professor Michael Cox, in which he argues that China's rising power faces several constraints that may limit its rise as a great power. Chapter 19 asks you to analyse territorial disputes in the East and South China seas and recommend policy directions to manage the region's Hobbesian form of anarchy. Chapter 20 concludes the course by reflecting on the various types of order that coexist in international society – from Realist polarity to Liberal interdependence and beyond.

Essential reading

The textbook for **IR1011 Introduction to international relations** can be purchased using the following bibliographical information:

Baylis, J., S. Smith and P. Owens *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) sixth edition [ISBN 9780199656172]. (Hereafter 'BSO'.)

As you work your way through the next 20 chapters, you will be prompted to read specific sections from this textbook. **Unless otherwise stated, all Essential readings for this guide come from the textbook**. All of the page numbers listed in the Essential reading boxes in this guide refer to the edition of the textbook listed above. A new edition may have been published by the time you study this course. You can use a more recent edition of the book by using the detailed chapter and section headings and the index to identify relevant readings. Also check the VLE regularly for updated guidance on using new editions.

You can deepen your understanding of specific themes and concepts by accessing the following book via the **IR1011 Introduction to international relations** page on the virtual learning environment (VLE):

Griffiths, M., T. O'Callaghan and S.C. Roach *International relations: the key concepts*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) second edition [ISBN 9780415774376]. (Hereafter GCR.)

Any Essential readings that cannot be found in your textbook will be available either in the Online Library (OL), the course's VLE page or online. These include:

Galtung, Johan 'Violence, peace and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6(3) 1969, pp.166–91. (OL)

Hirst, Paul 'The eighty years' crisis, 1919–1999 – power', *Review of International Studies* 24(5) 1998, pp. 133–48. (OL)

Hobbes, Thomas, and Edwin Curley *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*. Vol. 8348. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994) [ISBN 9780872201774] Chapter XIII. Available at: https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu /xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/748/leviathan.pdf?sequence=1

Human Security Report Project *Human Security Report 2009/2010: the causes of peace and the shrinking costs of war*. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) [ISBN 9780199860814]. www.hsrgroup.org/docs/Publications/HSR20092010/20092010HumanSecurityReport-CoverPage.pdf

Human Security Report Project *Human Security Report 2013 – The decline in global violence: evidence, explanation and contestation* (Vancouver: Human Security Press, 2013) [ISBN 9780991711116].

Medcalfe, R. and R. Heinrichs *Crisis and confidence: major powers and maritime security in Indo-Pacific Asia.* (Double Bay, Australia: The Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011) [ISBN 9780987057051]. www.lowyinstitute.org/files/pubfiles/Medcalf_and_Heinrichs%2C_Crisis_and_confidence-revised.pdf

Xiang, L. 'China and the "Pivot"', *Survival* 54(5) October–November 2012, pp.113–28. (OL)

Further reading

Please note that you are not required to read all of these sources. Once you complete your Essential readings, feel free to use these sources to justify your claims and deepen your understanding of a given IR topic. To help you read extensively, you have free access to the VLE and University of London Online Library (see below).

General overview

Brown, C. and K. Ainley *Understanding international relations*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) fourth edition [ISBN 9780230213111]. A concise, if somewhat advanced, text, focusing on the relationship between international relations theories and 20th-century events.

Burchill, S., A. Linklater, R. Devetak et al. *Theories of international relations*. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) fourth edition [ISBN 9780230219236]. An edited volume with individual chapters that deal with the major theoretical approaches to the study of international relations.

Cox, M. and D. Stokes (eds) *US foreign policy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) second edition [ISBN 9780199585816]. An edited volume with chapters by leading thinkers in the field, covering all aspects of US foreign policy, including its relationships with the different regions of the world.

Dunne, T., M. Cox and K. Booth (eds) *The eighty years' crisis: international relations 1919–1999*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) [ISBN 9780521667838]. A comprehensive edited volume examining the influence of 20th-century events on the development of IR.

Halliday, F. *Rethinking international relations*. (London: MacMillan, 1994) [ISBN 9780333589052]. A concise, well-written and thought-provoking introduction to the study of IR, covering a broad range of approaches, debates and historical events.

Books

Angel, N. *The great illusion: a study of the relation of military power to national advantage*. (London: Obscure Books, 2006) [ISBN 9781846645419].

Abdollohian M., C. Alsharabati, B. Efird et al. *Power transitions: strategies for the 21st century*. (Chatham House: Seven Bridges Press, 2000) [ISBN 9781889119434].

Beeson, M. and N. Bisley *Issues in 21st century world politics*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) [ISBN 9780230594524].

Booth, K. T. Dunne and M. Cox *How might we live? Global ethics in the new century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780521005203].

Brown, C, T. Nardin and N. Rengger *International relations in political thought: texts from the ancient Greeks to the First World War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780521575706].

Bull, H. *The anarchical society*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) third edition [ISBN 9780333985878].

Butler, S. *War is a racket*. (Port Townsend, USA: Feral Publishing, 2003) [ISBN 9780922915866].

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Chomsky, N. *The new military humanism: lessons from Kosovo*. (London: Pluto Press, 1999) [ISBN 9780745316338].

Clark, I. *Legitimacy in international society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) [ISBN 9780199219193].

Cox, M., K. Booth and T. Dunne *The interregnum: controversies in world politics 1989–1999*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780521785099]. Note: this is the book form of a special issue of the *Review of International Studies* 25(5) 1999.

Cox, M., T. Dunne and K. Booth *Empires, systems and states: great transformations in international politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780521016865]. Note: this is the book form of a special issue of the *Review of International Studies* 27(5) 2001.

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Doyle, M. *Liberal peace: selected essays*. (London: Routledge, 2012) [ISBN 9780415781756].

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Dunne, T., M. Kurki and S. Smith (eds) *International relations theories: discipline and diversity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) second edition [ISBN 9780199548866].

Falkner, R. *Business power and conflict in international environmental politics.* (London: Palgrave, 2008) [ISBN 9780230572522].

Flint, C. *Introduction to geopolitics*. (London: Routledge, 2011) second edition [ISBN 9780415667739].

Frieden, J., D. Lake and L. Broz (eds) *International political economy: perspectives on global power and wealth.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010) fifth edition [ISBN 9780415222792].

Friedman, T. *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century.* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2005) [ISBN 9780374292881].

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World Commission on Environment and Development *Our common future*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) [ISBN 9780192820808].

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Online study resources

In addition to the subject guide and your Essential reading, it is important to take advantage of the study resources that are available online, including on the VLE and in the Online Library.

You can access the VLE, the Online Library and your University of London email account via the Student Portal at: http://my.londoninternational. ac.uk

You should have received your login details for the Student Portal with your official offer, which was emailed to the address that you gave on your application form. You have probably already logged in to the Student Portal in order to register. As soon as you have registered, you will automatically have been granted access to the VLE, Online Library and your fully functional University of London email account.

If you forget your login details at any point, please click on the 'Forgotten your password' link on the login page.

The VLE

The VLE, which complements this subject guide, has been designed to enhance your learning experience, providing additional support and a sense of community. It forms an important part of your study experience with the University of London and you should access it regularly.

The VLE provides a range of resources for EMFSS courses:

- Self-testing activities: Doing these allows you to test your own understanding of subject material.

- Electronic study materials: The printed materials that you receive from the University of London are available to download, including updated reading lists and references.

- Past examination papers and *Examiners' commentaries*: These provide advice on how each examination question might best be answered.

- A student discussion forum: This is an open space for you to discuss interests and experiences, seek support from your peers, work collaboratively to solve problems and discuss subject material.

- Videos: There are recorded academic introductions to the subject, interviews and debates and, for some courses, audio-visual tutorials and conclusions.

- Recorded lectures: For some courses, where appropriate, the sessions from previous years' Study Weekends have been recorded and made available.

- Study skills: Expert advice on preparing for examinations and developing your digital literacy skills.

- Feedback forms.

Some of these resources are available for certain courses only, but we are expanding our provision all the time and you should check the VLE regularly for updates.

Making use of the Online Library

The Online Library contains a huge array of journal articles and other resources to help you read widely and extensively.

To access the majority of resources via the Online Library you will either need to use your University of London Student Portal login details, or you will be required to register and use an Athens login: http://tinyurl.com/ollathens

The easiest way to locate relevant content and journal articles in the Online Library is to use the **Summon** search engine.

If you are having trouble finding an article listed in a reading list, try removing any punctuation from the title, such as single quotation marks, question marks and colons.

For further advice, please see the online help pages: www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/summon/about.php

Examination advice

Important: the information and advice given here are based on the examination structure used at the time this guide was written. Please note that subject guides may be used for several years. Because of this, we strongly advise you to always check both the current *Regulations* for relevant information about the examination, and the VLE where you should be advised of any forthcoming changes. You should also carefully check the rubric/instructions on the paper you actually sit and follow those instructions.

Over the course of three hours, students must answer **any four** of the 12 essay questions provided. These cover the main topics in this syllabus, and test your ability to apply the theories and concepts of IR to a range of historical and policy-based questions. All answers should be written in the form of an essay, with a thesis statement and evidence organised in a series of paragraphs that support your conclusions.

As you will learn as you work through the subject guide, there are very rarely any definitive answers in IR. Theories, concepts, history and policy are contested by students, professors and practitioners. As discussed in the examination preparation materials on the VLE, your examiners look for well-crafted arguments that use IR concepts and theories to analyse real-world events. Before sitting your examination, be sure that you have worked through every chapter of this subject guide. You must be familiar with the Essential readings for each chapter. These can be supplemented with material from the news, the Further readings, various printed media and other literary sources. A Sample examination paper and *Examiners' commentary* can be found on the VLE.

Remember, it is important to check the VLE for:

- up-to-date information on examinations and assessments for this course, and
- past examination papers and *Examiners' commentaries,* which will give you advice on how to approach and answer examination questions in IR1011.

Part 1: Introduction

Notes

Chapter 1: The origins of international relations

> The armistices has been signed and the statesmen of the nations will soon assemble to undertake the task of concluding the pact of Peace which we all hope will herald in a new world, freed from the menace of war... Old problems must be confronted in a new spirit; insular and vested prejudices must be removed; understanding and toleration need to be greatly developed. It is an immense task and a myriad of agencies will be required to discharge it. Among these must be our universities...
>
> *Major David Davies, MP, in a letter to Sir John Williams, President of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, donating £20,000 for the establishment of the Wilson Chair in International Politics, 1920.*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- introduce the 20th-century origins of international relations as an academic subject
- highlight IR's deep roots in Western political philosophy, namely in the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Karl Marx
- use the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Marx to analyse current issues in IR.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- describe the influence of the First World War on the development of early IR
- discuss the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Karl Marx
- apply Hobbesian, Lockean and Marxist concepts to analyse aspects of the Syrian civil war.

Essential reading

Hobbes, T. and E. Curley *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*. Vol. 8348. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994) Chapter XIII. Available at: https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/748/leviathan.pdf?sequence=1

Hobden, S. and R. Wyn Jones 'Marxist theories of international relations' in BSO, Chapter 9.

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Further reading and works cited

Buzan, B. and R. Little 'Why international relations has failed as an intellectual project and what to do about it', *Millennium* 30(1) 2001, pp.19–39.

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Chapter synopsis

- International relations emerged as an academic discipline in the years following the First World War.

- The tragedy of the First World War encouraged early IR thinkers to focus on finding ways to build a more peaceful world.

- Subsequent international conflicts, including the Second World War, have changed the way that IR thinkers view world politics and have expanded the range of their interests.

- IR can trace its intellectual roots as far back as the fifth century BC.

- Many in IR continue to be influenced by Thomas Hobbes' views on anarchy, order and the state of nature, largely due to the absence of a world government.

- John Locke's impact on IR comes from his belief in natural rights and his view that the relationship between an individual and a state is governed by a social contract.

- Karl Marx changed the study of political philosophy by emphasising the role of economics as a driving force in human history.

- The ideas of these political philosophers can be used to analyse various aspects of current events, such as the causes of and potential solutions to the Syrian civil war.

Introduction: IR is born from the ashes of war

Compared to other academic subjects, like history or philosophy, international relations is a young discipline. Its first dedicated university professorship was not founded until 1920, when David Davis MP donated £20,000 to the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth. As you can see in the quotation that begins this chapter, the original goal of IR was simple: to 'herald a new world, freed from the menace of war'. After four

years of slaughter between 1914 and 1918, David Davis, like many others, hoped that humanity had learned its lesson and that the First World War might actually be the 'war to end all wars'.

Davis's dream was not to be. Again and again since 1918, communities, states and regions have been bloodied and destroyed by organised political violence. Understanding the causes of – and possible solutions to – this violence remains one of IR's main goals. Indeed, IR's growth in Western universities is directly connected to the simple and terrible fact that in the first half of the 20th century, the world experienced two devastating and protracted global conflicts: the First World War (1914–1918) and the Second World War (1939–1945). These wars cost tens of millions of lives, led to revolutionary social change around the world, nearly eliminated entire human populations from the face of the earth, facilitated the rise of new great powers and led to the demise of others. The attempt to make sense of these hugely destructive wars has been at the heart of IR since it first emerged as a taught subject in 1920.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 3, Sections 1 and 2, pp.51–53.

Activity

Complete the table below by listing events from the first half of the 20th century that have influenced key topics in IR. This list will be useful when you prepare essays and examination answers related to these topics.

IR topic	Associated 20th-century event
Causes of war	(Example: the unjust peace settlement of 1918–1919)
Conditions for peace	
Effects of economics on international rtelations	
Human rights	

The interwar years (1919–1939): the twenty years' crisis

If war gave birth to academic IR, the establishment of peace was its first mission. When David Davies funded the first permanent academic post in IR, he made it clear that the position was not to be used for vague theorising. Rather, it was to help scholars engage in practical thinking that would make the world a safer and more stable place. Many diplomats, politicians and scholars at the time imagined that war could be made obsolete by mutually agreed rules of behaviour and the creation of international organisations like the League of Nations. Instead, the treaties that ended the First World War settlement led to what E.H. Carr calls **the twenty years' crisis** – a period of political, economic and social unrest that spanned the interwar years between 1919 and 1939. Carr argues that the peace settlements of 1918–1919 contained the seeds for an even greater conflict. He is especially critical of the idealistic US President Woodrow Wilson, whose Fourteen Points were the basis for many of the

treaties. As a seasoned British diplomat, Carr saw that powerful revisionist states like Germany and Japan were dissatisfied with the **status quo** created after the Great War and pushed hard to change the international system in their favour. Like many of his day, he hoped that German and Japanese ambitions might be contained through a strategy of diplomatic concession called **appeasement**. The status quo, he argued, was not sacred, and 'peaceful change' was preferable to war. In the end, Carr's policy proved to be unrealistic. Germany and Japan were not satisfied through appeasement. Instead, their policies of conquest and expansion continued, drawing Britain and France (in September 1939), the USSR (in June 1941) and the USA (in December 1941) into the most destructive war in history. As you will see in Part 2 of this subject guide, the Second World War and the Cold War that followed on its heels had an enormous impact on the development of international relations – stripping away much of the idealism that defined the subject in its earliest days and broadening the scope of its interests to include questions about human rights and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

Summary

- International relations emerged as an academic discipline in the years following the First World War.
- The tragedy of the First World War encouraged early IR thinkers to focus on finding ways to build a more peaceful world.
- Subsequent international conflicts, including the Second World War, changed the way that IR thinkers viewed world politics and expanded the range of their interests.

Standing on the shoulders of giants: international political philosophy before 1920

As the study of international relations grew in Europe and the Americas after 1920, it was able to draw on a much older tradition of Western political philosophy that stretches back to the fifth century BC. These thinkers and writers are too many for us to describe in any one course – much less one section of one chapter. However, three writers stand out from the pack and deserve special attention: Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704) and Karl Marx (1818–1883). All three pre-date the formal discipline of international relations. However, their ideas have played an important role in shaping the subject – laying the groundwork for many of IR's most important concepts and theories. What follows are three brief sketches of their main ideas and a glimpse of some of the ways in which they have had a direct impact on the evolution of international relations.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1672)

Thomas Hobbes lived during the violence and instability of the English civil war (1642–1651). Though we need not go into its finer details here, the civil war was fought between supporters of King Charles II and the leaders of parliament – each of whom believed that they should represent the highest power in the land. Over nine years, the civil war cost well over 100,000 lives out of a total population of just over 5,000,000. Hobbes witnessed the immense suffering of the people around him. It was not unusual for bands of unpaid soldiers to wander the countryside, taking what they wanted and killing anyone who stood in their way. Chaos stalked the land and death was never far away. This experience gave

Hobbes a particular outlook on the relationship between government and the individual – which is the focus of his most important book, *The Leviathan*, published in 1651. In it he claims that all humans are relatively equal in their ability to harm and injure one another. One might be a little stronger and one might be a little quicker, but even the strongest man must sleep and even the quickest woman must stop to eat and drink. This makes all humans vulnerable to attack by another human. In a world without a government to enforce order – a condition that Hobbes calls the **state of nature** – every human must be vigilant against threats to their survival. A world without government, he claims, forces humanity into a constant state of war because there is no way to trust in the good or peaceful intentions of others. We must always be on our guard lest we be attacked. This condition – in which there is no ruler or judge who can resolve disputes and establish security – is called **anarchy**. In an anarchic world, Hobbes argues that our lives must revolve around survival, leaving no time for agriculture, the arts, sciences or international relations! In conditions of anarchy, Hobbes says, 'the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'[1]

[1] *Hobbes and Curley (1994) Chapter XIII.*

▶▶ **Stop and read**: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter XIII.

An online version of the text is available on the VLE.

Activity

Do you agree with Hobbes' views on anarchy and the need for order in politics? Can you think of any situations in which anarchy is preferable to order? Post your responses on the VLE discussion forum.

The only remedy for this unfortunate situation is the establishment of a government capable of replacing the state of nature with **order** – a system of rules and laws. This, Hobbes continues, is best achieved by granting one ruler unqualified political, spiritual, economic and social power over a population. This ruler is the Leviathan of the book's title, and is primarily responsible for replacing anarchy with order and, in so doing, replacing war with peace.

As you will see in later chapters of this subject guide, Hobbes continues to influence many IR thinkers. His ideas have remained particularly relevant in international relations because of the simple fact that there is no global government that can make and enforce decisions on behalf of the planet. Instead, the world is divided into smaller political communities – states – that pursue their own goals in international affairs. Hobbes' powerful logic, combined with the continuing persistence of war between states, has led many thinkers to embrace Hobbes' fear of anarchy and its effects on human development. As we will see in the later chapters of this subject guide, several strands of IR theory continue to embrace a deeply Hobbesian view of **human nature** and the world in which we live – fearing the absence of government, distrusting the motives of others and seeing almost any form of order as preferable to anarchy.

John Locke (1632–1704)

John Locke lived a generation after Hobbes. As a result, the defining experience of his life was not the civil war but the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688. In that year, the English king – James II of the House of Stuart – was replaced in a largely bloodless coup led by Protestant members of parliament who opposed the monarch's Catholic beliefs and alliance with France. The Glorious Revolution saw the last Stuart king

replaced by William and Mary of the House of Orange. As such, Locke's opinion of humanity and government is considerably less negative than Hobbes'. Whereas Hobbes sees human nature as essentially aggressive and greedy, Locke thinks of humans in a state of nature more positively. According to Locke, all humans have **natural rights** to life, liberty and property. These rights predate the formation of governments, so governments must uphold them if they wish to remain legitimate in the eyes of their subjects. Subjects, in turn, consent to government power only when their rights are being protected. Subjects withdraw consent when their rights are violated – as parliament did when it withdrew consent from King James II and invited William and Mary to take the English throne in 1688.

Government, according to Locke's theory, is based on a **social contract** between rulers and their subjects. If kings, generals, prime ministers or theocrats fail to uphold their side of the social contract by violating the natural rights of their subjects, those subjects are immediately freed from their duty to obey government decisions. This means that subjects have the right and duty to rebel against rulers when the latter fail to uphold their responsibilities. While Hobbes sees government as something that needs to be imposed on humanity in order to save it from the dangers of anarchy, John Locke sees government as something that emerges out of agreements between a population and the rulers that claim leadership over them. A government that does not deal with its population justly will not survive once its subjects stop recognising its **legitimacy** and withdraw their consent from the social contract. This is how Locke explained the civil war and the Glorious Revolution. Thus, according to Locke, political order must be based on a ruler's respect for the rights of his or her people rather than being something that a ruler imposes unilaterally. In the short term, a ruler might be able to maintain an unjust order through violence and coercion. However, only an order that enjoys the consent of the governed can avoid constant rebellion and thereby remain stable over longer periods of time. According to John Locke, political **justice** is a precondition for any form of lasting political order.

John Locke continues to have a large following in international relations. His ideas about the social contract and the responsibilities of rulers towards their subjects have contributed to a number of the theories that you will study in Part 3, particularly Liberalism. Locke is also credited with popularising the idea of natural rights – today referred to as human rights and certainly one of the main interests of modern IR. Finally, Locke's view that human nature can be improved by the use of reason to learn from past mistakes has found a voice in regime theory, which seeks to solve international problems through cooperation between international actors. This will be discussed in greater length in Chapter 16.

Activity

Using the BBC's online resources, look into the events leading up to the Syrian civil war. Links to relevant articles are available on the VLE. Now think about the following questions:

- How would John Locke explain the collapse of support for the Assad government among certain segments of the Syrian population?
- What solutions might Locke propose for the continuing bloodshed?

Post your thoughts on the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Karl Marx was born over a century after the death of John Locke. Coming of age during the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, Marx was concerned with different questions to those that worried either Locke or Hobbes. In particular, he was interested in how the unequal distribution of wealth among factory workers and factory owners might impact on the political systems of the day. Marx interpreted the world through the lens of **materialism** – the belief that any understanding of political community must be based on the physical and economic conditions in which that community exists. Economics is therefore the key that Marx used to unlock his political analysis. He also believed that history is dialectical. That is to say, the story of humanity is shaped by clashes of opposing ideas and groups that produce new historical trends. Marx combines materialism and the dialectical approach by focusing on **class conflict** between modern society's two main socio-economic groups – the bourgeoisie, which controls the way goods are made and distributed, and the proletariat, which sells its labour to the bourgeoisie in return for a small portion of the profits resulting from their work. Politics, he concludes, is merely a vehicle used by the wealthy to protect their economic interests at home and abroad. Wars are fought to access new resources and markets or to protect existing ones. Trade is pursued to benefit bourgeois owners rather than proletarian workers. Governments are tools in the hands of the wealthiest members of society. According to Marx, the laws that they pass are intended to protect their own bourgeois interests against proletarian uprisings at home and against competition from other states' bourgeoisies abroad.

Applying Marx's political philosophy to international relations fell to Vladimir Lenin in the years before he became the leader of the Soviet Union. Lenin identified **imperialism** – the belief in the desirability of acquiring colonies and territories overseas – as the highest form of **capitalism**, the economic system that dominates global production and trade. According to Lenin, the race for African colonies among European states in the late 19th century was not a patriotic quest, but an economic one, one that would ensure access to Africa's natural resources for European industry and to open colonial markets to goods and services controlled by the British, French, German, Belgian or Portuguese bourgeoisie. For example, French Indochina (today Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) was the key supplier of rubber to the French auto industry until countries in the region gained independence in the 1950s. Imperialism also allows a national bourgeoisie – be it British, Russian or American – to use colonial resources to reward loyal proletarians at home. The British were able to provide their workers with access to cheap tea and cotton from India, subsidised by the export of Indian opium to China. Thus, Indian and Chinese workers suffered in order to help the British bourgeoisie control proletarians at home – just one example of how imperialism served to stabilise capitalism at home while expanding it abroad.

Even though the end of the Cold War saw the collapse of many Communist regimes around the world, Marxism itself remained an important source of intellectual inspiration for IR writers of a critical disposition. His ideas have contributed to our understanding of the world around us. They have shone a light on the role of economic actors – including transnational companies (TNCs) – in international affairs. Marx's ideas also resonate with analysts looking at the relationship between the industrialised 'core' of the global economy and its much poorer 'periphery'. While the former produces high-value goods and services, the latter is largely limited to

producing low-value raw materials that are supplied to industrial interests located in or owned by bourgeois members of 'core' economies. This reinforces the periphery's secondary status in the world capitalist system, creating a widening gap between the richest and poorest citizens of the world and leads to economic and political crises when the world's poor rebel against their unequal position in the global economy. These points will be discussed much greater detail in Chapter 9 of this subject guide.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, 'Case Study 1: Occupy!', p.149.

Once you have read the case study, consider the following question: how would Karl Marx explain governments' decisions to bail out banks and financial institutions with taxpayers' funds after the 2008 global financial crisis?

Application: using political philosophy to understand the world

The study of international relations engages with classical philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Marx because their ideas teach us about the world we live in. Their theories highlight different aspects of IR. Without their theories, we are limited to simple narrative explanations of what happened first, then second, then third. Narrative explanations, though useful, do not explain **why** an event occurs or **how** it will influence events in the future. Theories such as those presented by Hobbes, Locke and Marx give you the chance to draw general conclusions from specific evidence. This common form of analysis allows you to make statements about the global political and economic systems based on a limited set of examples. For example, you may choose to answer a general question like 'why do wars happen' by studying the causes of individual conflicts. It is important to note that this type of reasoning produces **probable** instead of **definite** answers. This means that two general explanations for a specific instance of war can both be partially correct insofar as each explains a different aspect of the same phenomenon.

A lot of people find this very annoying. They would rather have definitive answers than long lists of possible ones. Unfortunately, the search for absolute truth in IR is an unrealistic goal. A definitive answer to any question requires complete and undisputed evidence. This is simply impossible in a subject as vast and contested as IR. You simply cannot know everything that is happening in the world, much less everything that has ever happened. Given our limited knowledge, we use theories in the same way that we use maps to navigate around the planet. They provide us with simplified models of the world in which we live, and highlight the parts of the world that we have to know about to get from Point A to Point B. Every theory of IR highlights and ignores different things about international affairs. Hobbes' ideas of anarchy and order highlight the need for a supreme ruler to pass laws and settle disputes. Locke's ideas highlight the contractual nature of the individual's relationship with the state and explain why unjust orders tend to collapse into chaos. Marx's ideas highlight the role of economic classes in political relations, explaining political power by reference to actors' positions in a socio-economic hierarchy.

International analysis requires at least two elements: knowledge of the phenomenon being analysed, and a theoretical 'map' to focus your study on the phenomenon's most essential elements. In Part 3 of this subject guide, you will use different IR theories to analyse various aspects of the First World War. For now, we will focus on a more contemporary issue to

see what Hobbes, Locke and Marx can teach us. The Syrian civil war has been raging since street protests escalated into armed resistance to the government of Bashar Al-Assad in the second half of 2011. In the years since, this tragic conflict has provided ample opportunities for IR analysis.

Thomas Hobbes

Were Hobbes alive and doing political analysis today, he would likely focus on Syria's overriding need for a government capable of establishing and maintaining a system of order within the borders of the state. Where such a government does not exist, Hobbes would argue that one needs to come into being – regardless of its political agenda. After all, populations prefer some form of order – however unjust it is – to anarchy. Hobbes would find ample evidence of this in the history of the Syrian conflict. In regions where the Assad government cannot maintain its power, other governments have taken control of people and territories. Central Syria has fallen to the self-styled 'Islamic State' (IS). Most people would call their form of order – based on a reactionary and theologically dubious reading of Islam – unjust. However, they represent a form of order in an otherwise chaotic situation. Hobbes would maintain, therefore, that any attempt to rid central Syria of their influence must include a plan to immediately replace their form of order with one supported by another political hegemon. Otherwise, the people would be thrown back into the dog-eat-dog world of anarchy and would be even worse off than they are now. As the United States and its allies learned in Iraq after 2003, it is not enough to defeat an enemy on the battlefield and remove their government. Victory must be followed by the quick reestablishment of a powerful state or it will prove to be a mirage as populations and territories fall into Hobbes' state of nature, where the life of man is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'

John Locke

John Locke's ideas focus on different aspects of the Syrian civil war. Instead of Hobbes' focus on the need for a powerful government to overcome the threat of anarchy, Locke's theory of natural rights and the social contract highlights the causes of the protests that led to the civil war. Protests began against the Assad government in March 2011 as part of a wider phenomenon in the Arab world – the Arab Spring. This movement sought to oust governments who failed to protect their people's natural rights to life, liberty and property. The Assad government's response to these protests was violent – opening fire on crowds of protesters, thereby increasing calls for Assad's removal at home and abroad. Locke would point out that this response actually strengthened the hand of those who opposed Assad's government by delegitimising the regime and thereby freeing the population from their obligation to accept the political order he had created. Locke would likely make a similar prediction regarding IS, whose system of order is likewise rooted in a system that regularly violates the natural rights of its population to life, liberty and property. Although IS may be able to maintain control through short-term coercion, Locke would argue that their long-term survival as a government is highly unlikely on the grounds that they have not established a social contract with their subjects. Only the Kurdish rebels in Syria's northeast have any claim to such a social contract, and they are therefore the most likely to form an effective and legitimate government that rules with the consent of its population. Thus, Locke would probably be pessimistic about the immediate chances for a restoration of effective government in all but one corner of Syria.

Karl Marx

Finally, Karl Marx's ideas highlight a completely different set of issues relating to the Syrian civil war. Instead of focusing on questions of order and justice, Marx would focus on the role of class conflict in Syria. He might argue that the battle for control of the Syrian state began as a struggle between two segments of the Syrian bourgeoisie – Assad's Alawites and their Shi'a, Druze and Christian allies against the economic leaders of the majority Sunni Muslim population – for control of the levers of government. Subsequent events have highlighted the importance of this sort of materialist analysis. After all, the only viable governments outside of the regions still controlled by the Assad regime are the Islamic State and the Kurdish assemblies of northeastern Syria. Each of these groups has been able to maintain itself through access to **capital** – defined as any form of wealth, including money, resources and labour. The Assad regime is supported by international allies with significant economic interests in Syria, particularly the Russian Federation. Apart from large military contracts with Assad's government, Russia is also his main international partner in infrastructure and tourism projects. This provides a materialist explanation for Vladimir Putin's support of Assad – that he is protecting the economic interests of the Russian bourgeoisie in the region. The Islamic State is an interesting case for Marx's ideas insofar as it claims to be founded on faith and belief, but is sustained by a combination of oil and gas revenues on the black market, the sale of antiquities looted from cultural sites, and foreign aid from governments hoping to cash in on its political influence when and if the Assad regime falls. Opponents of the Islamic State are now working to shut off these sources of capital – potentially the most effective way to undermine IS's ability to maintain domestic order within their territory and defend themselves against external aggression. Finally, the Kurdish assemblies of northeastern Syria receive the bulk of their capital from their ethnic allies in the Kurdish Regional Government of northern Iraq, which has access to substantial oil and gas reserves that it can trade legally on the international market. Thus, Marx's ideas provide for a novel analysis of the Syrian civil war – highlighting the importance of capital sources to each of the groups claiming governing authority over all or part of the country and recommending a strategy of economic disruption for international actors hoping to undermine one or more of them.

Summary

- IR can trace its intellectual roots as far back as the political philosophers of the fifth century BC.

- Many IR thinkers continue to be influenced by Thomas Hobbes' views on anarchy, order and the state of nature, partly due to the absence of a world government.

- John Locke's impact on IR comes from his belief in natural rights and his view that the relationship between an individual and a state is governed by a social contract.

- Karl Marx changed the study of political philosophy by emphasising the role of economics as a driving force in human history.

- The ideas of these political philosophers can be used to analyse various aspects of current events, such as ongoing Syrian civil war.

Conclusion

International relations is a relatively young academic subject. Its first departments were set up after the First World War and focused almost exclusively on the best ways to avoid another conflict as destructive as the one that raged across the planet between 1914 and 1918. Despite its youth, IR can trace many of its main ideas back to classical sources of Western political philosophy. This chapter has introduced three such sources: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Karl Marx. The ideas developed by these men provided IR with a springboard for its later development – leading to many of the more developed theories that you will learn about in Part 3 of this subject guide. These ideas – be they Hobbes' rejection of anarchy, Locke's call for natural rights or Marx's critique of economic power – remain important today because they highlight aspects of the world around us. They allow us to look beyond historical narratives to ask **why** events unfold as they do and **how** events might develop in the future. This allows IR to analyse the world through inductive reasoning, drawing general conclusions from specific evidence and thereby telling us more about the global political, economic and cultural systems in which we live today.

The next part of this subject guide will introduce you to some of the main historical developments that have helped to define IR over the past four and a half centuries.

Overview of chapter

- International relations emerged as an academic discipline in the years following the First World War.
- The tragedy of the First World War encouraged early IR thinkers to focus on finding ways to build a more peaceful world.
- Subsequent international conflicts, including the Second World War, have changed the way that IR views world politics and have expanded the range of its interests.
- IR can trace its intellectual roots as far back as the fifth century BC.
- Many in IR continue to be influenced by Thomas Hobbes' views on anarchy, order and the state of nature, largely due to the absence of a world government.
- John Locke's impact on IR comes from his belief in natural rights and his view that the relationship between an individual and a state is governed by a social contract.
- Karl Marx changed the study of political philosophy by emphasising the role of economics as a driving force in human history.
- The ideas of these political philosophers can be used to analyse various aspects of current events, such as causes of and potential solutions to the Syrian civil war.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- describe the influence of the First World War on the development of early IR
- discuss the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Karl Marx

- apply Hobbesian, Lockean and Marxist concepts to analyse aspects of the Syrian civil war.

Chapter vocabulary

- the twenty years' crisis
- status quo
- appeasement
- state of nature
- anarchy
- order
- human nature
- natural rights
- social contract
- legitimacy
- justice
- materialism
- class conflict
- imperialism
- capitalism
- capital

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. What impact did the First World War have on the development of IR as an academic subject?

2. What solution does Thomas Hobbes' thinking propose for the problem of anarchy in the modern international system?

3. Does John Locke agree with Thomas Hobbes' claim that any form of political order is preferable to anarchy?

4. Why do many IR thinkers call Karl Marx a **dialectical materialist**?

Part 2: The history of international relations

Notes

Chapter 2: Empires and international society from 1500 to 1914

By 1900 the peoples of Europe and European stock overseas dominated the globe. They did so in many ways, some explicit and some implicit, but the qualifications matter less than the general fact... This was a unique development in world history. For the first time, one civilization established itself as a leader worldwide.

Roberts, J.M. *The Penguin history of the world.* (London: Penguin, 2007) p.789.

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- introduce you to key trends in international history from 1500 to 1914
- explain Europe's central role in the creation of global international relations
- outline the historical background of European imperialism, the 'Long Peace' and the First World War
- familiarise you with the use of important IR terminology.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain some of the reasons why Europe emerged as the main driver of world politics by the end of the 19th century
- discuss competing explanations of the 'Long Peace' in Europe between 1814 and 1914
- evaluate different explanations of the causes of the First World War
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Armstrong, D. 'The evolution of international society' in BSO, Chapter 2.
'Hegemonic stability theory' in GCR.
'Imperialism' in GCR.

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Chapter synopsis

- Europe's imperial expansion after 1500 marks the beginning of a truly 'global' system of international relations.

- The relationships established during Europe's imperial era (1500–1918) were structured to benefit European states at the cost of non-European political communities, reinforcing European hegemony.

- The independence of the United States and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries did not diminish the hegemonic position of Europe's great powers in global affairs.

- The period of European history from 1814 to 1914 is commonly called the 'Long Peace' because of the relative stability that characterised its international affairs.

- British hegemony played a key role in maintaining the Long Peace throughout the 19th century.

- The rise of Germany, imperial competition in the non-European world, and the advent of modern industrial technologies have all been cited as causes of the First World War.

- The changes brought about by the First World War reshaped international affairs, brought the Long Peace to an end and heralded the start of the bloody 20th century.

Introduction

Making sense of the modern world is a daunting business. From the Arctic to the Sahara and from Beijing to Brasilia, the number of events brought to us every day by the global media is overwhelming. Given the sheer volume of this information, it is important to step back in order to understand how we arrived at this point in international history. In this chapter, you will be introduced to a few key trends in the history of international relations from the beginning of the modern era around 1500 to the eve of the First World War. Needless to say, this chapter will exclude more than it includes.

Instead of attempting a broad survey of four centuries of world history, we will focus on a few events that will inform your understanding of the present. These will be divided into three broad topics: the growth of truly 'global' affairs brought about by European imperialism, the management of 19th century international society on the European continent, and the place of the First World War at the end of Europe's era of global hegemony. If you want to understand the state of the world today, it is essential to look at the present through the prism of the past. After all, to echo a sentiment normally attributed to the great American writer Mark Twain, 'History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.'

Empires and hierarchy: Europe's imperial expansion

We should be more than a little critical of the ways in which some writers have traditionally thought about international relations: largely through European eyes, and mainly as something that only became seriously interesting when states emerged as the main actors in world affairs. IR does not begin and end with the rise of European states. Students of world politics must nevertheless confront an incontrovertible fact: that at some point between the late 14th and the 16th centuries, Europe – initially around the Mediterranean and later in states bordering the Atlantic – began to evolve in ways that changed the course of world history. In a very important sense, there was no such thing as a truly interconnected world before 1500. Only after the discovery of the Americas and Australasia by Europeans could we really start to think in such terms. As one of the great historians of world history, J.M. Roberts, has argued, the age of a true world history started in the 15th and 16th centuries and continued for another 400 years, by which time European domination of the globe was complete. In many ways, the age of European **imperialism** marked the birth of global international relations.

➤➤ **Stop and read:** 'Imperialism' in GCR.

The sources of Europe's dynamic expansion after 1500 have been hotly debated. Some explanations are technical: from Europe's medieval agricultural revolution to Renaissance innovations in shipbuilding and navigation that made oceanic travel more reliable. Other explanations are economic, attributing Europe's conquests to the rise of capitalism. According to historians like Eric Hobsbawm, it is no coincidence that Western Europe began to outperform other regions and push outwards just as feudalism began to break down at home and capitalism began to rise in its wake.[1] Whatever the reasons, it is fair to say that after 1500 the states of Western Europe no longer waited for things to happen **to them**. Instead, they went out to make things happen **to others**.

[1] *E. Hobsbawm,* The age of empire: 1875-1914. *(New York: Vintage Books, 1989) pp.13–17.*

The consequences for international relations were immense. Not only did imperial expansion make European states very rich, it also made their citizens feel distinctly superior to everybody else. It spawned a regular trade in West African slaves that spelled disaster for millions of chained souls and created immense fortunes for the few who lived and prospered from the unpaid labour of others. Like many historical processes that came before it, Europe's expansion simultaneously created wealth, poverty, technological progress and moral barbarity. It fostered invention and innovation, revolutionised communication, gave birth to modern geography and cartography, and was instrumental in the beginning of modern science. Its consequences were certainly not neutral from the point of view of global relationships. The world was refashioned by the European powers, sometimes for economic gain and

sometimes on grounds that made European conquest sound – at least to most Europeans – enlightened (in terms of 'raising the level' of 'native' civilisations), religiously necessary (in terms of spreading Christianity) or racially preordained (with 'inferior' groups and cultures being destined to be ruled by those of the supposedly 'superior' white variety). Significantly, few Europeans of the era opposed imperialism. Even liberals and socialists were counted among imperialism's supporters, arguing that there was something distinctively progressive about an economically and culturally superior Europe helping those less fortunate to join the modern world. Whatever the reasons behind it, European imperialism was the driving force behind the creation of today's global **international society**. It linked previously isolated political communities and economies through transoceanic networks of power, almost always to the benefit of the Europeans who dominated them. Imperialism and the empires it created did significant damage to societies and cultures around the world. It also provided the basis for modern **globalisation**, which links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations. Ironically, it was this very same process of globalisation that eventually led to the dissolution of these empires in the 20th century, as European ideas about statehood and national self-determination spread along globalised networks to encourage colonial liberation movements across the planet.

⇥ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 2, Section 4, pp.41–45.

Activity

This reading introduces the concept of 'international society' to explain the development of international relations between 1500 and 1914. Using the glossary in BSO and the definitions in GCR, complete the table below by (1) defining the terms in the left-hand column, and (2) identifying one or more events in international history that have influenced their evolution.

Norm, rule or practice	Definition	Related historical events
Diplomacy		
International law		
The balance of power		
Sovereignty		

The assault on the world by Europe's rising states had, by the late 19th century, created European world hegemony. There was opposition – first when the 13 American colonies defeated and expelled the British empire in the late 1700s, and again when most of Latin America expelled the Spanish and the Portuguese empires in the 1800s. However, these challenges did not upset Europe's global dominance. The USA made its revolution in the name of European – even English – ideals, and only welcomed immigrants from Europe into the 'New World' until the 20th century. In Latin America, liberation from Spain and Portugal did not lead to the end of Europe's influence over the continent. Indeed, its revolutions left the old European ruling classes of Latin America intact and allowed states like the USA and the UK to become even more deeply involved in regional affairs than they had been before the expulsion of Spanish and Portuguese power.

Dynamic imperial and commercial expansion made Europe the centre of the world by 1914. This revolutionary transformation did not occur without a great deal of organised violence, initially directed against those who were being subjected to European rule and later directed against competing European powers. Spain and Portugal may have been able to come to a 'gentleman's agreement' over the distribution of colonial possessions in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), but no such agreement was possible elsewhere. Instead, the **great powers** of Europe fought a series of bitter and prolonged wars to establish who would control the lion's share of the non-European world. Great Britain and Spain, for instance, were bitter enemies throughout the 16th century. Their long war, which concluded rather dramatically with the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588, was followed by struggle between the Dutch and the English. This only ended when the Dutch *Stadtholder* – at that time the Netherlands' head of state – was invited by Parliament to take the British throne as King William III in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The Anglo–Dutch commercial conflict was superseded in the 18th century by a long struggle between Great Britain and France. A series of Anglo-French wars continued on and off for just under a century, were fought across three continents, and only ended after the defeat of Napoleonic France at the hands of a grand coalition made up of Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria–Hungary in 1814.

Summary

- Europe's imperial expansion after 1500 marks the beginning of a truly 'global' system of international relations.

- The relationships established during Europe's imperial era (1500–1918) were structured to benefit European states at the cost of non-European political communities, reinforcing European hegemony.

- The independence of the United States and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries did not diminish the hegemonic position of Europe's great powers in global affairs.

From the Long Peace to the First World War

The extended period of international competition from 1500 to 1814 continues to fascinate IR scholars. Many of the discipline's most important concepts such as **balance of power** derive from this extraordinarily turbulent period. Following the defeat of Napoleonic France in 1814, however, something equally extraordinary occurred: a form of 'great power' peace broke out on the European continent. This lasted – with

a few interruptions – until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Different explanations have been advanced to explain this period of relative calm, often referred to as the **Long Peace**. These have ranged from the diplomatic efforts of the major powers at the Congress of Vienna through to war weariness – a believable hypothesis given that at least five million died across Europe between 1789 and 1814 – to the notion that, whatever else might have divided them, the great powers after 1814 shared some common values and interests that drove them to resolve most of their differences through **diplomacy** rather than through costly wars.

A number of scholars have used the modern idea of **hegemonic stability theory** to explain the 19th century's Long Peace. In this analysis, the key explanation for this period of extended stability is the structural imbalance that developed between Great Britain and the rest of the European powers, allowing Britain to establish a relatively stable system often referred to as the *Pax Britannica*, or the 'British Peace'. Using its naval and industrial superiority, Britain established a set of rules and practices for international politics and commerce. Unlike Napoleonic France, or so the hegemonic stability argument goes, Britain never sought to conquer mainland Europe. Instead, it focused on increasing its influence in the non-European world through trade and imperialism. This was accomplished by doing what Britain did best: pushing ahead industrially, investing its capital in all corners of the globe, protecting the free movement of world trade through its overwhelming naval superiority, and teaching others the benefits of commerce and industry over more dangerous – and less profitable – pursuits of war and conquest.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** 'Hegemonic stability theory' in GCR.

Activity

In a short paragraph, answer the following question: 'Do you think that the presence of a hegemonic state makes international society more or less prone to war? What examples would you use to justify your argument?'

Post your answer to the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, take a look at one of your peers' work. Did they reach the same conclusions you did? How does their analysis differ from yours?

How long the 19th century's Long Peace might have lasted became a hypothetical question when it collapsed at the start of the First World War in 1914. Several different schools of thought exist to explain this development. One sees the First World War as an inevitable consequence of changes in the European balance of power following the unification of Germany in 1871 and its rapid emergence as a serious economic and military challenger to British **hegemony**. This remains a commonly held view in IR, and is still important insofar as the rise of new powers tends to increase tensions between existing great powers. The rise of states (like China today, discussed further in Chapter 19 of this subject guide) makes this a worrying observation. Other writers and students of IR have broadened this thesis by arguing that Germany's less-than-peaceful rise on the back of Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's three wars of German unification (against Denmark in 1864, Austria–Hungary in 1866 and France in 1870) made armed conflict between Europe's states more likely by showing that war was an effective means by which to reach political goals.

Others in IR argue that the breakdown of the Long Peace could only have occurred within a larger set of changes that were taking place in the

international system. According to this thesis, we should focus less on changes brought about by the rise of new states, and more on the by-products of the global struggle for influence between the various great powers. In other words, the key to understanding the collapse of the old order may be found in the era's key international processes: capitalism and imperialism. This remains the view of most Marxists, espoused in a pamphlet *Imperialism* (1916) by the great revolutionary V.I. Lenin. Lenin argues that peace had become impossible by the beginning of the 20th century because of capitalists' determination to carve up the world through imperial competition. As states competed for more imperial power, they were increasingly likely to come into conflict. In some ways, this is also the view of more orthodox IR analysts like the so-called 'Realists'. Realists, who will be discussed more in Chapter 7 of this subject guide, see politics as an arena in which the 'winner-takes-all'. They reject Lenin's economic explanation of the First World War, but agree that the odds of the Long Peace surviving under conditions of increased imperial competition were slim. The end of the Long Peace was therefore no accident. Rather, for Marxists and Realists alike, it was the tragic result of conflicts inherent in an international system which could not be contained by deft diplomacy, carefully worded treaties or states' adherence to a shared set of practices and norms.

Finally, there are some in IR who insist that the Long Peace was only possible so long as military technology remained relatively primitive. The Industrial Revolution brought with it new naval technologies, improvement in munitions and a rapid acceleration in the destructive capacity of arms. It changed the way states fought wars, making new forms of war more and more destructive. This materialist theory claims that technology made war far more likely because it forced states into **arms races** as one state after another began to invest in these new weapons of death. Arms racing may not fully explain what finally happened in 1914. However, the rapid build-up of modern military technology in a world where war was still regarded as an effective route to political goals made armed conflict more likely, increasing the insecurity of states both great and small.

The First World War

Some have even wondered whether the First World War need ever have happened at all. This approach – going under the broad heading of counter-factualism – makes one major theoretical claim: that just because things happen in international affairs does not mean that they are inevitable. Even as we look for the causes of certain events, we need to remain sensitive to the fact that we are doing so after the events in question have already happened. Inevitability only exists in retrospect, and any claim that history had to unfold as it has should be viewed with a highly sceptical eye. This issue has been raised in relationship to the First World War by Niall Ferguson, whose thoughts on the First World War have been especially controversial.[2] Ferguson is highly critical of those who argue that the war was inevitable and suggests that the whole thing was an avoidable tragedy brought about by British miscalculations regarding the meaning of German actions in late 1914. Whether Ferguson is right or is just being mischievous cannot be settled here. However, he raises a crucial question that we will explore further in Chapter 13: how should IR explain the outbreak of war and what methods should we use to understand why wars happen?

[2] Ferguson (1998).

The First World War marked the end of one epoch in world politics and the beginning of another. As we saw in the first chapter of this subject guide, the First World War was only the first of three great conflicts that came to define the 20th century. In many ways, however, it was the most significant, not because it was the bloodiest – the Second World War lays claim to that dubious distinction, or the longest – the Cold War was 10 times as long, but because of the dramatic changes that it left in its wake. The list of these changes is long: the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the creation of the Soviet Union on the bones of the old Russian empire; the emergence of the United States of America onto the world stage; the shift of financial and economic power from London to New York; the break-up of the Austro–Hungarian and Ottoman empires in central Europe and the Middle East; the first major stirrings of nationalism in Europe's overseas empires; a bitter sense of betrayal in Germany that helped to bring Hitler to power 15 years later; new opportunities for Japan to expand its holdings in Asia; and a disastrous economic legacy that made it nearly impossible to restore the health of the world economy. The First World War unleashed a series of changes that brought the age of European global hegemony to an end and ushered in the world we know today. The First World War, more than any other event, was the midwife of modern international relations.

Summary

- The period of European history from 1814 to 1914 is commonly called the 'Long Peace' because of the relative stability that characterised its international affairs.

- British hegemony played a key role in maintaining the Long Peace throughout the 19th century.

- The rise of Germany, imperial competition in the non-European world and the advent of modern industrial technologies have all been cited as causes of the First World War.

- The changes brought on by the First World War fundamentally reshaped international affairs, brought the Long Peace to an end and heralded the start of the bloody 20th century.

Conclusion

International relations is a product of its history. If you want to understand the former, you have to understand the latter. Even though IR is a relatively new subject, the problems it grapples with are as old as human civilisation. Some of our earliest texts deal with war and diplomacy. The Amarna letters, found on clay tablets in Egypt and normally dated to the 14th century BC, record correspondence between the Egyptian pharoah and rulers of other kingdoms and territories around the eastern Mediterranean and Near East.[3] Other historical texts deal directly with issues relevant to modern IR, such as war, peace, government and trade. These include the *Arthashastra* of 3rd century BC India, *The history of the Peloponnesian war* by the 5th century BC Greek historian Thucydides, and *The art of war* by the 6th century BC Chinese writer Sun Tzu. In these early days of human civilisation, however, it wasn't possible to speak about truly 'global' relationships. At least two major segments of the human species were isolated from the rump of Eurasia and Africa – the Americas and Australasia. Global political, economic and social relationships only became possible once these pockets were linked to the rest of the human world. This was made possible around 1500 by a series of European

[3] *Manley (1996) pp. 80–81.*

voyages across the world's oceans, linking European states to new lands and populations. The results were often bloody and barbaric. All too infrequently, they were peaceful and mutually beneficial. Either way, they have had a major impact on norms, rules and practices that continue to influence IR today. These include diplomacy, **international law**, the balance of power and **sovereignty**. While it pursued imperialism abroad, 19th century Europe built a relatively stable system of international relationships at home. These were anchored by British naval and industrial power, which allowed the government in Westminster to shape the norms, rules and practices of international society. The First World War brought large segments of this society crashing down. It destroyed four major empires: the German, Russian, Austro–Hungarian and Ottoman. It drew new borders that remain highly contentious today. It killed tens of millions of people, and gave rise to a renewed peace movement around the world that eventually led to the formal discipline of international relations. The world would never be the same again.

Chapter overview

- Europe's imperial expansion after 1500 marks the beginning of a truly 'global' system of international relations.

- The relationships established during Europe's imperial era (1500–1918) were structured to benefit European states at the cost of non-European political communities, reinforcing European hegemony.

- The independence of the United States and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries did not diminish the hegemonic position of Europe's great powers in global affairs.

- The period of European history from 1814 to 1914 is commonly called the 'Long Peace' because of the relative stability that characterised its international affairs.

- British hegemony played a key role in maintaining the Long Peace throughout the 19th century.

- The rise of Germany, imperial competition in the non-European world, and the advent of modern industrial technologies have all been cited as causes of the First World War.

- The changes brought on by the First World War reshaped international affairs, brought the Long Peace to an end and heralded the start of the bloody 20th century.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain some of the reasons why Europe emerged as the main driver of world politics by the end of the 19th century

- discuss competing explanations of the 'Long Peace' in Europe between 1814 and 1914

- evaluate different explanations of the causes of the First World War

- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- imperialism
- international society
- globalisation
- great powers
- diplomacy
- international law
- the balance of power
- sovereignty
- the Long Peace
- hegemonic stability theory
- hegemony
- arms races

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How did European imperialism after 1500 lead to the first truly 'global' international relationships?

2. Which element of modern international society is having the biggest impact on current events around the globe: diplomacy, international law, the balance of power or sovereignty?

3. Which best describes the current international situation: a balance of power or hegemonic stability?

Chapter 3: The short 20th century from 1919 to 1991

> If I had to sum up the twentieth century, I would say that it raised the greatest hopes ever conceived by humanity, and destroyed all illusions and ideals.
>
> *Yehudi Menuhin*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- examine the decline of European imperialism in the 20th century
- describe the transition from a multipolar to a bipolar international system after 1945
- consider efforts after the First and Second World Wars to create international organisations for global governance.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how the practice of national self-determination precipitated a transition from a world of empires to a world of states
- use the concept of polarity to discuss the changing distribution of power in international society from 1919 to 1991
- assess fundamental differences between the League of Nations and the United Nations
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Scott, L. 'International history 1900–1999' in BSO, Chapter 3.
'League of Nations' in GCR.
'United Nations' in GCR.

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Chapter synopsis

- The 'short' 20th century describes the tumultuous period from the beginning of the First World War in 1914 to the end of the Cold War in 1991.

- The end of the First World War ushered in new ideas to the field of international politics, including self-determination – the right of a political community to decide its own political future.

- By the end of the Second World War, the great European powers of the 19th century had been surpassed by the rise of two new superpowers: the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

- International relations often describes an international society according to its polarity – a condition defined by the number of great powers that dominate a system:

  ○ a society with three or more great powers is multipolar.

  ○ a society with two great powers is bipolar.

  ○ a society with a single great power is unipolar.

- The Cold War was an era of bipolarity, in which the world divided into opposed blocs of states centred on the USA and the USSR.

- In a world of independent states, shared problems are dealt with through mutually agreed rules and organisations associated with global governance.

- The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation (IGO) whose main purpose is to protect the sovereign independence of its member states.

- Unlike the League of Nations that preceded it, the UN balances the independence of its member states against the need to sanction and stop threats to international peace and security.

Introduction

Historian Eric Hobsbawm describes the twentieth century as the 'age of extremes' – defined by upheaval, war and revolution.[1] In chronological terms, the 20th century began on 1 January 1901 and ended on 31 December 2000. In historical terms, however, it is often defined by a series of inter-related global conflicts: the First World War (1914–1918), the Second World War (1939–1945) and the Cold War (1947–1991). For Hobsbawm and others, these dates mark the historical boundaries of the 'short' 20th century: a period of violence and change that produced a deeply disturbed, economically fragmented and ideologically divided world before the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR between 1989 and 1991 consigned it to the dustbin of history.

This chapter will focus on three specific developments of the 'short' 20th century: the decline of European imperialism and the rise of self-

[1] *Hobsbawm (1994).*

determination, the transition from a multipolar world to a bipolar world after 1945, and successive efforts to create international organisations like the League of Nations after 1918 and the United Nations after 1945. In doing so, the chapter will introduce several important concepts in international relations: self-determination, polarity and global governance.

Self-determination and the decline of imperialism

The First World War is a watershed event in international relations – an event that marks the end of one era and the beginning of another. The war and the peace treaties that ended it were directly responsible for bringing about the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union, for dissolving the multinational Ottoman and Austro–Hungarian empires, for humiliating a defeated Germany, for disappointing nationalist aspirations in Italy and Japan, and for weakening the financial and military capabilities of the two remaining great powers on the European continent – France and Great Britain. The United States had become a world power during the war, culminating in President Woodrow Wilson's **Fourteen Points** – his plan to achieve a just and lasting peace settlement. Eight of the fourteen points dealt with specific territorial disputes between warring states. Five introduced new norms, rules and practices into diplomacy that President Wilson hoped would be the basis for a new kind of international relations. These were: treaties or agreements arrived at through open and public diplomacy instead of the secret ones that predominated before the war; freedom of the seas; free trade; reduction of armaments; and the adjustment of colonial claims based on the principles of self-determination. Wilson's final point called for the creation of a new organisation – later the League of Nations – which would protect the sovereignty of states great and small.[2]

[2] *Wilson,* Fourteen Points speech, *18 January 1918.*

President Wilson's proposals were the main base for the idealism that typified international relations in the interwar years. He sought to make the world a fairer and more democratic place. Like John Locke, Wilson saw justice as the only basis for a sustainable order. Thus, he believed that the post-war international order could only be sustained when the peoples of the world lived in states that they created through a social contract, rather than being forced to live in states created and maintained through conquest or oppression. He summed this up in the concept of **self-determination** – loosely defined as the right of a national group to choose its own form of political organisation. States – governments, bureaucracies and the security services – should represent a political community composed of people sharing a common identity. This kind of political community is called a **nation**. Self-determination took hold in many colonial capitals, responding to the idea that governments need to represent the political will of the peoples they govern or risk losing their legitimacy. It was this idea of self-determination more than anything else that signalled the coming end of imperialism. As colonial peoples began to call for their own independent governments, the hold of imperial states over their far-flung territories declined. Furthermore, the weakening of great powers like France and Britain by the profligate bloodletting and expenditure of 1914–1918 limited their ability to suppress calls for independence. This dialectic process, in which the opposing ideas of imperialism and self-determination battled for supremacy, culminated in the decades following the Second World War (1939–1945) with the widespread collapse of European imperial power and the achievement of sovereignty by dozens of new states. This radically changed the composition of the international system by increasing the number of

small powers on the world stage and undermining the imperial systems that had constituted the backbone of the international order since the time of Christopher Columbus. Gone was the old order of European states competing for imperial possessions overseas while developing economically and trading extensively at home. In its place rose a new order dominated by two states – the USA and the USSR – whose power was so inflated by political, economic, technological, military and social influence that a new term had to be invented to describe them: **superpowers**.

Summary

- The 'short' 20th century describes the tumultuous period from the beginning of the First World War in 1914 to the end of the Cold War in 1991.

- The end of the First World War ushered in new ideas to the field of international politics, including self-determination – the right of a political community to decide its own political future.

- By the end of the Second World War, the great European powers of the 19th century had been surpassed by the rise of two new superpowers: the United States of America and the USSR.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 3, Section 3, pp.53–55.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** 'Self-determination' in GCR.

Activity

When you have finished the readings, consider the impact of self-determination on the norms, rules and practices of international relations discussed in Chapter 2 of this subject guide. In particular, how does self-determination affect international rules relating to state sovereignty? Can a state remain the sole source of political authority within its territorial boundaries if one or more of the nations that inhabit it choose to form their own government?

Once you have considered these points, post your ideas in point form to the VLE discussion forum so that your peers can see and respond to your work.

Power and polarity from 1919 to 1991: from multipolarity to bipolarity

The years between the First and Second World War were dominated by international relationships between a large number of great powers: Britain, France, the United States, Japan, arguably Italy, and later, Germany and the Soviet Union. As you will see throughout this subject guide, one way to think about international relations is to describe the world in terms of how many great powers coexist in international society. There is some logic behind this simplistic assumption. Powerful states can use their influence to shape the norms, rules and practices that influence international behaviour. This means that very powerful states might be able to change the behaviour of international society itself. In an international society made up of many influential states – such as existed in Europe before 1945 – practices such as the balance of power may evolve to guard against the rise of anyone trying to dominate society's other members. In a society with a single hegemonic power – such as existed during the *Pax Britannica* in the early and mid-19th century – the rules and practices expected of a state will probably mirror the hegemon's own behaviour. In a society divided between two great powers, small states will

probably be drawn into one camp or the other – splitting the world into competing blocs with their own preferred norms, rules and practices. The distribution of power within an international society is referred to as its **polarity**, and normally falls into one of the three following conditions:

1. a society with three or more great powers is called **multipolar**

2. a society divided between two great powers is called **bipolar**

3. a society dominated by a single great power is called **unipolar**.

As the Second World War came to an end, IR analysts were aware that a huge power shift was underway. Instead of the multipolarity that had typified European and international politics since around 1500, this new development pointed towards the emergence of a two-power, bipolar system. The emerging world order would be dominated not by a large number of European empires – though these still possessed considerable assets in 1945 – but by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The chances of a return to the pre-war status quo were very slim. By 1945, the USA recognised that its own security required participation in international relations. This effectively ruled out any return to its pre-war isolationism. Indeed, the USA had become so powerful that it would not have been feasible for it to have 'retreated'. This is rarely, if ever, what rising powers do. In 1945, every other great power – winner and loser alike – was severely weakened by years of war that had left them in ruins. This included the USSR, which had emerged from the Second World War with the world's most powerful army, but at the cost of over 25 million of its citizens' lives. The USA, meanwhile, had never been in better economic and military heath, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the world's economic wealth, over 50 per cent of its research and development, 70 per cent of its naval tonnage and the lion's share of its agricultural surpluses. The USA also possessed the world's only atomic bombs – weapons of mass destruction that gave it an absolute military advantage over all other states until the USSR exploded its own atomic device in 1949. American self-confidence in this period meant that many of its policy-makers discounted any threat from the USSR, which had been economically weakened by its brutal four-year war of extermination with Germany and was now confronted by US atomic power. However, US hopes for a unipolar world were quickly dashed by the growth of Soviet power in the years after the war. The age of superpower rivalry had begun.

By 1945, military planners in Washington DC and Moscow were already wondering who the next enemy might be. The power of Europe's imperial states was in obvious decline. As their colonial empires achieved independence, the USA saw a need to establish a new economic and political order to maintain international peace and security. However, deep differences of opinion over the future shape of Europe, the status of Germany, the situation in China and even the future of capitalism soon divided the victorious allies. This division quickly became a full-blown divorce, punctuated by the USSR's attempt to blockade the American, British and French sectors of occupied Berlin in 1948. The origins of the ensuing 45-year long Cold War have been hotly debated. Some blame Soviet expansionism for causing the rift. Others blame the hegemonic political and economic policies of the USA. Whatever its causes, the Cold War can be viewed through the lens of polarity as a natural consequence of competition between the two superpowers in a bipolar international society – with the USA and its allies promoting capitalist norms, rules and practices, while the Soviets and their allies tried to spread those of state socialism.

Because of its importance to modern international relations, the Cold War continues to fascinate many in our discipline. Some writers believe that the wartime alliance between the West and the USSR was bound to fail – not just because of the Allies' political and economic differences, but because alliances between sovereign states tend to fall apart once unifying threats like Nazi Germany and imperial Japan are overcome. While both the USA and the USSR exaggerated the aggressive intentions of their opponent, the fact remains that the larger international system was in turmoil after the Second World War. Insecurity and distrust were the order of the day. Nowhere was this more visible than in postwar Europe, where economic recovery proved difficult and the pre-war balance of power had been completely overturned by the defeat and division of Germany into a western state allied to the USA and an eastern state allied to the USSR. This shift in the distribution of power on the European continent, combined with the territorial gains made by the USSR and the defeat of Japan on the Soviet's eastern border, made the Soviet Union more geographically secure than at any other time in the 20th century. Even so, a number of Soviet policies made it unlikely that US policy analysts would trust the government in Moscow. The USSR's repressive actions in Eastern Europe, its construction of a sphere of influence around its borders, its interference in the increasingly influential Communist parties of Italy and France, its closed economy, and the brutal domestic policies of its late Stalinist period were seen as evidence that the USSR and USA operated according to different sets of norms, rules and practices. This was certainly the view held by the USA and the UK by 1946, and by early 1947 the idea was embedded in Western perceptions of their one-time ally.

The outcome of this process led to what British writer George Orwell (1945) and US columnist Walter Lippmann (1947) called a **Cold War**. This new kind of war was conducted in a bipolar world where power was left in the hands of two superpowers armed with nuclear weapons. First Europe and later many other regions of the world were divided into blocs, one pro-Soviet and the other pro-American. The Cold War was to have all the features of a normal war except – it was hoped – for direct military confrontation between its main combatants. After all, a direct confrontation would spell nuclear disaster for the entire human species. This was avoided through **nuclear deterrence** – a practice employed by both superpowers and neatly summed up by the policy of mutually assured destruction, or MAD. This promised that any attack by a superpower would be met with an overwhelming retaliatory nuclear response. Thus, any attack by one superpower would bring about the destruction of both. This dangerous strategy is still employed by the world's nuclear powers, each of whom maintains a credible 'second strike' capability – often in the form of submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles – should their homelands be attacked and destroyed.

Unsurprisingly, this state of affairs had a profound impact on the way people thought about IR. New IR thinkers saw themselves as living in dark and dangerous times, making them extraordinarily tough-minded. The vast majority of these thinkers, who branded themselves as Realists, continued to believe that diplomacy and cooperation were possible, even essential, in a nuclear age. Nevertheless, most were decidedly pessimistic. Having witnessed the outbreak of two global wars, one world depression, the rise of Fascism and now an expanded communist threat – often equated with fascism in US officials' minds – many analysts of world politics came to look at the world through a particularly dark prism born of harsh experience. Like Thomas Hobbes in 17th-century England, their world view may help

to explain many of the amoral – even immoral – decisions made by policy makers on both sides of the conflict between 1948 and 1991.

Summary

- International relations often describes an international society according to its **polarity** – a condition defined by the number of great powers that dominate a system.

- A society with three or more great powers is **multipolar**.

- A society with two great powers is **bipolar**.

- A society with a single great power is **unipolar**.

- The Cold War was an era of bipolarity, in which the world was divided into opposed blocs of states centred on the USA and the USSR.

⯈⯈ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 3, Section 4, pp.55–62.

Activity

In two paragraphs of no more than 250 words each, respond to the questions below. Your answers should include a one-sentence thesis statement that clearly states your position on a given question **and** historical evidence that justifies your position.

1. 'How did the Cold War's bipolar distribution of power affect the international relations of small and medium powers between 1948 and 1991?'

2. 'How different were the international policies pursued by the USSR and the USA during the Cold War?'

Post your response to the VLE discussion forum so that your peers can see and respond to your work.

Once you have posted your work, take a minute to look at one of your peer's answers. Did they reach the same conclusions as you? Why or why not?

Global governance: building international organisations in a world of sovereign states

The First World War (1914–1918) led to a desire among statesmen and citizens to create a new kind of organisation to maintain peace and security without the use of force. Although every state in the world was recognised as sovereign, there was an obvious need for them to coordinate their actions in the interests of the common good. This meant the creation of an organisation for **global governance** that could establish rules and practices for the sovereign states of the world to follow in their dealings with one another. It is important to differentiate global governance from global **government**. For a global government to exist, the states of the world would need to surrender their final decision-making authority to some sort of transnational actor. This is highly unlikely in the short or medium term, so a form of global governance may be the best we can hope for to address humanity's shared problems. The result of the push for global governance following the First World War was the League of Nations. Founded in 1920 and based in Geneva, the League had a chequered history. It managed to survive the 1920s, doing much good work in the process. However, it contained flaws that could not be overcome. First, it did not include the United States of America – which refused to join after the Paris Peace Conference – nor the USSR – which was excluded on the grounds that it was considered a rogue state. Second, the League did nothing to deal with the grievances of states like Italy, Japan and Germany, who felt cheated or betrayed by the post-war settlement. These states

became revisionists – seeking to replace the status quo with a new order in which they held a hegemonic position. Given these issues, the 1930s proved disastrous. The decade began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and ended with the outbreak of the Second World War – a testament to the ultimate failure of the League to deal with international peace and security. Nevertheless, lessons had been learned and some of the same mistakes were avoided in the League's post-war successor – the **United Nations**.

The United Nations (UN) differed from the League in several respects. Its original membership included both the USSR and the United States. It formally recognised the privileged position of the five great powers in international society in 1945 – the United States, the USSR, the United Kingdom, France and China (then represented by the Nationalist government of the Kuomintang, and now by the Communist government of the Chinese Communist Party). The UN granted these states – called the Permanent Five (P5) – veto powers in the Security Council, the UN organ dedicated to preserving 'international peace and security'. Designed to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', the organisation continued to grow as new states were created through decolonisation and new UN agencies were created to deal with new international issues.

The UN's critics often ridicule the organisation as a 'talking shop' without the power to alter states' behaviour. It is sometimes blamed for failing to carry out tasks for which it has never been given a mandate or resources, such as ending war and eradicating poverty. Others say that analyses of the UN should focus on its successes and failures 'on the ground': looking after refugees, keeping warring factions apart, feeding starving populations and delivering some kind of hope to people living in the the world's most underdeveloped countries. In each of its areas of responsibility, the UN's performance has been less than perfect. How much of this is the organisation's own fault depends on how much responsibility you place at the feet of its member states. After all, the UN is an **intergovernmental organisation (IGO)**, organised by and for the sovereign states that make it up. Without their permission, there is little the UN can do to address the world's problems. Article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter – the founding document of the organisation – clearly places states' sovereign rights above those of the global community in all but the most dire of circumstances when it says;

> Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.[3]

[3] *United Nations Charter. Chapter I, Article 2, Paragraph 3.*

Chapter VII of the Charter refers to the power of the Security Council – with the consent of the veto-wielding P5 – to act on behalf of the international community to ensure international peace and stability. This power ranges from the ability to sanction individual state leaders and businesses to declaring a state in violation of international law and authorising military action against it. Thus, Article 2.7 illustrates how the UN learned lessons from the League of Nations. The Charter gives the UN teeth that the League of Nations never had. At the same time, by giving the P5 veto powers over enforcement actions, it ensures that they will see their interests better served by active participation than by leaving the organisation and thereby placing its enforcement powers in the hands of their adversaries. Whether this proves to be enough to keep the organisation alive throughout the 21st century remains to be seen.

Summary

- In a world of independent states, shared problems are dealt with through mutually agreed rules and organisations associated with global governance.

- The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation (IGO) whose main purpose is to protect the sovereign independence of its member states.

- Unlike the League of Nations that preceded it, the UN balances the independence of its member states against the need to sanction and stop threats to international peace and security.

- ➤➤ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 19, Sections 1 and 2, pp.305–10.

Conclusion

The Cold War finally drew to a close between 1989 and 1991. These years saw the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the states of Eastern Europe, the reunification of West and East Germany, and the collapse of the Soviet Union into its constituent republics. As you will see in the next chapter of this subject guide, the end of the Cold War had effects that continue to reverberate through IR. First, it left the United States as the only remaining superpower in the world, setting up a period of unipolarity based on US hegemony. This radically changed the international order on which peace and security was based, introducing a new set of dangers and opportunities into international society. Second, it left thinkers and policy makers across IR wondering why they hadn't seen the end coming. The failure to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union was especially damaging for Realists – the group of thinkers and policy makers who dominated IR throughout the Cold War. This led to renewed interest in alternative IR theories that could account for this kind of major historical change.

With the end of the Cold War came the end of the 'short' but eventful 20th century. The period between 1919 and 1991 saw at least three major developments in the field of international relations. First, it saw the end of European imperial power as a major force on the world stage. Second, it contained important structural changes to the distribution of power as the world shifted from a multipolar to a bipolar international society. Finally, the era saw the first important attempts to establish formal organisations for global governance – charged with helping sovereign states coordinate their actions with the goal of addressing shared global problems. Whatever you say about the 20th century, it was short, it was bloody, it was insecure. It was very interesting.

Chapter overview

- The 'short' 20th century describes the tumultuous period from the beginning of the First World War in 1914 to the end of the Cold War in 1991.

- The end of the First World War ushered in new ideas to the field of international politics, including **self-determination** – the right of a political community to decide its own political future.

- By the end of the Second World War, the great European powers of the 19th century had been surpassed by the rise of two new superpowers: the USA and the USSR.

- International relations often describes an international society according to its **polarity** – a condition defined by the number of great powers that dominate a system:
  - a society with three or more great powers is multipolar.
  - a society with two great powers is bipolar.
  - a society with a single great power is unipolar.
- The Cold War was an era of bipolarity, in which the world divided into opposed blocs of states centred on the USA and the USSR.
- In a world of independent states, shared problems are dealt with through mutually agreed rules and organisations associated with global governance.
- The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation (IGO) whose main purpose is to protect the sovereign independence of its member states.
- Unlike the League of Nations that preceded it, the UN balances the independence of its member states against the need to sanction and stop threats to international peace and security.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how the practice of national self-determination precipitated a transition from a world of empires to a world of states
- use the concept of polarity to discuss the changing distribution of power in international society from 1919 to 1991
- assess fundamental differences between the League of Nations and the United Nations
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- Fourteen Points
- self-determination
- nation
- superpowers
- Cold War
- nuclear deterrence
- global governance
- United Nations
- intergovernmental organisation (IGO).

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How did the First World War affect European imperialism?
2. Was Cold War bipolarity a more stable form of international order than the multipolarity it replaced?
3. How does state sovereignty limit attempts to create formal global governance organisations?

Chapter 4: The post-Cold War world

> We will succeed in the Gulf. And when we do, the world community
> will have sent an enduring warning to any dictator or despot,
> present or future, who contemplates outlaw aggression. The world
> can therefore seize this opportunity to fulfil the long-held promise
> of a new world order – where brutality will go unrewarded, and
> aggression will meet collective resistance.
>
> President George H.W. Bush, State of the Union Address, 1991.

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- examine the USA's unipolar moment from 1991 to 2001
- describe the impact of the end of the Cold War on Russia, China, Europe and the global South
- consider the consequences of the war on terror on the norms, rules and practices of modern international society.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how the United States' position as the sole global superpower influenced IR in the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union
- assess the position of Russia, Europe, China and the global South in the post-Cold War world
- explain the impact of the war on terror on the norms, rules and practices of international society
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Baylis, J. 'International and global security' in BSO, Chapter 15.

Best, E. and T. Christiansen 'Regionalism in international affairs' in BSO, Chapter 26.

Cox, M. 'From the end of the Cold War to a new global era?' in BSO, Chapter 4.

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Chapter synopsis

- The decade following 1991 was one of US unipolarity.

- Between 1991 and 2001, US foreign policy focused on multilateral global governance, including the establishment of the WTO and the expansion of the EU and NATO.

- Democratisation was a key goal of US foreign policy in this period.

- Following 1991, European states of the former Soviet bloc joined IGOs like NATO and the EU, while multinational states broke up into their component nations.

- The Communist states of Asia took steps to avoid the fate of the USRR by opening their economies to the global capitalist system while maintaining their authoritarian domestic political systems.

- Europe's largely successful transition away from bipolarity has been helped by the continent's shared sense of identity and the strength of the EU and NATO.

- The end of the Cold War brought widespread change to the global South, including a widespread movement towards liberal economic policies and several examples of state collapse.

- The War on Terror has changed the rules of international society, increasing the likelihood of great power intervention.

- US foreign policy after 9/11 shifted from multilateralism to unilateralism, undermining norms associated with non-intervention, state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- The US fight against violent non-state actors, including terrorists, has allowed it and other states to adopt behaviours that were previously against the rules of international society.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of international relations. Gone were the days of bipolarity, when the world looked on as two superpowers glared at each other across an iron curtain. In its place rose something quite different in terms of the international system: unipolarity. The United States of America ascended to dizzying heights of power after 1991, achieving a level of hegemony never seen before in international society. As the only superpower left on the planet, the USA had immense influence over the norms, rules and practices of international society – influence that it used to remake IR in its own image. Meanwhile, other great powers struggled to cope with the changes brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union and the bipolar order. The Russian Federation, the main successor state to the USSR, went through a decade of decline before starting to rise again on a tide of oil and gas. Europe also struggled with the legacy of the Cold War while building a European Union framework designed to deal with its political and economic challenges. In Asia, states like the People's Republic of China began to assert their positions on the regional and global stage, competing with US economic power and foreshadowing the political competition to come. In the developing world, the legacy of the Cold War remains mixed. Some states used the two decades that followed 1991 to establish themselves as rising powers in international society. Others found themselves torn apart by civil wars when their governments proved unable to contain the national aspirations of their populations. This period of US unipolarity was transformed by an unforeseen event: the terror attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. The 'War on Terror' that followed radically altered US behaviour on the world stage, ushering in a new set of international norms, rules and practices. Several of these are of special interest, particularly the hollowing out of sovereignty as a principle of interstate relations on the world stage.

The USA's unipolar moment: 1991–2001

When the USSR collapsed into its 15 constituent republics, the United States of America was left as the world's only superpower. Although several other states possessed nuclear weapons – including the four other members of the P5 – and others also had highly competitive economies – including Japan and a newly united Germany – no state could match the USA for its influence across the political, economic and socio-cultural sectors. Its military was the most advanced, its economy was by far the largest, and its cultural industries filled movie screens and bookshelves around the world. Despite these massive advantages, the USA was remarkably restrained in its use of power during the first decade after the end of the Cold War. It avoided direct involvement in a number of regional crises around the world, and was criticised for inaction – as in Rwanda in 1994 – more often than it was for excessive interventionism. The presidency of Bill Clinton (1993–2001) was one in which the United States generally worked within the global governance organisations of the day. It was an active – if sometimes grudging – participant at the United Nations, and actively sought to reassure its allies and former adversaries of its good intentions. With only a few exceptions, its foreign policy focused on **multilateralism** as the preferred method of conflict resolution and problem solving – building alliances and broad coalitions even when it could have taken unilateral steps to address its international goals.

As the global hegemon between 1991 and 2001, the United States had immense influence over the norms, rules and practices of international

society. Unipolarity encourages states around the world to mirror the actions of the global hegemon. This behaviour is called 'bandwagoning': the tendency of actors to mirror the behaviour of a dominant actor in a society. Think of all the parents who flock to buy whatever outfit they see the young Prince George wearing for a rather mundane example of the phenomenon at work. The United States used its influence in the 1990s to push several goals. The first was the spread of capitalism – its preferred means of economic organisation. With this goal in mind, the US government supported the creation of the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** – a more muscular successor to the largely toothless General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) that had existed since 1947. It also used economic aid as a lever to remake developing states in Washington's image by forcing aid recipients to sell off owned assets, remove government barriers to international trade and investment, and allow markets rather than governments to set prices and wages. Finally, the USA encouraged its allies to form more robust international organisations, supporting the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the **European Union (EU)**. This, it was hoped, would bring a measure of unity to Europe's historically fragmented politics, making the continent more peaceful and reducing the need for direct US involvement in European defence.

The 1990s also saw the USA encourage states, particularly those in the former Soviet bloc, to accept democratic forms of government. For reasons closely associated with Liberal IR and democratic peace theory – discussed in Chapter 8 of this subject guide – the US leadership believed that the spread of **democracy** would make the world a safer and more prosperous place. Although this goal was never as central to US foreign policy as its support for capitalism, the 1990s witnessed a high-water mark in the spread of democratic forms of political organisation, particularly in the Russian Federation.

Summary

- The decade following 1991 was one of US unipolarity.
- Between 1991 and 2001, US foreign policy focused on multilateral global governance, including the establishment of the WTO and the expansion of the EU and NATO.
- Democratisation was a key goal of US foreign policy in this period.

⯮ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 4, Section 2, pp.67–68.

⯮ **Now read:** 'Hegemony' in GCR.

Activity

In a paragraph of no more than 400 words, answer the following question:

'Was the unipolar international order created by US hegemony in the 1990s a more stable form of international society than the bipolarity and multipolarity that preceded it?'

Remember to include a thesis statement that summarises your argument in a single sentence and several pieces of evidence to justify your analysis.

Post your answer to the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, look at a post by a fellow student. Do you agree with their analysis? Why or why not? Be constructive with your feedback.

Great powers in post-Cold War international society

So far, this chapter has used the idea of polarity to focus on the most important single actor in the unipolar post-Cold War international society: the United States of America. After the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, only the USA could claim superpower status. Other states – even nuclear-armed great powers like the People's Republic of China – could not compete with the scale of US power. However, the picture of international relations painted by polarity is problematic for three reasons. First, it ignores the influence of other states in global international society. Second, it only considers IR on a global scale, ignoring the fact that the norms, rules and practices of international society can differ from region to region. Third, by concentrating on states, polarity ignores the role of important **non-state actors** in international relations. All three concerns are valid. The following section will address the first two by looking more closely at some of the great powers that retained significant regional influence after 1991.

The communist world after communism

The immediate consequences of the end of the Cold War were felt first in communist states and varied widely from place to place. Some communist governments simply collapsed, most obviously the people's republics of Eastern Europe that had been set up by the USSR in the wake of the Second World War. These states, such as Poland and Hungary, elected non-Communist governments that reoriented their states' international relations westwards. Since 1991, most of the states of Eastern Europe have allied themselves with the United States and the states of Western and central Europe by joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Others states of the former Soviet bloc followed a more tragic trajectory. Yugoslavia – a multinational federation made up of 'southern Slavs' – descended into a series of bloody civil wars as each nation within the federation called for self-determination. Yugoslavia no longer exists. In its place are Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) – seven states where once there was one.

The initial breakup of the multinational Soviet Union generated a series of complex challenges. The Russian Federation emerged from the collapse of the USSR, with the majority of the latter's territory and population, as well as the Soviet seat on the UN Security Council and its nuclear arsenal. For most of the 1990s, it looked as if Russia was moving into the Western camp. With the election of President Vladimir Putin, however, it became clear that Russia's trajectory was not moving in the direction mapped out for it by the 'Westernisers'. President, then prime minister, and then once again president, Putin has charted a different political course – interacting, and not always peacefully, with its neighbours in the West and the East. This may not lead to a 'new' Cold War with the USA and the European Union as some have speculated. Russia's economic interdependence with the global energy market makes complete isolation highly unlikely. However, it has left their relationship in a delicate condition, subject to increasingly belligerent rhetoric and action. Meanwhile, the three Baltic republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – have anchored themselves within NATO and the EU. In doing so, they shrank the borders of Russia's political authority. Belarus and Kazakhstan followed a different path, choosing to remain within Russia's diminished sphere of influence instead of looking westwards. Still other republics, particularly Ukraine and Georgia, straddle the lines between the Russian and Western spheres

of influence. In this sense, they are **buffer states** – states that exist between two rival international groups. This makes them vulnerable to international rivalry brought on by competition between the groups that border them. This rivalry has manifested militarily – as in Russia's 2008 intervention in Georgia and 2014 intervention in Ukraine – or politically and economically – as in the Western-supported revolt against the government of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in 2013–4 and the 2014 Ukraine–EU Association Agreement. Recalling your earlier readings on self-determination, it is interesting to note that the USSR's multinational population meant that most of its constituent republics contained several important national groups. The states that emerged out of the USSR do not conform to the model of the pure **nation state**, which sets the stage for civil conflicts as different national groups use self-determination as a legal weapon to oppose the state that rules them. Initially, the collapse of the USSR led to several ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and parts of central Asia. More recently, the issue of nationality has again become important with Russian President Vladimir Putin's moves to reincorporate 'historic' Russian lands into the Russian Federation – a process most clearly illustrated in Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula, most of whose inhabitants are considered ethnically Russian.

The communist states of East Asia watched the collapse of the USSR with considerable concern. Not wanting to lose power themselves, their leaders chose a different path from the glasnost and perestroika of the late Soviet Union. Instead, many communist states reasserted authoritarian control over their people and territory. This is most obviously true in the People's Republic of China (PRC), where the Chinese Communist Party crushed a student-led democracy movement during the bloody suppression of protests in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989. Similar steps – though not as well publicised – were taken in communist states like Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea, where the grip of ruling parties has proved tenacious. This has had particularly disturbing consequences in North Korea. Whereas China and Vietnam – and more recently Cuba – have offset their political authoritarianism by integrating their economies with global markets, North Korea has sought security by purely military means: developing its own nuclear arsenal to deter international intervention. Thus, the end of the Cold War made North Korea more of a danger to international peace and security even while opening space for the partial integration of other communist states into mainstream international society. The PRC is unquestionably the most important of these semi-integrated states. The 20 years since the end of the Cold War have witnessed the PRC's emergence as a great power. It now boasts the world's largest economy. Though it still cannot provide the high per capita incomes enjoyed in the West, it can rightly claim to be the workshop of the world. It is also the second largest military power in the world after the USA, and arguably the single most important military power in the East Asian region. The PRC's rise has been the main driver behind the many alliances formed between Asian states and the USA, which was once viewed very negatively in the region. Even Vietnam – which fought a decade-long war against the USA in the 1960s and 1970s but now faces Chinese pressure off its western coast – is now a US military ally. This process illustrates how IR can differ between regions of the world. Most of Europe has replaced its old regional international society based on the balance of power with one based on integration and interdependence. Meanwhile, the regional international society of East Asia resembles that of Europe before the bloody 20th century: filled with mutually suspicious states locked in society where military posturing and coercion remains a valid form of international behaviour.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 4, Sections 3 and 5, pp.68–69 and 71–73.

Europe

Although the end of the Cold War produced deeply ambiguous results in many parts of the world, its effects were generally positive for the states of Europe. Although we now take European peace for granted, it did not look like such a sure thing at the beginning of the 1990s. After all, Europe had been a bloody battlefield for much of the past 500 years. In the 20th century alone, it was the main front in two world wars and the prolonged existential crisis of the Cold War. Many of the 'Realist' IR thinkers of the Cold War predicted that it would quickly return to its old, warlike ways. The unification of Germany and the withdrawal of Soviet power would re-establish Europe's old balance of power, leading to the interminable wars that have coloured the continent's history. Realists' predictions have largely failed to crystallise. Germany did not start acting like the Germany of old as some thought it must in order to balance US hegemony. Instead, the new Germany became one of the USA's most important allies and was the driving force behind the **integration** of Eastern Europe into NATO and the EU. Outside of the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, Europe did not descend into the nationalist conflicts that had defined the first half of the 20th century. In spite of a rocky economic and political start, most of central and Eastern Europe peacefully transitioned to democratic forms of government, liberalised economies and the collective security of the NATO alliance and the European Union. How and why did Europe manage the transition out of Communism with such success? At least three answers have been suggested.

The first involves **identity**. For decades after the Second World War, the peoples of Eastern Europe were compelled to live under the control of states that did not represent their political communities. Many saw the people's republics set up after the Second World War as Soviet puppets. This alienated Eastern Europeans from the USSR and gave their admiration for the West more political justification. When the Cold War finally ended, former Soviet satellite states saw their realignment with the West as a return 'home' to Europe – from whose institutions they had been separated since 1945. This sense of a common European identity was reinforced by the fact that only a few of the USSR's former satellites had been fully and completely isolated behind the iron curtain. East Germans, for example, clearly knew what life was like in West Germany. Yugoslavs travelled widely. Hungarians maintained contact with other groups up and down the Danube basin. Eastern Europeans were aware of – and attracted to – what they imagined life to be like in Western Europe. At times, their fascination with all things from the West bordered on the naive. Still, it meant that when they finally had the chance to join the Western world, they did so enthusiastically.

The second reason given for Europe's successful transition is the strength of its organisational embodiment: the European Union. Formed after the war as a means of reconciling the aspirations of previously warring states – Germany and France in particular – Europe's common market gradually evolved from a narrowly defined economic body into something like a genuine political community. As its membership grew numerically, the EU expanded its functions. By the time the European Community (EC) became the European Union (EU) in 1992, it had the support of the overwhelming majority of Europeans, who associated their prosperity and democratic rights with the existence of an integrated Europe. Gorbachev himself was much impressed with what had been achieved in Western

Europe since the late 1940s, and was a great admirer of the European Community (EC) – particularly the central part it played in integrating the once fragmented continent. The role the EC/EU played in persuading the USSR to give up its hold over Eastern Europe is an important, though understudied, part of the story of 1989. Regardless, the organisation played an enormous role: holding the European states together at a time of great turmoil and facilitating the economic and political transition of the post-Communist East. There is no way of knowing what might have happened without the EC/EU, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that the end of the Cold War would have created many more problems for Europe and the wider world.

Finally, a third argument can be made that Europe was especially fortunate in that it is home to the world's most successful collective security alliance: NATO. Formed in 1949 with what its first secretary-general termed the triple purpose of 'keeping the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down', NATO was critical in holding the West together through the Cold War and in helping Europe negotiate its way through the security problems that followed 1991. Throughout this era of turmoil, NATO ensured that the USA remained a crucial player in maintaining European security. After all, the USA remains by far the biggest contributor to NATO forces and is an indispensable partner in the alliance. It is easy to be critical of the USA's foreign policy during and after the Cold War. However, during the critical years of transition it successfully reassured allies and former enemies alike. Hegemons are not always popular. In Europe – especially in France – many dreamed that the continent would soon be able to look after its own security needs without US assistance. However, as the Cold War gave way to the 1990s, one thing became abundantly clear: the USA remained an indispensable part of Europe's security architecture.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 4, Section 4, pp.70–71.

▸▸ **Now read:** BSO, Chapter 26, Section 4, pp.411–13.

Whatever happened to the global South?

The **global South** includes most of the world's population and territory. Unlike East Asia, the former Soviet Union or Europe, it is not a geographically defined region. Rather, it includes a wide variety of states with a single shared characteristic: economic underdevelopment. Like the concept it replaced – the **Third World** – the global South stretches from South America to Asia and from Africa to Oceania. Outside Latin America, most of it was under European imperial control until the second half of the 20th century. Its states therefore tend to be quite young. They often lack the economic and political resources to provide their populations with prosperity or security. This makes many states in the global South problematic insofar as they do not truly fulfil Locke's idea of a social contract – protecting citizens' life, liberty and property. In extreme cases, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, they do not fulfil a basic requirement of statehood: a government capable of projecting power over a clearly defined territory and population. These failed states are important sources of global insecurity in the post-Cold War world.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Case Study 1 in Chapter 15, p.232.

The end of the Cold War had a number of effects on the states of the global South. In some cases, 'socialist' states abandoned Soviet-style planning in favour of far-reaching market reforms. In India, this produced

impressive socio-economic results. In other states, the end of the Cold War led to socio-economic disaster when regimes that had justified their actions in the name of Marxism were no longer able to protect their citizens' lives, liberty or property and melted away in the face of banditry and national division. This process has been especially brutal in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly around the Horn of Africa – Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, southern Sudan and northern Kenya. With the end of the Cold War, long-standing rivalries that had once been masked by Cold War bipolarity percolated to the surface of international affairs. In some cases, this ended with a victory for one of the factions fighting to control the state. In Angola and Mozambique, former Marxist rebels defeated their opponents and became the new rulers of their respective governments. In places like Somalia, however, the state simply imploded with terrible consequences for local populations and the international community alike. Each must now face down immense challenges posed by this implosion: rampant poverty, piracy, terrorism, hopelessness and hunger.

Political change after 1991 was accompanied by far-reaching economic reform throughout the global South. While the end of the Cold War was not the only driver behind the new global economy that emerged in the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet model of economic development made the case for market-oriented reforms almost irresistible. After all, how could one argue for a non-capitalist, planned road to economic development in less developed states when that very model had just fallen apart in Eastern Europe and the USSR? Prior to 1991, it could be claimed that, whatever its many faults and weaknesses, central government planning was a viable approach to development. After 1991 it was no longer possible to make this case with any degree of seriousness. The alternative to capitalism had been tried and it had failed, leaving former Communist states to implement liberal economic reforms at home by opening up their once closed economies to the wider world market. This required money and resources – both of which could be found in development organisations like the World Bank. The Bank's international aid came at a price, however. **Conditionality** attached to its loans forced developing states to accept the capitalist economic model by reducing the government's role in the economy and opening up domestic markets to international trade and investment. The human costs of this process were high. Conditionality often undermined states' ability to pay its own way, much less maintain control over their people and lands. The consequences were certainly problematic. But, at the end of the day, there seemed to be no other way.

Summary

- Following 1991, European states of the former Soviet bloc joined IGOs like NATO and the EU, while multinational states broke up into their component nations.

- The Communist states of Asia took steps to avoid the fate of the USRR – opening their economies to the global capitalist system while maintaining their authoritarian domestic political systems.

- Europe's largely successful transition away from bipolarity has been helped by the continent's shared sense of identity and the strength of the EU and NATO.

- The end of the Cold War brought widespread change to the global South, including a widespread movement towards liberal economic policies and several examples of state collapse.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 4, Section 6, pp.73–74.

International society and the war on terror

The attacks on New York's World Trade Center and Washington's Pentagon on 11 September 2001 changed the way that the United States used its position in the unipolar international society of the day. This was partly due to the perceived nature of the threat facing the USA immediately after the attacks. These had not been carried out by the agents of a state. They were the work of a group of non-state militants – trained and funded by individuals not directly answerable to any government – who sought to effect political change through the use of violence against a civilian population. The war on terror that ensued could not be fought like any other interstate war. Al-Qaeda, the group that claimed responsibility for the attacks, had no capital city to bomb or territory to occupy. This presented the United States and its allies with a novel set of problems whose solutions have altered the norms, rules and practices of post-Cold War international society.

The most important change brought about by the war on terror was increased **intervention** in states' domestic politics by the great powers. Prior to 2001, the United States was reluctant to deploy its armed forces into conflict areas in the Middle East and Central Asia. This did not remain the case for long after 9/11. Less than a month later, US forces were directly supporting rebel forces against the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which allowed al-Qaeda to train its operatives and plan its operations on Afghan soil. This began a commitment of soldiers to Central Asia that, as of 2015, has not ended. Although some international organisations have been involved in the Afghan war, including the United Nations and NATO, it was initially an Anglo-American operation without the legal authority normally provided by the UN Security Council. This set a precedent for later US and allied action, most notably the 2003 invasion of Iraq. From the invasion of Iraq to Washington's ongoing use of drones to assassinate enemies in Yemen and Pakistan, the war on terror has regularly ignored the right of sovereign states to **non-intervention**.

The impact of this change is magnified by the USA's hegemonic position in international society. As discussed earlier, unipolar international societies tend to mirror the behaviour of their most powerful actor. It is therefore no surprise that other states have since used the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq to rationalise their own interventions. This has most notably been the case with the Russian Federation, which points to US precedents to excuse their 2008 invasion of Georgia and their ongoing interventions in Ukraine. At the same time, the rise of interventionism and the decline of respect for state sovereignty has had knock-on effects for other rules of international society, particularly respect for the **territorial integrity** of sovereign states.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 4, Section 7, pp.75–76.

The war on terror has also influenced IR by forcing states to adopt new strategies to fight the influence of non-state actors in international society. For now, let's focus on those non-state actors who exist outside of international and domestic legal systems. These include terrorists, transnational criminal gangs and guerrillas. Each of these groups suffers from a gross power disadvantage when compared to the states they oppose. States, after all, enjoy the right to use force in their own defence and in support of allies and international society. Non-state actors have no such right in domestic or international law. Terrorists are particularly

interesting examples in this regard. **Terrorism** is the use of force to effect political change by attacking civilians or symbolic targets. It is not a new phenomenon. The term was first coined to describe the use of violence by the French government against its own people during the French Revolution's 'Reign of Terror' (September 1793 to June 1794). In the late 1800s, terrorism became associated with non-state actors when anarchist groups in Europe and North America carried out a series of attacks and assassinations against targets ranging from Russian Tsar Alexander II to US President McKinley. Twentieth century nationalists, who identify themselves as liberation movements rather than terrorists, use similar tactics to fight what they see as oppression by imperial masters. From Ireland to Israel to India, terrorism has been a strategy by which relatively weak non-state units promote political change. Fighting terrorism is a particularly difficult job that requires states to use non-traditional means. One of the most important and controversial has been the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, to carry out targeted assassinations of individuals on foreign soil. Assassination – particularly on another state's territory – has historically been frowned on by international society. Sovereignty, after all, requires that states refrain from intervening in one another's domestic affairs. The use of drones to kill individuals on foreign soil therefore violates one of the main norms of international society. However, because the party responsible for the assassination is also the unipolar hegemon, there is little that can be done to curtail the practice. It is a risky strategy. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, actors in a unipolar system often mirror the behaviour of the hegemon. Bandwagoning is to be expected. The USA therefore runs the risk of their actions being used to give another power a legal precedent to act in a similar manner – assassinating their opponents, even on another state's sovereign territory. Such is the danger of hegemonic bandwagoning in a unipolar society.

Activity

Go the VLE and take a look at 'The Crimea crisis and the Iraq precedent: Realpolitik and hypocrisy' by Campbell Craig.

Do you agree with the author's claim that Russia has used the US 2003 invasion of Iraq as a legal precedent for its actions in Crimea? What does his argument tell you about the effects of the 2003 invasion on international society's ability to oppose threats to states' territorial integrity?

Summary

- The war on terror has changed the rules of international society, increasing the likelihood of great power intervention.

- US foreign policy after 9/11 shifted from multilateralism to unilateralism, undermining norms associated with non-intervention, state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- The US fight against violent non-state actors, including terrorists, has allowed it and other states to adopt behaviours that were previously against the rules of international society.

Conclusion

Post-Cold War international society has evolved from the bipolarity of the late 20th century to an increasingly problematic unipolarity centred on the United States of America. Increasingly challenged in many regions of the world, particularly in East Asia and the former USSR, US political hegemony remains a defining feature of IR. This has had important effects on international society. First, it has led to the creation and enlargement of international organisations that mirror the USA's own international goals – the World Trade Organization, NATO and the EU to name a few. More recently, the war on terror has introduced new norms into international society. The most important of these is the spread of interventionism brought about by the fight against global terrorism. Interventionism has diminished states' abilities to rely on the principle of sovereignty to defend them against foreign intervention. This encourages states like North Korea to seek military deterrents against aggression. The post-Cold War world is arguably both more orderly and more fragmented than its bipolar predecessor. How this affects international relations going forward depends very much on how the United States and rising powers such as the People's Republic of China choose to use their influence over the norms, rules and practices of international society.

Chapter overview

- The decade following 1991 was one of US unipolarity.
- Between 1991 and 2001, US foreign policy focused on multilateral global governance, including the establishment of the WTO and the expansion of the EU and NATO.
- Democratisation was a key goal of US foreign policy in this period.
- Following 1991, European states of the former Soviet bloc joined IGOs like NATO and the EU, while multinational states broke up into their component nations.
- The communist states of Asia took steps to avoid the fate of the USRR – opening their economies to the global capitalist system while maintaining their authoritarian domestic political systems.
- Europe's largely successful transition away from bipolarity has been helped by the continent's shared sense of identity and the strength of the EU and NATO.
- The end of the Cold War brought widespread change to the global South, including a widespread movement towards liberal economic policies and several examples of state collapse.
- The war on terror has changed the rules of international society, increasing the likelihood of great power intervention.
- US foreign policy after 9/11 shifted from multilateralism to unilateralism, undermining norms associated with non-intervention, state sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- The US fight against violent non-state actors, including terrorists, has allowed it and other states to adopt behaviours that were previously against the rules of international society.

A reminder of learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how the United States' position as the sole global superpower influenced IR in the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union

- assess the position of Russia, China, Europe and the global South in the post-Cold War world

- explain the impact of the War on Terror on the norms, rules and practices of international society

- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- multilateralism
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- European Union (EU)
- democracy
- non-state actors
- buffer state
- nation state
- integration
- identity
- global South
- Third World
- conditionality
- intervention
- non-intervention
- territorial integrity
- terrorism.

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How has US unipolarity affected the structure of international society?

2. Describe the impact of the end of the Cold War on any two (2) regions of the world.

3. Has the war on terror fundamentally changed the norms, rules and practices of international society?

Notes

Chapter 5: Globalisation and the evolution of international society

> It has been said that arguing against globalization is like arguing against the laws of gravity.
>
> *Kofi Annan*

Aims of the chapter

The aim of this chapter are to:

- introduce students to different definitions of globalisation
- consider the role of globalisation in the history of international relations
- compare the views of globalisation's supporters, sceptics and critics.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- assess empirical and theoretical arguments about globalisation
- identify key moments in the globalisation of international society
- weigh supportive, sceptical and critical arguments about the role of globalisation in international society
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Baylis, J., S. Smith and P. Owens 'Introduction' in BSO, Introduction.

McGrew, A. 'Globalisation and global politics' in BSO, Chapter 1.

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Chapter synopsis

- Globalisation is a complex process involving states and non-state actors, and is characterised by the 'widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'.

- Globalisation is a historical process with a history stretching back at least as far as the European Age of Discovery around 1500.

- Thomas Friedman identifies three eras of globalisation in which the process was driven first by states, then by companies, and finally by individuals.

- Truly 'global' problems, such as the economic havoc brought about by the Second World War, can only be addressed through global responses. The Bretton Woods agreement was one such response.

- Globalisation 3.0 has been driven by US hegemony in international society, allowing the USA to establish liberal democracy and liberal economics as the world's preferred political and economic ideologies.

- Liberal ideology has been institutionalised through the support of international organisations like the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF.

- Democratisation – a key element of US foreign policy – seeks to extend the zone of democratic peace hypothesised by democratic peace theory (DPT).

- Globalisation sceptics and critics point out that states remain the key actors in international society – setting the rules by which globalisation continues to unfold.

- Globalisation's supporters point to non-state actors as key beneficiaries of globalisation, connecting previously isolated groups and potentially creating a global civil society.

- Globalisation has the potential to disrupt international society by allowing people, goods and ideas to cross borders more easily, threatening state sovereignty.

- The 9/11 terror attacks and the 2008 global financial crisis are two examples of crises that 'went global' thanks to the changes brought on by globalisation.

Introduction

The past four chapters have used the ideas of international society and polarity to examine important trends in international history from the rise of European imperialism to the crises of the 20th century and the years since the end of the Cold War. International society and polarity focus on different historical trends. The former zeroes in on the norms, rules and practices that shape international relations. The latter spotlights the role of great powers and excludes small states and non-state actors. Each tells you something different about the world in which you live. This chapter re-examines the same historical events through the lens of **globalisation**. Although this term is deeply contested, a simple definition of globalisation is provided at the beginning of Chapter 1 of your textbook. This defines globalisation as 'the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'.[1] As you will see later in this chapter, this is rather simplistic definition of a very complex idea. For now, however, it will do the job.

[1] McGrew, A. 'Globalization and global politics' in BSO, p.16.

Globalisation highlights international interactions that can involve **both** states **and** non-state actors. This is very different from polarity, which normally focuses only on powerful states. The growing number and importance of non-state actors – including **non-governmental organisations** and **transnational corporations (TNCs)** – is often seen as evidence of globalisation's increasing importance in IR. That said, globalisation is not just for non-state actors. It also includes the world's governments, which try to dictate the rules by which international interactions take place. For historical context, you might recall the important role played by states in creating many of the norms, rules and practices that define proper behaviour in international society, including diplomacy, international law, the balance of power and sovereignty. Globalisation goes on within the international society created by these rules. It also challenges the existing rulebook. Increasing global interconnectedness has produced a number of global challenges. These are often too big for any one state to effectively solve. Globalisation issues like global climate change and nuclear proliferation illustrate the limits of sovereignty, for example, as a method of political organisation. After all, even the most powerful sovereign state cannot unilaterally 'solve' climate change. Solutions to this and other problems arising from globalisation require transnational coordination and cooperation, often through **international organisations (IOs)** like the United Nations. Globalisation is therefore challenging the very bases of the international order created during and after European imperialism and the crises of the 20th century. It is giving new, non-state actors a voice in diplomacy. It is creating the need for new kinds of international law. It is redrawing the balance of power, with a few powerful non-state actors exceeding the influence of several sovereign governments. Finally, it is bringing about more interaction across states' borders and thereby undermining their sovereignty.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 1, Sections 1–4, pp.16–23.

Activity

Once you have completed the reading, use your knowledge of current events to complete the table below by providing an example of each type of globalisation listed in the left column. A definition for each variety of globalisation can be found in Box 1.4 on page 21 of BSO. Post your examples to the VLE discussion forum so that your peers can see and respond to your ideas.

Once you have posted your work, look at the answers posted by one of your peers. Do you agree with their examples?

Type of globalisation	Example
Economic	
Military	
Legal	
Ecological	
Cultural	
Social	

Globalisation to the end of the Cold War

There are many ways to think about world history. One of these is presented by Thomas Friedman in his influential book *The world is flat* (2005). Friedman identifies three stages in the history of globalisation. The first, which he calls Globalisation 1.0, extends from the early 1500s to the late 1700s. Like all examples of globalisation, it involves 'the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'. In this case, it was driven by European states' drive to explore, trade with and rule new parts of the globe. As such, it was shaped mainly by imperialism and **mercantilism**. During Globalisation 1.0, European states crossed oceans and continents to exploit resources beyond their borders. Although trade and communication were nothing new, this period saw European states expand their reach in ways that had not been done before. This involved exploration, transoceanic territorial annexation, trade agreements, warfare and the conquest and displacement of non-European populations. Globalisation 1.0, Friedman notes, shrank the world from 'a size large to a size medium', creating the foundations for a single international society where there had once been many separate regional systems.

Friedman's second stage of globalisation, Globalisation 2.0, runs from around 1800 to the years immediately after the end of the Second World War in 1945. Globalisation 2.0 was driven by the Industrial Revolution, which used machine power to transform economies and societies. This occurred first in Britain, then across Europe and the globe. New communications and transportation technologies like steam power and the telegraph made it easier for things, people and ideas to move around the world. Global companies became major players on the international stage through their control of international resources, products, capital and labour. Globalisation 2.0 was extended by great powers such as Britain and its empire, whose dominant position allowed it to unilaterally open markets and insist on advantageous trading terms with its colonies. Globalisation 2.0, this second stage of globalisation, shrank the world from Friedman's 'size medium' to what he calls a 'size small'. World exports and foreign investment soared, gold became the standard of

currency exchange, and London became the world's financial centre. By the First World War, this phase of globalisation had created high levels of interconnectedness, supported by mass migration from Europe to the Americas and Britain's self-governing dominions. A number of thinkers around 1910 argued that war between states had been made obsolete by the extent of economic ties around the world. After all, why would states go to war with other states when each relied on others for goods, people, ideas and wealth? Optimists before 1914 hoped that the deep economic ties that bound states like France, Germany, Britain and Russia would overcome any political motivations to fight one another. These hopes were dashed by the outbreak of war in 1914. The First World War was not stopped by economic globalisation. In fact, it damaged the global economy. The years between 1918 and 1939 saw the rise of **revisionist** states whose leaders had no real interest in economic or political cooperation. As one writer noted, the First World War left 'no basis for a stable, interactive global order'.[2] The situation was made worse by the failure of any of the major powers, including Britain, to impose some form of hegemonic order over international society and its economic system. This contributed to the Great Depression which began with the Crash of 1929 and led to a slow descent into another global war. By the end of that war in 1945, there was effectively no functioning international economy at all.

[2] Robertson (2003) p.156.

The turning point came in 1945 when the USA took on Britain's role as the global economic hegemon. For a time, the **Bretton Woods agreement** tried to return the global economy in the Western bloc to its pre-war rulebook. By the 1970s, however, the United States and its allies were moving towards a different kind of international order in which states would play a smaller economic role. The abandonment of Bretton Woods led to what became the next phase of globalisation: Globalisation 3.0. Globalisation 3.0 was influenced by many things: the communications revolution, a series of global economic crises in the 1960s and 1970s, and the adoption of neo-liberal economic policies by leaders like President Ronald Reagan in the USA and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the UK. **Deregulation** and **liberalisation** became the order of the day. Stock markets were freed from government regulators and trade barriers were lowered. In Globalisation 3.0, governments became viewed as obstacles to economic growth, and **market self-regulation** became the preferred way to organise and manage the international economy.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its system of alliances gave Globalisation 3.0 more momentum by opening up the centrally planned economies of the Soviet bloc to the influence of the capitalist world economy. Deregulation removed states' domestic supervision of economic activity while liberalisation lowered the tariff walls that separated state economies from one another. This is what Friedman means when he suggests that the world had become 'flat'. Using globalisation as his lens, Friedman sees history since the end of the Cold War as an era in which the world shrank from 'a size small to a size tiny'. Globalisation 3.0, he argues, has been secured by US hegemony, underwritten by a vast expansion of non-state financial services, and propelled by the ongoing communications revolution.

Summary

- Globalisation is a complex process involving states and non-state actors, and is characterised by the 'widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'.
- Globalisation is a historical process with a history stretching back at least as far as the European Age of Discovery around 1500.

- Thomas Friedman identifies three eras of globalisation in which the process was driven first by states, then by companies, and finally by individuals.

- Truly 'global' problems, such as the economic havoc brought on by the Second World War, can only be addressed through global responses. The Bretton Woods agreement was one such response.

Globalisation and US unipolarity

Following the end of the Cold War, academics, politicians and commentators sought to make sense of the unipolar world in which they found themselves. Gone were the certainties of bipolarity and deterrence. What would take their place? How would unipolarity and globalisation interact in the post-Cold War world?

The years after 1991 gave rise to a pair of international processes: the expansion of Globalisation 3.0 into the states of the former Soviet bloc, and the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar international society. These processes are closely related. Globalisation 3.0 is a product of US power in international society. US hegemony after the fall of the Soviet Union therefore permitted Globalisation 3.0 to reach its full bloom. Likewise, Globalisation 3.0 has extended US influence across the world and reinforced the USA's superpower status. Of the many in IR who have trumpeted this development, two stand out. One was a third-generation Japanese–American political philosopher named Francis Fukuyama. The other was the small-town governor of an unfashionable southern US state who in 1993 became President Bill Clinton.

The main thesis of Francis Fukuyama's important article *The end of history* (1989) argues that the past 200 years of world history have witnessed a struggle between two competing ways of thinking. One sees the future in terms of the collective well-being of human communities, with the group being more important than any single person within it. In Cold War terms, Fukuyama associates this way of thinking with the socialist society of the Soviet Union. The other side of Fukuyama's historical dialectic sees the past in terms of a struggle for individual rights, placing the person above the group. This he associates with the capitalist society of the United States. According to Fukuyama's thesis, this struggle between communal and individual rights has been the main driver of history. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, he saw history begin to tilt decisively towards the liberal individualism championed by the United States and the Western bloc. Fukuyama argues that the end of the Cold War confirmed rather than created this ideological shift towards the individual. In his view, the end of the Cold War marks the end of the dialectic between the individual and the collective. It therefore marks the end of the 'history' of struggle between them. In his opinion, the fall of the Berlin Wall signalled that the long competition between individual and communitarian ideologies had finally reached its conclusion. Liberalism, Fukuyama asserted, had triumphed, setting the world on a course towards Western-style liberal democracy and liberalised economics. The end of the Cold War was not the '**end of history**' in the literal sense. Rather, it was the end of the dialectic between groups and individuals that had defined international relations for the past two centuries.

Fukuyama's description of a world inexorably moving in the direction of liberal democratic politics and open markets found a political champion in US President Bill Clinton. Unencumbered by Cold War bipolarity, Clinton was more than happy to shift the national security debate onto

the terrain where he felt most comfortable: the economy. Globalisation, he proclaimed, was the basis for a new world order. The USA, victorious in the Cold War, could not retreat into counterproductive and pointless isolationism. It had to compete economically and show others the way forward. Ever the brilliant politician, Clinton managed to link the USA's need for continued international engagement with an embrace of globalisation, promising the renewal of the US economy and of the USA's role as the leader of a 'free world'. In doing so, he embraced Fukuyama's intellectual argument as a guide for the conduct of US foreign policy: enlarging the community of free market democracies by encouraging and supporting emerging capitalist economies.

Clinton's focus on market enlargement was more than just a slogan. Under his leadership, the United States drove globalisation forward through a series of bold policy measures that altered the norms, rules and practices of international society. These included the creation of a series of free trade agreements, most notably the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Meanwhile, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was replaced with the more powerful and global World Trade Organization (WTO), which works to bring less economically developed countries (LEDCs) into the international economy. Clinton's international policies also empowered and altered some existing institutions. The powers of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were enhanced, allowing it to play a key role in the integration of former Communist and emerging economies. The World Bank was used to press for economic reform in developing states through **conditionality**, which made deregulation and liberalisation requirements for states seeking World Bank loans. Some knowledge of these powerful economic organisations is vital for a complete understanding of international relations in our globalising world.

Summary

- Truly 'global' problems, such as the economic havoc brought about by the Second World War, can only be addressed through global responses. The Bretton Woods agreement was one such response.

- Globalisation 3.0 has been driven by US hegemony in international society, allowing the USA to establish liberal democracy and liberal economics as the world's preferred political and economic ideologies.

- Liberal ideology has been institutionalised through the support of international organisations like the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF.

- ▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 27, Sections 3 and 4, pp.422–28.

Globalisation and the international political order

President Bill Clinton's foreign policy put economics and globalisation at the heart of US international relations. However, globalisation is not a purely economic process. It describes the widening and deepening of many forms of international interaction. It is therefore an important source of political order, reinforcing and extending the power of the most influential economic actors on the world stage. During the Clinton presidency (1993–2001) the spread of market-based economics was seen as a precondition for the emergence of liberal democracies around the world. Rightly or wrongly, this linked the USA's stated goal of global democratisation with its immediate pursuit of global economic liberalisation. But why should the United States seek to create democracies around the world? What did the USA have to gain? An important international relations concept

helps to explain Clinton's reasoning: **democratic peace theory (DPT)**. DPT claims liberal democratic states are highly unlikely to go to war with other liberal democratic states. They may go to war with states that are illiberal or undemocratic, but they will refrain from violent conflict with other liberal democracies. It was therefore seen to be in the national security interest of the USA – a liberal democracy – to promote democracy while investing in global processes to speed up the pace of international interaction, thereby extending the zone of liberal democratic peace.

Globalisation is much more than just a description of the integrated world economy and political society. In many respects, globalisation has become an ideology in its own right. Like all effective ideologies, it both describes reality and shapes that reality in its own image. By the beginning of the 21st century, the benefits of globalisation were so obvious to its supporters that those who questioned its desirability were seen as dinosaurs hanging on to antiquated ideas about autonomous national economies.

⟫ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 1, Section 5, pp.23–29.

Activity

Once you have finished the readings, complete the table below. First, define the Westphalian institution listed in column one. Then, in the right-hand column, assess the impact of globalisation on the institution in question.

Westphalian institution	Definition	Impact of globalisation
Territoriality		
Sovereignty		
Autonomy		

Thinking again about globalisation

The claims made for globalisation by its advocates are anything but modest. People from Fukuyama to Clinton argue that the increasing extent, intensity, speed and depth of global interconnectedness constitutes a fundamental shift in social organisation. They argue that the world is becoming a shared political, economic and social space, breaking down divisions between states and linking hitherto distant communities.

These inflated claims have not gone unchallenged – even by globalisation's supporters. As David Held points out, there has always been more than one theory of globalisation and more than one view of its significance. Globalisation's biggest supporters sometimes talk as if state borders no longer exist and sovereignty has been done away with. More sceptical analysts disagree. They insist that globalisation would be impossible without sovereign states to manage relationships and forcibly open the

world. States, they argue, have created the norms, rules and practices that created Globalisation 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. According to Friedman, it was European states' imperialism that first drove globalisation. It was then their quest for resources and markets during the Industrial Revolution that led to Globalisation 2.0 in the 19th century. Following the Second World War, the USA became essential to the international economy. Its role grew even more after 1991, leading to a unipolar moment in which the hegemonic power of the USA was used to spread globalisation across the planet. States still matter. Even in the European Union, sovereign states negotiate and manage the process of integration. Behind all of their talk of cooperation and shared interests, the states of Europe think and act differently with regard to their international political, economic, social and military relationships.

Even if we do not accept the most inflated claims about globalisation, there is no doubt that it remains a serious business. According to one of its leading theorists – Anthony Giddens – globalisation is a way for us to understand the 'runaway world' in which most of us live. Giddens makes several strong claims in favour of globalisation. Its successes before 1989, he argues, helped undermine the credibility of the Soviet model. Thereafter, following well-established patterns, it transformed world politics by making threats more global – accelerating interactions to such a degree that events in one part of the world could quickly impact on other parts of the globe.

Giddens sees globalisation going on at several different levels of analysis. Globalisation cannot be thought of as something that comes only 'from the top' – implemented by states and multinational organisations. He argues that there is also a form of globalisation 'from below', involving millions of individuals as well as organised groups. He characterises these non-state actors as an emerging global **civil society** in which people are connected to one another via thickening networks of transnational relations. This change, Giddens concludes, is creating a new political order based on individualism and a new set of global values – a very similar argument to that championed by Fukuyama.

Despite his general support for globalisation, Giddens admits that it has problems. These range from the spread of privatised security companies who feed off the insecurities generated by globalisation, to the ease with which transnational corporations can shift production to states with cheaper labour or less environmental regulation. He notes that the communications technologies that have made all of this possible have also made the world more vulnerable. Not only do problems with internet security threaten users' civil liberties, but the speed at which technologies allow us to communicate enables instability to travel very quickly through international society. Globalisation helps to spread the material benefits of free market economies and liberal democracy to previously isolated parts of the world. It can also destroy communities who cannot compete in our increasingly competitive global economy, as evidenced by rising levels of economic inequality around the world. Globalisation may not produce a world as 'flat' as Thomas Freidman would like to suggest.

Sceptics

Although Giddens is aware of some downsides to globalisation, he remains one of its strongest advocates. There are others in IR who maintain a more sceptical position. These 'globalisation sceptics' focus their questions around a number of core themes. The first is empirical, casting doubt on claims made by globalisation's advocates. They argue that the world

is not as integrated as some would suggest. In many respects, such as the percentage of economic activity created by international trade, the global economy is not that much more integrated now than it was in the late 19th century. What increases there have been are very localised. The bulk of international trade is concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy states and tends to be conducted either regionally or between established allies and trade blocs. Likewise, **foreign direct investment (FDI)** is dominated by a few advanced economies. Transnational corporations, though powerful, remain tied to the legal jurisdiction of their home states, which are almost always located in the most developed states. Thus, while financial markets have become more integrated through globalisation, the bulk of world economic activity is still carried out at the inter-state level – between states that remain distinct, national economic units with their own domestic rules and practices.

In the political sector, sovereign states remain the arbiters of political power. While some issues are genuinely global – such as climate change – our efforts to address them have been dominated by the world's governments. This is clearly demonstrated by the world's environmental treaties, which set state-by-state targets for environmental policies and thereby reflect the traditional state-based international order. Even where **civil society** plays a role in political decision-making, it must do so in cooperation with state governments. Many aspects of globalisation, sceptics conclude, are less than truly **global**. Rather, they are national or regional, be they connected to trade, migration or security cooperation.

In the social and cultural sectors, the claims for globalisation might also be seen as overstated. The vast majority of the world's population still spends its life in one country. Many stay in their native village, town or province. People's identities are still defined by geographically and culturally specific experiences. Although new forms of communication have allowed us to become more aware of the rest of the world, this does not imply that all humans see themselves as global citizens. On the contrary, many of our social, cultural and economic relationships remain resolutely local, and new forms of communication have only served to increase the depth of material and information flows along established social and cultural lines.

Critics

What, then, of globalisation's critics? They come in all ideological shapes and sizes, though the most vocal tend to be those on the political left. These view globalisation as a new form of imperialism, made more palatable by means of a simple name change. Globalisation, these critics argue, masks the simple fact that IR is driven by neoliberal policies emanating from a capitalist world economy. Critics point out that this economy is dominated by Western states and elites who are intent on maximising their own power and profits. Behind globalisation lies not the 'invisible hand of the marketplace', but the not-so-hidden hand of the great powers, especially the United States. Globalisation, critics insist, is tantamount to Americanisation. However much its supporters try to disguise the fact, critics claim that globalisation is an expression of US power rather than an emerging global community.

Critics of globalisation also focus on the economic consequences of globalisation, particularly in terms of the distribution of wealth. Supporters of globalisation argue that it generates wealth, reduces poverty and gives everybody a better chance of achieving economic security. Critics look at the same set of statistics and arrive at a completely different conclusion. Globalisation, they argue, excludes millions of poor people

from socio-economic development, shreds Earth's ecology, undermines democracy, and leads to a growing gap between the planet's super-rich and the rest. It keeps the poor nations poor – with one or two notable exceptions – and keeps the rich nations rich. Globalisation is, according to its critics, just another word for imperialism and exploitation.

Summary

- Globalisation sceptics and critics point out that states remain the key actors in international society – setting the rules by which globalisation continues to unfold.

- Globalisation's supporters point to non-state actors as key beneficiaries of globalisation, connecting previously isolated groups and potentially creating a global civil society.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, 'Introduction', Section 5, pp.10–12.

Activity

In a paragraph of no more than 500 words, identify yourself as a globalisation supporter, sceptic or critic. Your answer should include a one-sentence thesis statement that clearly states your position, followed by the main points on which you base your position. The arguments for and against globalisation on pp.10–12 of BSO will provide you with several starting points for your response. Post your paragraph on to the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Does their understanding of what it means to be a supporter, sceptic or critic agree with your own? Send them a short (and polite) note on the forum to let them know what you think.

The double crisis of globalisation?

Although there were many critiques of globalisation in the 1990s, these did not become internationally influential until the 21st century, when two events challenged it in a far more serious way. First, the attacks of 11 September 2001 struck at the heart of US hegemony – a key aspect of Globalisation 3.0. Aimed as they were at the symbols of US economic, military and political power, the 9/11 attacks revealed the extent of resistance to globalisation in several parts in the Islamic world. They also succeeded in temporarily shutting down the arteries and veins of global trade. Admittedly, the terrorists did not succeed in doing so for very long. However, their actions had consequences. Terrorism has made world travel and world trade more difficult. The financial panic created by the attacks also forced US policy-makers to loosen their already weak controls over the global money supply. In the short term, this fuelled an economic boom and helped steady the markets' nerves. In the medium term, it established the regulatory conditions that allowed banks and financial institutions to take the world to the brink of economic collapse in 2008.

This brings us to the **global financial crisis** that has unfolded since 2007: an event as unexpected and potentially disturbing to world order as the end of the Cold War. Its origins have been discussed by economists and economic historians. The narrative, if not the deeper causes of the crisis, are well known. A housing bubble in the USA was inflated by low interest rates and eventually burst to reveal the exposure of the US and European banking systems to vast quantities of risky 'sub-prime' debt. The balance sheets of financial institutions were subject to massive write-downs, and the US government and its allies – having allowed the financial firm Lehmann Brothers to fail in September 2008 – were forced to step in to

bail out other banks and institutions in the global financial system. As banks sought to assess their losses, the supply of credit – the lubricant of capitalist economies – shrank severely. US real **gross domestic product (GDP)** shrank for four consecutive quarters, wiping out all economic growth from the end of 2005 to 2008. Unemployment rose to its highest levels since the early 1980s, and the cost of preventing a more serious economic meltdown left the US facing a 2009 budget deficit equivalent to 13.5 per cent of its GDP.

Even as the US economy faltered, the 2008 financial crisis represented something far more fundamental than an isolated banking event. The loss of confidence in the free-market system placed the future of global capitalism under the microscope. The financial crisis therefore dealt a serious blow to US power by undermining the ideological claims of its economic model.

While lessons drawn from history might have helped the USA prevent a repeat of 1929's Crash, they could not prevent the 2008 financial crisis from rolling through the global economy. In less competitive parts of Europe, its impact has been dramatic. With unemployment on the rise and several countries like Ireland, Greece, Italy and Portugal looking for economic support from the EU to stave off default on their sovereign debts, the European project looks shakier than at any time since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Combined with the migration crisis lapping at Europe's southern and eastern shores, this spells trouble for the EU.

Summary

- Globalisation has the potential to disrupt international society by allowing people, goods and ideas to cross borders more easily, threatening state sovereignty.
- The 9/11 terror attacks and the 2008 global financial crisis are two examples of crises that 'went global' thanks to the changes brought on by globalisation.

Conclusion

Although the 2008 economic crisis damaged the global economy, globalisation survived. However, there are strong indications that the pre-crisis balance of global economic power has not. This is a subject to which we will return in the concluding chapter of this subject guide, when you critically examine the fashionable argument that a great international transition is underway, leading to the decline of the West (especially the USA) and the rise of Asia (especially the People's Republic of China). We do not need to address this issue in any great detail now. Suffice it to say that since the crisis of globalisation in 2008, the USA and the West look less and less 'bound to lead' and China and Asia appear far more self-confident. Whether this will shift the centre of global power towards the western Pacific is uncertain. At first glance, it looks like China emerged from 2008 with enormous self-confidence, while the USA and its traditional Western allies have not. It might even be that we have now entered the fourth stage in the history of globalisation: Globalisation 4.0.

Chapter synopsis

- Globalisation is a complex process involving states and non-state actors, and is characterised by the 'widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'.

- Globalisation is a historical process with a history stretching back at least as far as the European Age of Discovery around 1500.

- Thomas Friedman identifies three eras of globalisation in which the process was driven first by states, then by companies, and finally by individuals.

- Truly 'global' problems, such as the economic havoc brought on by the Second World War, can only be addressed through global responses. The Bretton Woods agreement was one such response.

- Globalisation 3.0 has been driven by US hegemony in international society, allowing the USA to establish liberal democracy and liberal economics as the world's preferred political and economic ideologies.

- Liberal ideology has been institutionalised through the support of international organisations like the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF.

- Democratisation – a key element of US foreign policy – seeks to extend the zone of democratic peace hypothesised by democratic peace theory (DPT).

- Globalisation sceptics and critics point out that states remain the key actors in international society – setting the rules by which globalisation continues to unfold.

- Globalisation's supporters point to non-state actors as key beneficiaries of globalisation, connecting previously isolated groups and potentially creating a global civil society.

- Globalisation has the potential to disrupt international society by allowing people, goods and ideas to cross borders more easily, threatening state sovereignty.

- The 9/11 terror attacks and the 2008 global financial crisis are two examples of crises that 'went global' thanks to the changes brought on by globalisation.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- assess empirical and theoretical arguments about globalisation

- identify key moments in the globalisation of international society

- weigh supportive, sceptical and critical arguments about the role of globalisation in international society

- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- globalisation
- non-governmental organisations
- transnational corporations (TNCs)
- international organisations (IOs)
- mercantilism
- revisionist
- Bretton Woods
- deregulation
- liberalisation
- market self-regulation
- the 'end of history'
- conditionality
- democratic peace theory (DPT)
- civil society
- foreign direct investment (FDI)
- global financial crisis
- gross domestic product (GDP)

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Is globalisation a new process in international history?
2. What challenges does globalisation pose for the norms, rules and practices of international society?
3. Does democratic peace theory mean that globalisation is making IR more peaceful?

Part 3: Theories of international relations

Notes

Chapter 6: The English School of international relations

> It is better to recognise that we are in darkness than to
> pretend that we can see the light.
>
> *Hedley Bull*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- locate the English School as a branch of international relations (IR) theory
- introduce 'international society' as the organising principle of the English School
- consider the English School's ability to analyse regional, historical and either cooperative or competitive types of international society
- apply English School concepts to analyse the causes and effects of the First World War.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how international society creates order out of anarchy
- explain how global and regional international societies differ
- use English School concepts to analyse aspects of the First World War.
- define key terms written in bold

Essential reading

Armstrong, D. 'The evolution of international society' in BSO, Chapter 2.
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Chapter synopsis

- The English School of IR is a diverse group of analysts who see the world as being composed of international actors who agree to shared standards of behaviour that make their actions more predictable.

- The organising principle of the English School is international society – a collection of international actors who share in the working of common institutions. These are norms, rules and practices that prescribe specific types of behaviour for society's members.

- Actors who violate international society's institutions may be sanctioned by its other members. Sanctions can range from verbal warnings to full-scale military interventions, depending on the severity of the transgression and the power of the actors involved.

- Hedley Bull, a key thinker in the English School, argues that contemporary international society is fundamentally anarchic insofar as there is no global government that can settle disputes between sovereign states.

- Despite being anarchic, international society is orderly thanks to the influence of formal and informal institutions, which regularise actors' behaviour and allow for international coordination and cooperation.

- The English School is particularly good at tracing the evolution of actors and practices through history, allowing analysts to explain how specific behaviours – such as imperialism – rise to prominence and fade into obscurity.

- The English School approach allows analysts to compare and contrast different regional international societies, which may be defined by very different arrays of actors and institutions.

- Regional international societies are likely to exist alongside a thinner 'global' society defined by a less dense network of norms, rules and practices.

- The First World War was the result of the institutions that defined European international society in the first decades of the 20th century, particularly the norms, rules and practices associated with militarism and nationalism.

- The end of the First World War introduced new institutions, such as collective security, into the international society of the day.

Introduction

As discussed in earlier chapters, studying IR theory is an important step towards effective international analysis. Theories are the simplified 'maps' that we use to navigate our way through the complex reality of international relations – highlighting some things and ignoring others. The English School is one such theory. It emphasises many of the concepts that you've already been introduced to, including international society, anarchy, sovereignty and diplomacy. It is also the most historically minded of the theories we will look at, allowing you to deploy some of the history you were exposed to in Part 2 of this subject guide.

The **English School** is the name given to a group of international relations analysts who believe that relations between international actors are shaped by sets of norms, rules and practices that have evolved over hundreds of years of human history. These norms, rules and practices make up an informal set of guidelines for acceptable behaviour among state and non-state actors. Actors who accept these guidelines are part of an international society whose norms, rules and practices form the basis of coordination and cooperation between members.

The name 'English School' is a bit of a misnomer. Many of its most important thinkers have not been English, and not all English IR analysts subscribe to its main ideas. Furthermore, the English School contains many factions. Some are highly pessimistic – even Hobbesian – in their world view. They fear the effects of international anarchy and tend to support powerful hegemons who might be able to impose some form of political order on the world's states and non-state actors. Others are more hopeful that states can cooperate to solve shared problems in a globalising world. They see diplomacy and international agreements as a way forward, reflecting John Locke's belief in the power of a social contract to link parties together. Still others members of the English School follow in the footsteps of Karl Marx. They see present-day international society as fundamentally unjust and foresee a future of radical, even revolutionary, change.

It may seem odd to lump these disparate groups together. However, they share one central belief that identifies them all as members of the English School: the existence of international society. International society is the main organising principle that defines English School analysis. It must therefore be the first stop on your road to understanding this important approach to the study of international relations.

Organising principle

Previous chapters of this subject guide have used the idea of an **international society** to introduce the history of international relations from 1500 to the present. At the time, you were probably not aware that you were engaged in a theoretical discussion of IR. That is good. Theory can be an intimidating word, calling up images of mind-boggling scientific equations and philosophical arguments. Don't panic. Theories are just tools that we use to make sense of the world around us. In IR, they allow us to analyse a world that would otherwise be far too complex for us to understand. Theories can be thought of as metaphorical maps. A map helps you to navigate from Point A to Point B by providing a simplified model of the geography through which you are passing, showing the roads on which you have to travel while leaving out other objects like

houses and vegetation. This simplification is a necessary evil. A perfectly accurate map of the world would have to include everything in the world. It would therefore be as big as the world it describes, making it impossible to use. IR theories perform a similar function. They help you to see the connections between different events by creating a simplified model of human interaction on an international scale. Just as different maps include and exclude different kinds of information to make navigation easier, different IR theories include and exclude different kinds of human interaction. Some look at patterns of international trade and finance in the international economy. Others are more interested in security alliances between states. No theory generates a completely accurate rendering of the world. After all, a theory's purpose is to highlight and mask aspects of reality in order to allow you to identify causes, effects, problems and solutions in what would otherwise be an overwhelming rush of information about the world.

The English School simplifies the world of IR by describing it in terms of one or more international societies. An international society is made up of a set of actors – normally states – with a shared set of norms, rules, and practices that shape their behaviour which are called **institutions**. Diplomatic immunity is a straightforward example of a globally recognised international institution. It protects the representatives of a state when they reside in another territory, allowing adversaries and enemies to safely maintain official representatives in each other's capitals. This allows them to communicate effectively – a key step in any problem-solving process. Even at the height of the Cold War, the USA and USSR did not kill or imprison each other's diplomats. They would simply expel any diplomats they suspected of wrongdoing, leaving the possibility of future communication open.

The four norms discussed in Chapter 2 of this guide – diplomacy, international law, the balance of power and sovereignty – are important examples of institutions that shape state behaviour around the world. In many ways, they mark the boundaries of global international society. How can an institution mark the boundaries of a society? Let's return to the example of diplomatic immunity. At the most basic level, states that reject diplomatic immunity cannot become full members of international society because other members will not accept them. Without the assurances provided by diplomatic immunity, states will not risk putting their diplomats in a foreign capital. In order to be a member of global international society, a state must at least nominally accept the institutions that define it. This is not to say that an actor will always comply with a society's dominant institutions. International actors can and do violate international societies' norms, rules and practices. When they do, they can expect to receive some form of **sanction** from society's other members. These sanctions can range from informal warnings against future violations, to trade and travel embargoes that isolate the offending actor to large-scale military interventions intended to force the offending actor back into line with international society's dominant institutions.

International society is made up of a set of international actors that share norms, rules and practices that shape their behaviour towards one another. This is the main thesis of the English School, and leads to a number of interesting conclusions when used to analyse the past and present of international relations.

Summary

- The English School of IR is a diverse group of analysts who see the world as being composed of international actors who agree to shared standards of behaviour that make their actions more predictable.

- The organising principle of the English School is international society – a collection of international actors who share in the workings of common institutions. These are norms, rules and practices that prescribe specific types of behaviour for society's members.

- Actors who violate international society's institutions may be sanctioned by its other members. Sanctions can range from verbal warnings to full-scale military interventions, depending on the severity of the transgression and the power of the actors involved.

⯈ **Stop and read:** 'International society' in GCR.

Concepts and assumptions

One of the English School's key thinkers is Hedley Bull, whose book *The anarchical society* (first published in 1977) remains the School's most widely respected treatise. Bull argues that contemporary international society is fundamentally **anarchic**. This means that it does not have a supreme ruler who can always settle disputes and dictate society's institutions – it does not mean that international society is chaotic. In fact, Bull argues that international society is remarkably well ordered, despite the fact that nobody is in charge. The idea that a society can be both anarchic and ordered may seem counterintuitive. It is, however, an accurate rendering of the world around us.

⯈ **Stop and read:** 'Anarchy' in GCR.

Explaining how international anarchy produces international order is one of the main goals of the English School. Its members pursue it by tracing the evolution of international institutions. Bull and others note that institutions can be formal or informal. They can be enshrined in treaties and organisations like the Charter of the United Nations. Other institutions have unwritten codes of conduct. Institutions evolve, often becoming more formalised over time. Let's look at an example. Imperialism, an institution of European international society until the mid-20th century, emerged as a common but informal practice among European states long before it was written down and formalised in international law. As we saw in Chapter 2 of this subject guide, imperialism became a common practice in European international society between 1500 and 1914. Over time, it became a 'normal' and 'proper' way for European states to deal with non-European people and territory. Geology provides an apt metaphor for understanding this process. Just as the fine silt deposited by rivers can slowly transform into rock through a continuous process of sedimentation, so too can informal practices and values become institutionalised within international society by constant repetition.

International society does not require a supreme arbiter or leviathan to provide it with a constitutional structure. Order can develop organically from the repeated interaction of international actors, allowing their society to be both anarchic and orderly – lacking a ruler, but not lacking rules. As Hedley Bull explains, 'by an institution, we do not necessarily imply an organisation or administrative machinery, but rather a set of habits and practices shaped towards the realisation of common goals.' Informal practices may or may not lead to the development of more formal

institutions, in which norms, rules and practices become codified in formal international law through treaties and agreements.

As we saw in Chapter 3 of this subject guide, the norms, rules and practices associated with imperialism have fallen out of favour since the Second World War. Other international institutions, such as self-determination, replaced them. This brings us to an important claim made by members of the English School: institutions are always changing. They do not remain static over time. The rise and fall of imperialism is one example. If institutions emerge and change over time, there is no reason to believe that the norms, rules and practices of modern international society will remain the same forever. Formal treaties and informal codes of practice are open to revision – the former by means of new international treaties and the latter by means of cultural shifts within international society. Both signify the acceptance of new institutions by society's members. The English School's embrace of change allows its members to be particularly good at analysing historical trends, making it one of the most popular approaches to IR among lovers of history.

The last point that we need to consider with regard to the English School is how institutions bring order to international anarchy. Barry Buzan argues that institutions do so by providing answers to two main questions:

1. Who is a member of the international society you are studying?

2. How do its members relate to one another?[1]

[1] Buzan (2010).

Institutions determine international society's rules of membership and its rules of behaviour. At the risk of yet another metaphor, think of IR as a board game. Institutions are the rules that dictate who gets to take part and how they must play the game. If a player breaks the rules of a game, they will probably be disqualified from future games. Nobody likes playing with a cheater. Likewise, if someone new is willing to accept the game's rules of behaviour, they will probably be allowed to join in next time around. By determining who is part of international society and how they should behave, institutions make IR a little more predictable. Institutions therefore provide a basis for order within the anarchic global society in which we live. It is not a system of which Thomas Hobbes would approve. In his eyes, anarchy was inevitably disastrous. However, this odd brand of '**anarchical society**' has served humanity with some success for centuries – even millennia – and remains the most likely form of international governance into the foreseeable future.

Summary

*   Hedley Bull, a key thinker in the English School, argues that contemporary international society is fundamentally anarchic insofar as there is no global government that can settle disputes between sovereign states.

*   Despite being anarchic, international society is orderly thanks to the influence of formal and informal institutions, which regularise actors' behaviours and allow for international coordination and cooperation.

*   The English School is particularly good at tracing the evolution of actors and practices through history, allowing analysts to explain how specific behaviours – such as imperialism – rise to prominence and fade into obscurity.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 2, Section 1, p.36

Global and regional international societies

The English School provides an effective way to compare and contrast international societies around the world. The international scene is inhabited by a dizzying array of interacting state and non-state actors. By focusing on the norms, rules and practices that shape their interactions, the English School prioritises the study of certain actors and certain interactions. This reduces the number of actors and interactions by boiling down the planet's 200+ states and its thousands of nations and non-state actors to a much smaller number of global and regional international societies. Early in its history, the English School focused almost solely on states as actors in international society. It has since widened the range of actors that it analyses, bringing in transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations. In doing so, the English School has become more closely associated with **pluralism** by acknowledging the role of non-state actors and the importance of concerns other than state security. The influence of non-state actors is more apparent in the economic and social sectors than in politics. In the political sector, the state continues to dominate.

One of the great benefits of the English School's approach to IR is the theory's ability to trace similarities and differences between the planet's global and regional international societies. In his 2010 book, Barry Buzan argues that the planet is inhabited by a number of overlapping international societies. At the global level, international actors are linked by a relatively 'thin' form of international society characterised by very few shared practices and values. The most widely recognised of these include **state sovereignty** – a rule of membership – and diplomacy – a rule of behaviour. These norms are generally accepted by the states of the world and form the basis for global international society. At the regional level, more exclusive international societies often develop 'thicker' sets of formal and informal institutions than their global counterpart. This is largely due to neighbouring actors' more frequent interactions and longer shared histories. These longer histories allow informal practices more time to become sedimented aspects of their regional international society, creating a denser set of norms, rules and practices than exists at the global scale. Professor Buzan explains the relationship between our 'thin' global international society and its 'thicker' regional counterparts by comparing the world to a frying pan filled with several eggs cooking. As he explains, 'although nearly all states in the [global] system belong to a thin, pluralist international society (the layer of the egg-white), there are sub-global and/or regional clusters that are much more thickly developed… (the yolks)'.[1] Relatively 'thick' regional societies float on top of a thinner, global society. This means that any one state will probably take part in at least two international societies: one global and one regional.

Beyond providing a simplified way of thinking about global and regional IR, the English School's approach also provides an opportunity to compare institutions across history. As indicated earlier, imperialism was once a defining institution of European – and arguably global – international society. It helped determine both who could be a full member of international society (imperial actors) and how they should act (e.g. asymmetric economic relationships, rule by foreign elites). This is no longer the case. Imperialism has been replaced by other rules of membership and behaviour in Europe and around the world. These other norms, rules and practices – such as self-determination – have proven to be more resilient than imperialism, providing a basis for the 'thin' global society described in Professor Buzan's fried egg metaphor.

[1] *Buzan (2009) p.28.*

Summary

- The English School approach allows analysts to compare and contrast different regional international societies, which may be defined by very different arrays of actors and institutions.

- Regional international societies are likely to exist alongside a thinner 'global' society defined by a less dense network of norms, rules and practices.

⏩ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 2, Sections 2–3, pp.37–40.

Activity

Note the important role played by religion as an institution in ancient and pre-modern Christian and Islamic international societies. In particular, think about how religion acted like Buzan's 'thin' egg whites, holding otherwise dissimilar international societies together by virtue of its transnational appeal. How do you think the emergence of state sovereignty in the 16th and 17th centuries affected this 'thin' institutional framework? Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have posted your work, respond to a post from one of your peers. Do you agree with their analysis? Send them a note to let them know what you think.

The English School and the First World War

As has been argued in previous chapters of this subject guide, the First World War was a seminal event in the evolution of modern international relations. It marked the transition from one type of international society to another. Understanding this transformation is a task best accomplished through the use of the English School's analytical methods.

It is tempting to think of international society as something that is naturally cooperative, encouraging its member states to behave civilly towards each other in order to avoid conflict. This is true in many parts of the world today. Europe and the Americas, for example, have regional international societies that prohibit war as an acceptable political tool in all cases except self-defence. This has not always been the case. Using English School concepts, it is possible to identify different types of institutions across world history. Some of these characterise cooperative international societies. Others encourage competitive, even combative, behaviour. This is an important point: an international society does not need to be peaceful. Europe's regional international society before the First World War was characterised by high levels of competition and conflict between its members. This resulted in frequent wars between European states. To many in the English School, these wars do not indicate a failure of international society. In the international society of the day, war was one of the institutions that defined acceptable state behaviour. Norms like militarism – the belief in military solutions to political disputes – and **nationalism** pushed international actors into violent conflict with one another. In societies defined by militarism and nationalism, war became an essential institution. It provided a means – however imperfect – of conflict resolution. Thus, the First World War was a product of the institutions that defined European international society before 1914.

Since the end of the First World War, Europe's international society has slowly and fitfully transformed itself into something much more

cooperative. War has been replaced as an acceptable practice by other institutions such as **collective security**. This new institution has become entrenched in European international society through a series of formal agreements associated with the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus, the impact of the First World War on IR is understood by members of the English School to consist mainly of institutional changes to the make-up of international society. The bloodshed and bankruptcy brought about by the First World War forced Europe's states to turn their backs on old institutions of militarism and nationalism in the 1920s. When these re-emerged in states like Italy and Germany in the 1930s, they signalled a return to the more combative and dangerous international society of the years prior to 1914. This led to the Second World War – an even more costly conflict in terms of both lives lost and wealth wasted. It was only after this devastating conflict that Europe slowly began to shift away from its militaristic and nationalistic past towards a more cooperative form of international society.

Summary

- The First World War was a result of the institutions that defined European international society in the first decades of the 20th century, particularly the norms, rules and practices associated with militarism and nationalism.

- The end of the First World War introduced new institutions, such as collective security, into the international society of the day.

Activity

In a short paragraph, address the following question:

'Is there any evidence that European international society is transitioning away from collective security towards the militarism and nationalism that defined its institutions prior to 1914?'

Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have posted your work, respond to a post from one of your peers. Do you agree with their analysis? Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Conclusion

English School theory revolves around the idea of international society – a collection of international actors linked by shared sets of formal and informal institutions. It uses this theoretical concept to simplify the study of IR by grouping actors and their interactions into a limited number of global and regional societies, each possessing 'thick' or 'thin' sets of shared practices and values. Different institutional structures can result in different kinds of international societies – from the highly cooperative society that currently exists in Europe to the much more competitive society that characterises IR in East Asia. By tracing the different institutional structures that define these societies, it is possible to compare and contrast them across space and time in order to assess the impact of different institutions on the evolution of international societies around the world.

Chapter overview

- The English School of IR is a diverse group of analysts who see the world as being composed of international actors who agree to shared standards of behaviour that make their actions more predictable.

- The organising principle of the English School is international society – a collection of international actors who share in the working of common institutions. These are norms, rules and practices that prescribe specific types of behaviour for society's members.

- Actors who violate international society's institutions may be sanctioned by its other members. Sanctions can range from verbal warnings to full-scale military interventions, depending on the severity of the transgression and the power of the actors involved.

- Hedley Bull, a key thinker in the English school, argues that contemporary international society is fundamentally anarchic insofar as there is no global government that can settle disputes between sovereign states.

- Despite being anarchic, international society is orderly thanks to the influence of formal and informal institutions, which regularise actors' behaviour and allow for international coordination and cooperation.

- The English School is particularly good at tracing the evolution of actors and practices through history, allowing analysts to explain how specific behaviours – such as imperialism – rise to prominence and fade into obscurity.

- The English School approach allows analysts to compare and contrast different regional international societies, which may be defined by very different arrays of actors and institutions.

- Regional international societies are likely to exist alongside a thinner 'global' society defined by a less dense network of norms, rules and practices.

- The First World War was the result of the institutions that defined European international society in the first decades of the 20th century, particularly the norms, rules and practices associated with militarism and nationalism.

- The end of the First World War introduced new institutions, such as collective security, into the international society of the day.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how international society creates order out of anarchy
- explain how global and regional international societies differ
- use English School concepts to analyse aspects of the First World War.
- define key terms written in bold

Chapter vocabulary

- English School
- international society
- institutions
- sanction
- anarchic
- anarchical society
- pluralism
- state sovereignty
- nationalism
- collective security

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Which institutions define membership and behaviour in global international society today?

2. Why might the English School characterise the Cold War as 'a battle over international institutions' between the USA and the former USSR?

Notes

Chapter 7: Liberalism

To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war.

Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Churchill

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- locate Liberalism as a branch of international relations (IR) theory
- introduce 'interdependence' as the organising principle of Liberalism
- discuss the role of regimes in the international arena's system of global governance
- apply Liberalism's concepts to analyse the causes and effects of the First World War.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and discuss key terms and concepts associated with Liberalism
- describe the role of regimes in the present system of global governance
- analyse the impact of the First World War on the development of Liberalism.

Essential reading

Dunne, T. 'Liberalism' in BSO, Chapter 7.

Further reading and works cited

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Chapter synopsis

- Liberalism is one of the oldest theoretical schools of IR, and focuses on the best way to create a more just and peaceful international order.

- The organising principle of Liberalism is interdependence – a condition in which two or more international actors rely on each other for the provision of essential goods or services.

- Liberals claim that interdependence decreases conflict by encouraging a harmony of interests – shared goals that can be achieved through cooperation.

- Liberals see regimes as the most important sources of order in what is otherwise an anarchic international society.

- The most effective regimes are supported by international organisations that ensure absolute gains for all of their members.

- Liberals believe that domestic political systems are an important indicator of states' international behaviour, claiming that liberal democratic states do not tend to go to war with other liberal democracies. This is called democratic peace theory (DPT).

- Spreading liberal democracy is therefore an effective way to widen the international 'zone of peace' inhabited by the world's democratic states.

- Liberals have successfully constructed a wide variety of international regimes dealing with security, economic and social development, decolonisation, international law and a range of other issues.

- Many of these regimes work through the organs of the United Nations, which is the main instrument of global governance in the world today.

- The First World War gave birth to the first generation of Liberal thinkers in IR – the Idealists. These thinkers hoped to establish a world based on the rule of law and collective security, in which states would resolve disputes through the League of Nations rather than war.

- The Second World War forced many Liberals to accept the special role of great powers in creating and maintaining regimes – a lesson they put into practice when designing the United Nations Security Council.

Introduction

Liberalism is a powerful theory of IR that highlights a different set of questions than those covered by the English school. Like John Locke, Liberals believe that any form of international order must be defined by **justice** if it is to survive. Unjust orders, they argue, are inherently unstable because they invite rebellion by the people they oppress. As such, Liberal theory is often prescriptive, recommending specific policy actions in pursuit of its international goal of a just global order. The English School, on the other hand, tends to be descriptive, analysing the structure and composition of different international societies without necessarily asking which form of society is 'best'. This difference is clearly illustrated by their attitudes to war. Whereas the English School accepts that war can be a legitimate form of conflict resolution in certain international societies, Liberalism views military conflict as evidence of failure. For Liberals, war is an evil that must be avoided whenever possible. This makes Liberalism a **normative theory** – concerned with what ought to be rather than simply describing what is.

It is important to note that there are many varieties of Liberal theory in the social sciences – IR, political science, economics, sociology and so on. Though connected by their intellectual histories, these varieties of Liberalism are not identical. Economic Liberalism – which encourages the reduction of government regulation and reliance on market forces to determine economic outcomes – is not the same as Liberal Institutionalism – the most influential brand of Liberal thought in IR. You will need to be careful not to conflate these different 'Liberal' theories.

Organising principle

With its philosophical roots in the 18th century's European Enlightenment, Liberalism focuses on ways in which actors' **interdependence** can result in increasing cooperation and thereby ensure international peace and security. Interdependence is closely associated with globalisation. It describes a situation in which two state or non-state actors rely on one another for essential goods or services. This limits the actors' autonomy, forcing them to consider the impact of their actions on others. According to Liberalism, interdependence makes actors less likely to engage in violent conflict because it generates a **harmony of interests** that encourages cooperation between international actors and makes competition and conflict less likely. In this sense, Liberalism owes a debt to the idealism that defined most IR theory between the two world wars.

Like the English School, Liberals see the international arena as one defined by anarchy – the absence of a final judge to arbitrate disputes and dictate rules. Unlike the English School, Liberals have little time for informal institutions. They prefer formal agreements and treaties to unwritten understandings because they represent written social contracts that can be clearly understood and monitored by all of the contracting parties. This has focused Liberalism on the present, sidelining many of the historical analyses favoured by the English School. Many of these Liberal principles are deeply contested by other IR theories, particularly those branded as Realist by their followers. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter of this subject guide.

Summary

- Liberalism is one of the oldest theoretical schools of IR, and focuses on the best way to create a more just and peaceful international order.

- The organising principle of Liberalism is interdependence – a condition in which two or more international actors rely on each other for the provision of essential goods or services.

- Liberals claim that interdependence decreases conflict by encouraging a harmony of interests – shared goals that can be achieved through cooperation.

- ▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 7, Section 1, pp.114–15.

Concepts and assumptions

Liberals argue that international actors are interdependent. Each relies on others to provide essential goods and services, ranging from security to food to investment. It is this interdependence that Liberals look to when they prescribe policies to limit conflict and create a just order in our anarchic world. Liberals argue that the most just form of order is provided by **regimes**. These are defined by Stephen Krasner as:

> sets of… principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations.[1]

Regimes are problem-solving tools that make it easier for international actors to pursue collective actions to solve shared problems. They do so by codifying actors' rights and responsibilities in a series of treaties, agreements and charters. Unlike the institutions of the English School, Liberal regimes are consciously designed to address specific issues. Liberals argue that the informal institutions of the English School cannot provide a sustainable basis for international cooperation. In order to be effective, institutions must be codified into international law. Liberalism therefore sees **international organisations** – the organisational embodiments of regimes – as the best way to ensure peaceful relations between actors.

Liberalism's faith in regimes as the best way to ensure international peace and stability is based on its assumption of an international harmony of interests. The harmony of interests argues that the interests of all international actors – if rationally calculated – are essentially similar. They can therefore pursue **absolute gains** through collective action, pooling their resources in pursuit of shared goals. Liberals argue that international organisations (IOs) such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) represent actors' surest means of achieving absolute gains by making all state and non-state actors more secure and wealthy. Because nobody is a 'loser', the order created by the pursuit of absolute gains is considered 'just' and, following the ideas of John Locke, stable. This is very different from the **relative gains** that other theoretical schools pursue, in which international units try to strengthen themselves at one another's expense.

Liberalism in IR is a relatively new variation on the Liberal philosophical tradition, only emerging as a coherent approach to the study of international politics and economics during the late 20th century. It accepts many of classical Liberalism's guiding principles. For example, it assumes that peace is best achieved through the liberation of humanity from authoritarian rule through democratic politics. Liberals argue that liberal democratic states tend to be less warlike than their authoritarian and theocratic neighbours. This is especially true when it comes to their relations with other liberal democracies. Liberalism's views on the relationship between domestic government and international behaviour have led to **democratic peace theory (DPT)**, first discussed in Chapter 5. Democratic peace theory's central claim is that liberal democracies will not go to war with one another, though they will fight against illiberal or non-democratic states. Democratic peace theory concludes that a fully democratic world would be a peaceful one in which disputes are solved by diplomatic negotiation instead of military action. The most likely flashpoints for international conflict therefore exist where democratic and non-democratic states collide. This has led Liberals to call for the establishment of liberal democratic domestic governments around the world. This goal has occasionally been pursued through military means, often under the banner of **humanitarian intervention**. Although liberal democratic institutions have been successfully forced on some states 'at the end of a bayonet', as in post-1945 Germany and Japan, the difficulties experienced following the more recent wars of Afghanistan (2001 to the present) and Iraq (2003 to the present) have cast considerable doubt on the efficacy of 'fighting for peace'. Nevertheless, democratic peace theory continues to be a powerful argument in Liberalism's toolkit.

Liberalism is a prescriptive theory that advocats establishing the conditions for international peace through the creation of regimes to deal with shared problems in the otherwise anarchic international arena. It identifies a broad range of international actors in IR, from states to TNCs and NGOs. Interdependence, the theory argues, is the best way to inoculate IR against conflict – particularly when reinforced by a formal set of rules and organisations that can address shared problems and achieve absolute gains for each of the actors involved. Regimes bring order to what Liberals see as an otherwise anarchic international system by establishing the rule of law and thus overcoming the problems of coordination and cooperation at the international scale.

Summary

- Liberals see regimes as the most important sources of order in what is otherwise an anarchic international society.

- The most effective regimes are supported by international organisations that ensure absolute gains for all their members.

- Liberals believe that domestic political systems are an important indicator of states' international behaviour, claiming that liberal democratic states do not tend to go to war with other liberal democracies. This is called democratic peace theory (DPT).

- Spreading liberal democracy is therefore an effective way to widen the international 'zone of peace' inhabited by the world's democratic states.

▶▶ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 7, Section 2, pp.116–20.

Activity

The case study on p.118 of BSO recalls how Liberal thinkers in the 19th century applied their ideas to IR in European international society while denying Liberal rights to non-European people. They did so on the basis of a 'standard of civilisation' that separated European and non-European international society. Does such a standard of civilisation exist today? If so, which international societies does it separate? Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have posted your work, respond to a post from one of your peers. Do you agree with their analysis? Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Applications

Liberalism has a clear normative goal: to establish conditions for a sustainable peace in the otherwise anarchic international arena. The questions it seeks to answer revolve around this objective. Its assumptions and guiding concepts address the requirements of cooperation between actors at the international scale. It should therefore come as no surprise that Liberalism is best suited to analyses dealing directly with the role of regimes and international organisations in coordinating efforts to solve pressing global issues.

At the global scale, the best-known and arguably the most influential international regimes are focused around the organisations of the United Nations system. Though often thought of as a single entity, the UN is really a collection of international organisations working towards related goals. Its five principle organs – the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the International Court of Justice – are each responsible for the maintenance

of a different international regime. The General Assembly sets the agenda for the UN system and acts as a forum in which all member states can voice their opinions and mobilise support for their political, economic and social interests. The Security Council is more narrowly concerned with the maintenance of 'international peace and security' through collective action. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is concerned with coordinating international action on a broad range of issues including economic development, culture, education and health. The Trusteeship Council is responsible for decolonisation – a goal it formally achieved in 1994 when Palau, the final trusteeship territory under the Council's purview, declared its independence. Finally, the International Court of Justice acts as the main arbiter of legal disputes between states, interpreting and applying international law to cases brought before it by members of the UN. It is important to note that the ICJ operates under the articles of the UN Charter and cannot, therefore, interfere in the domestic politics of any member state. This limits its ability to enforce its decisions on a state that chooses to ignore them.

Liberalism provides a number of useful theoretical tools to help you understand this complex system. First, Liberalism can help you to understand the UN's limitations. It is not a global government. As liberal thinkers in IR point out, the UN operates internationally rather than domestically. It is made up of sovereign states rather than individuals. States do not have the same relationship to the UN as citizens do towards their governments. Whereas a state is normally able to order its citizens to follow the laws of the land regardless of their individual wishes, the UN has no such power over its membership. As the Article 2.7 of the UN Charter clearly states,

> Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.[2]

This limits the organisation's ability to force even weak states to abide by its decisions except in cases of a threat to international peace and security, when the Security Council can choose to intervene economically, politically or militarily to stabilise the situation. Because it lacks the ability to enforce its decisions, the United Nations is not a global government. The states that make it up are sovereign and can therefore ignore its decisions if they choose to do so. Rather, the United Nations is an organisation dedicated to **global governance** – the coordination of international action in pursuit of actors' shared goals. The UN's role in world affairs is not to legislate solutions to international problems, but to ensure that member states wishing to cooperate in pursuit of solutions can do so effectively. This can make the organisation look ineffective when one or more member state chooses not to cooperate with its efforts. From the point of view of Liberals, however, this limitation is a natural product of the anarchic international arena in which the UN operates. Without a supreme ruler or judge to settle disputes and force states into line with its decisions, the UN system must accept member states' sovereignty and the limits this places on the organisation's influence. To do otherwise would require the establishment of a global government capable of intervening in sovereign states' domestic jurisdictions – a goal explicitly rejected in the UN Charter.

Activity

In 500 words or less, use the vocabulary of Liberalism to answer the following question.

'Some commentators claim that the UN will be unable to achieve its goal of international peace and stability until it transforms itself from an institution of global governance into a global government. Would a global government really make the world a more peaceful and stable place?'

Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum in order to compare it with answers from other students in your class. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post from one of your peers. Do you agree with their analysis? Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Apart from its ability to analyse key international regimes and organisations, Liberalism provides a good starting point from which you can analyse proposed solutions to international problems. When they face ecological crises, economic downturns or violations of copyright law, states often create regimes to help them achieve international solutions. Regimes codify international practices, creating formal agreements and organisations to make international cooperation easier for the actors involved. While imperfect insofar as they continue to operate in an anarchic international system, regimes increase the likelihood of effective crisis management by clearly laying out the social contract by which international actors will cooperate.

Despite many successes since 1945, Liberalism fails to answer many of the most pressing questions in international relations. Why have so many states resisted the pull of liberal democracy and the promise of global stability described by democratic peace theory? Why have the benefits of global governance been so unevenly distributed among the states of the world? How can Liberalism hope to deal with threats from deeply illiberal actors such as the so-called 'Islamic State' in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria and elsewhere? As the world moves deeper into the 21st century, these questions have become more and more pressing, undermining Liberalism's claim to have the 'answer' to problems of international cooperation.

Summary

- Liberals have successfully constructed a wide variety of international regimes to coordinate states' efforts in fields as diverse as security, economic and social development, decolonisation and international law.

- Many of these regimes work through the organs of the United Nations, which is the main instrument of global governance in the world today.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 7, Sections 3–4, pp.120–24.

Liberalism and the First World War

There is a strong argument to be made that Liberalism is a product of the First World War. Before 1914, European and global international society were dominated by institutions that encouraged interstate competition and possibly even conflict. As discussed in Chapter 6 of this subject guide, these included militarism – the belief that political disputes could be resolved through the use of force against one's competitors, and nationalism – the belief that the world is divided into separate identity groups that define themselves in opposition to one another. When combined with the norms, rules and practices associated with Westphalian

international society (see BSO, Box 1.7, p.24), these institutions helped push the world to a state of war in 1914. The carnage that ensued marked an epochal shift in international relations. It led to the establishment of the first academic positions dedicated to the study of international relations. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this subject guide, these were established in order to avoid future wars. This led writers such as G. John Ikenberry to identify Liberalism with the dominant school of IR between 1919 and 1939, which he calls Liberalism 1.0. Normally referred to as **Idealism**, this early strand of Liberalism called for the creation of an international rule of law similar to that which exists in states' domestic jurisdictions. This, argued Idealists, would solve the security problems associated with international anarchy and lay the groundwork for international peace.

In their attempts to create a world in which international law could restrain states' violent tendencies, Liberalism 1.0 created the League of Nations. This collective security organisation tried to embody Liberalism's harmony of interests by asking states to treat an attack on any one of their number as an attack on them all, a variation on the Musketeers' code made famous by Alexandre Dumas: 'All for one and one for all'. The League of Nations tried to make war obsolete by ensuring that international society would unite to overwhelm any attacker. Though unsuccessful in the fact of Japanese, Italian and German aggression in the 1930s, the Liberal concept of collective security would re-emerge from the ashes of the Second World War in the guise of the United Nations. Many writers, including a number of Liberals, explain the failure of the League of Nations by pointing to the unwillingness of great powers – especially Britain, France and the United States – to use their might to enforce the post-1918 settlement. This has led some Liberals to support hegemonic stability theory – the idea that an international society is most stable when it is supported by one or more states that are both willing and able to reward supporters and punish opponents of the international order. Among other things, hegemonic stability helps to explain the veto powers granted to the Permanent Five (P5) members of the Security Council to ensure their active participation in the UN system of collective security.

Liberalism explains the First World War as a failure of pre-war international society to establish clear disincentives around the use of force by a state in pursuit of its political goals. This conclusion has led to repeated attempts to build regimes that punish violators of international peace and security. It has also encouraged Liberals to call for more interdependence between states as a way to incentivise cooperation by rewarding good behaviour. Some of these attempts to build a peaceful world have been more successful than others, but all can trace their roots to the earliest versions of Liberalism that emerged from the fires of the First World War.

Summary

- The First World War gave birth to the first generation of Liberal thinkers in IR – the Idealists. These thinkers hoped to establish a world based on the rule of law and collective security, in which states would resolve disputes through the League of Nations rather than war.

- The Second World War forced many Liberals to accept the special role of great powers in creating and maintaining regimes – a lesson they put into practice when designing the United Nations Security Council.

Conclusion

Liberalism revolves around the concepts of interdependence and regimes. The former describes the fact that state and non-state actors around the world rely on one another for the provision of essential goods and services. This interdependence means that any potential solutions to international problems will normally require a cooperative solution from a large number of international actors. Liberals argue that cooperation in an anarchic international society requires a formal set of international agreements that lay out actors' rights and responsibilities and set up an administrative apparatus to ensure effective coordination. The goal of these regimes and their associated international organisations should be effective global governance rather than global government, an outcome that ensures the continued autonomy of international actors while maximising their chances of successfully tackling thorny global issues.

Chapter overview

- Liberalism is one of the oldest theoretical schools of IR, and focuses on the best way to create a more just and peaceful international order.

- The organising principle of Liberalism is interdependence – a condition in which two or more international actors rely on each other for the provision of essential goods or services.

- Liberals claim that interdependence decreases conflict by encouraging a harmony of interests – shared goals that can be achieved through cooperation.

- Liberals see regimes as the most important sources of order in what is otherwise an anarchic international society.

- The most effective regimes are supported by international organisations that ensure absolute gains for all of their members.

- Liberals believe that domestic political systems are an important indicator of states' international behaviour, claiming that liberal democratic states do not tend to go to war with other liberal democracies. This is called democratic peace theory (DPT).

- Spreading liberal democracy is therefore an effective way to widen the international 'zone of peace' inhabited by the world's democratic states.

- Liberals have successfully constructed a wide variety of international regimes dealing with security, economic and social development, decolonisation, international law and a range of other issues.

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- The Second World War forced many Liberals to accept the special role of great powers in creating and maintaining regimes – a lesson they put into practice when designing the United Nations Security Council.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and discuss key terms and concepts associated with Liberalism
- describe the role of regimes in the present system of global governance
- analyse the impact of the First World War on the development of Liberalism.

Chapter vocabulary

- justice
- normative theory
- interdependence
- harmony of interests
- regimes
- international organisations
- absolute gains
- relative gains
- democratic peace theory (DPT)
- humanitarian intervention
- global governance
- Idealism

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How do the principles of Liberalism lead to a more peaceful international society?

2. Do regimes need to be supported by a global hegemon in order to be effective?

3. What impact did the First World War have on the development of Liberalism?

Chapter 8: Realism

> International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power
>
> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- locate Realism as a branch of international relations (IR) theory
- introduce the 'anarchic international system' as the organising principle of Realism
- compare the main ideas of Classical Realism and Structural Realism
- apply Realist concepts to analyse the causes and effects of the First World War.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and discuss key terms and concepts associated with Realism
- describe the security dilemma as a cause of conflict between states
- contrast Realist theories of IR with those of the English School and Liberal Institutionalism
- use Realist concepts to understand the causes of the First World War.

Essential reading

Dunne, T. and B. Schmidt, 'Realism' in BSO, Chapter 6.

Further reading

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Chapter synopsis

- Realist theory first gained prominence in the United States following the end of the Second World War, and tries to understand the historical persistence of war.

- The organising principle of Realism is the anarchic international system – a collection of sovereign states whose actions are only limited by power rather than of English School institutions or Liberal regimes.

- Realism presents a highly simplified model of international behaviour that addresses the persistence of war but fails to capture many other aspects of IR.

- All Realists agree on the importance of three fundamental ideas: statism, survival and self-help.

- Classical Realists ascribe war to what they see as our flawed human nature.

- Structural Realists ascribe war to what they see as our rational response to the security dilemma created by the anarchic international system in which we live.

- During the Cold War, US Realists recommended a policy of containment in which the USA strengthened and supported anti-Communist states, even if this meant supporting governments that were tyrannical.

- This was explained by the dual moral standard, in which a state's actions internationally are not subject to the same ideas of right and wrong as actions taken domestically.

- [When balancing against the power of another actor] in the international system, a state can balance internally by building up its own power or externally by allying with other actors.

- Structural Realism teaches us that the First World War began thanks to the security dilemma, which meant that any investments made in armaments by one state had to be echoed by similar policies in the others.

- To balance against one another, the great powers of Europe formed a pair of opposed alliances that were intended to deter war, but actually made it easier for conflict to spread from the borders of Serbia and Austria–Hungary to every corner of the continent.

Introduction

Realism is the name given to a group of theories that emerged in the United States after the Second World War. Like Thomas Hobbes, Realists believe that anarchy is an inherently unstable condition that requires international actors to guarantee their own survival through the accumulation of **power**. The pursuit of power is therefore a primary goal of Realist theory insofar as it helps states to guarantee their survival in a world where the life of an international actor tends to be 'solitary,

poor, nasty, brutish and short'. You will recall Hobbes' argument that a society without a hegemon to enforce order would be naturally unstable because any individual is capable of killing any other individual. Even the strongest among us is vulnerable when they sleep. Realists apply this piece of political philosophy to answer their primary question about international relations: 'Why do wars persist?' Its focus on the causes of violent conflict makes Realism a relatively narrow theory. It tends to ignore the bases for peace and justice described by the English School and Liberal Institutionalism. Instead, it highlights the roots of violent conflict on the international stage. This limits Realism's ability to analyse peaceful international societies, but makes it a prime candidate for anyone wishing to understand the continuing importance of war to IR. This was especially true during the Cold War, when Realism provided the main guide for US foreign policy.

Organising principle

The English School and Liberal Institutionalism focus on the international institutions and regimes that bring some level of order to the anarchic international societies in which we live. Realism, born in the wake of the Second World War and at the dawn of the Cold War, focuses on a very different set of questions. For Realists, the most important fact in IR is the existence of an anarchic **international system** inhabited by sovereign states. An international system is subtly different from the international society championed by the English School. Whereas international society recognises the important of norms, rules and practices in shaping actors' behaviour, an international system is simply a set of interacting states pursuing power in order to ensure their survival. While some states in the system may find it convenient to follow shared sets of 'rules' in the short term, Realists argue that states will violate these rules as soon as they are no longer convenient to the state's pursuit of power. After all, there is no global government that can force states to follow the conventions of international law. This makes IR very different from domestic politics, where centralised judiciaries and police forces enforce the law of the land. Instead of a global government, Realism's international system is given shape by the relative power of its constituent states. This means that the system's polarity – a concept that you first learned about in Chapter 3 of this subject guide – is an important Realist tool when analysing the nature of international relations on the global or regional scale.

Realism's model of the anarchic international system helps it to explain the persistence of **war** – defined as large-scale organised violence between two or more international actors in pursuit of political ends (see Bull, 2002, p.184). To return to the map metaphor used in Chapter 6 of this subject guide, Realism provides a clear guide to the causes of war in international relations. It does so by simplifying the world – highlighting just those actors and interactions that contribute to its explanation of international conflict. Realism is like a simple road map of the journey between two points. It is easy to understand and is a great tool if you are just trying to travel from Point A to Point B. However, it is almost useless if you want to go anywhere else and cannot tell you much about the context you're travelling through. Such details are excluded from the Realist model in order to provide a clear and elegant answer to questions about the causes of war. This comes at a cost, however. Realism has a tough time analysing the causes of peace and cooperation – phenomena that are as important as war in the history of international relations.

That said, Realism has arguably long been IR's most influential theory. As you will see in this chapter, it is a great help when trying to understand how wars begin and how they can be effectively waged. This made it especially popular in US IR during the second half of the 20th century, when the United States and the Soviet Union were in a more or less permanent **state of war** from around 1948 to around 1991.

Summary

- Realist theory first gained prominence in the United States following the end of the Second World War, and tries to understand the historical persistence of war.

- The organising principle of Realism is the anarchic international system – a collection of sovereign states whose actions are only limited by power instead of English School institutions or Liberal regimes.

- Realism presents a highly simplified model of international behaviour that addresses the persistence of war but fails to capture many other aspects of IR.

⇥ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 6, Section 1, pp.100–02.

Concepts and assumptions

In this chapter, you will be introduced to two major schools of Realist thought – Classical Realism and Structural Realism. These share a number of assumptions about the world we live in. First, they all accept **statism** as a basic fact in IR. The reason for this single-minded focus on state actors is rooted in Realism's organising principle: non-state actors lack the military capacity to threaten state actors and are therefore dependent on their home state for security in the anarchic international system. This leads Realists to focus on the role of states in their analysis of international events and ignore the influence of non-state actors. Statism makes Realism very different from the pluralist model of IR proposed by the English School and helps to define the Realist approach to understanding IR.

Second, Realists of all stripes identify **survival** as the main goal of any state on the international stage. As you have already learned, Realists emphasise the anarchic nature of the international system. In this sense, they are not alone in IR theory. Both the English School and Liberal Institutionalism accept that there is no supreme ruler or judge who can settle international disputes. However, whereas these theories identify institutions and regimes as potential sources of order and justice, Realism maintains that only power can ensure a state's survival in the international system. All other goals must be subordinated to the quest for survival, even if this means turning one's back on an ally or violating a key aspect of international law.

Third, all Realists agree that states can only ensure their own survival through **self-help** strategies that allow them to defend themselves and their interests against another state's aggression. They reject the Liberal concept of a harmony of interests shared by all international actors and question the sustainability of alliances over the long term. After all, history is littered with examples of allies turning on each other as soon as the threat that united them is gone. This is precisely what happened at the end of the Second World War, when the United States and the UK split from the Soviet Union after the threat of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan were extinguished. This experience deeply affected Realism's early thinkers, leading them to conclude that no alliance was permanent and

that every state had to look to its own power for a true guarantee of its survival in a Hobbesian world.

⯈⯈ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 6, Section 3, pp.107–10.

Classical Realism

Classical Realism was the first branch of Realist thought to emerge following the end of the Second World War. Starting with the work of Hans Morgenthau, it argues that states pursue power and security at one another's expense. Following in the footsteps of Thomas Hobbes, who argues that human beings are aggressive and acquisitive beasts unless controlled by some form of dominant ruler or government, Classical Realists assert that **human nature** holds the key to understanding war and conflict. Morgenthau and Hobbes agree that humans in a state of nature are aggressive beasts. In the absence of a government to control our aggressive instincts, human life is therefore 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. Classical Realists use Hobbesian human nature to describe state relations in our anarchic international system. On this basis, they conclude that war is a natural product of flawed human nature operating in an ungoverned and therefore insecure international environment. Each state must rely on its own power to defend itself against every other state in the international system. Given these assumptions, Classical Realists have no trouble explaining the persistence of war, which they ascribe to moral flaws at the level of the individual human being.

Structural Realism

Structural Realism, which emerged in the 1970s, reaches many of the same conclusions as its classical predecessor. However, it does so by looking at systemic rather than individual causes. This means that it focuses less on human nature and more on the anarchic **structure** of the international system in which states operate. Kenneth Waltz, whose 1979 book *Theory of international politics* provides the foundations for Structural Realism's explanations of war and IR, emphasises the distinction between his approach and that of Morgenthau and the Classical Realists. Whereas Classical Realism places responsibility for war at the feet of individual human beings, Waltz points to the anarchical structure of the international system as the main reason for war's persistence. He asserts that states are victims of the **security dilemma**, in which one state's efforts to ensure its survival will threaten the security of states around it. Following Realism's concept of self-help, Waltz argues that the only rational course of action for a state in an anarchic international system is to maintain enough military and political power to defend itself against aggression. In doing so, it might invest in new weapons or seek alliances with other states who may or may not come to its aid in a crisis. Unfortunately, these steps toward self-defence will appear threatening to neighbouring states, forcing them to respond with their own military build-up and alliance making. In a world defined by mutual suspicion, one state's attempts to safeguard its survival will make other states less secure, forcing them to respond with their own self-help strategies. The result is an arms race in which every state builds up its military capacity in response to one another's actions. This is the crux of the security dilemma, which Structural Realists use to explain the persistence of conflict and war on the international stage. In the absence of a world government, states are condemned to exist in an environment of mutual distrust and one state's declaration that it is seeking armed strength for purely defensive reasons is certain to be met with suspicion by its neighbours.

⏩ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 6, Section 2, pp.103–06.

It is worth pausing to compare and contrast the three theoretical approaches to IR covered so far in this course. They agree on several points. First, each accepts that international relations take place in an anarchic international environment. Second, all three theories use this characteristic to differentiate IR from domestic interactions, which are regulated by the presence of sovereign authorities capable of enacting and enforcing rules on their citizens and subjects. Finally, each theory sees the international stage as inhabited by collective actors – groups of individuals with enough unified decision-making capability to (a) reproduce themselves over time, and (b) be treated as actors for the purposes of analysis. States, non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations all fit this definition, though not all are considered important by each of the three theories under consideration. Realism, with its exclusive focus on states, has the most restricted definition of what can be considered international actors. Liberal Institutionalism has a broader understanding, with states, NGOs and TNCs all playing roles in its international regimes and organisations. The English School – which considers international societies rather than international systems – falls somewhere between these extremes. Some international societies resemble Realism's competitive and combative model of IR, particularly when practices such as war and militarism are defining institutions. Other societies will be more ordered, with greater emphasis on institutions such as international law and diplomacy. These will bear a closer resemblance to the cooperative model of IR adopted by Liberal Institutionalism.

Activity

Complete the tables below. In Table A, note down any assumptions or concepts that are shared by the theoretical pairs listed in the left-hand column. In Table B, do the same for important conceptual differences.

Table A

Theories	Overlapping assumptions and concepts
English School – Liberalism	
Liberalism – Realism	
Realism – English School	

Table B

Theories	Conflicting assumptions and concepts
English School – Liberalism	
Liberalism – Realism	
Realism – English School	

Summary

- All Realists agree on the importance of three fundamental ideas: statism, survival and self-help.

- Classical Realists ascribe war to what they see as our flawed human nature.

- Structural Realists ascribe war to what they see as our rational response to the security dilemma created by the anarchic international system in which we live.

Applications

Classical and Structural Realism are mainly concerned with explaining the persistence of war in the international system. As a result, the range of questions that it can answer is relatively small. These centre on the role of human nature (Classical Realism) or international structure (Structural Realism) in enabling and encouraging interstate conflict. Though more limited than the English School or Liberal Institutionalism in terms of the analytical themes it addresses, Realism has been an important tool used by diplomats and politicians to shape their foreign policy decisions. This is particularly true of US foreign policy during the Cold War. Thanks to its relatively simple model of international relations, Realism provides policy makers with a straightforward and accessible set of recommendations to ensure state survival in the uncertain and anarchic international arena. Many of these recommendations focus on the maintenance of a balance of power – a condition in which no single actor or group of actors can overwhelm the remainder of the international system. During the Cold War, this led to the Western policy of **containment**, in which the USA and its allies deployed power in such a way as to limit the spread of Soviet influence. According to Realist theory, the purpose of US foreign policy was to ensure the survival of the US state rather than the spread of US practices and values around the world. Thus, while Liberal Institutionalism calls for the establishment of liberal democracies as the best way to ensure peace in international society, Realism is concerned with the immediate needs of national security, even if that means supporting **tyrannical states**. Justice is not a goal of Realism for the simple reason that Realism does not recognise it as a practical objective. Instead, Realists tend to accept a **dual moral standard** – the idea that what is right and wrong within a state's domestic jurisdiction is different from what is right and wrong in the anarchical international system.

With this in mind, it is interesting to consider US foreign policy in the early 21st century. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have often been laid at the feet of Realist advisers in the G.W. Bush administration. Is this accusation merited? One of Realism's central assumptions is that states' internal constitutions will have less of an impact on their international relations than either the characters of their leaders (Classical Realism) or the structure of the international system in which they are embedded (Structural Realism). For what reasons, then, should a state invade and occupy another? Would a Realist accept the spread of democracy as a valid reason for such aggressive international action? If not, which IR theory would?

Activity

In 500 words or less, explain how you think (a) a Structural Realist, and (b) a Liberal Institutionalist would have reacted to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States. What steps could they have taken to ensure US national security? Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have posted your work, respond to a post from one of your peers. Do you agree with their analysis? Send them a note to let them know what you think.

One of Realism's great strengths is its simplicity. It creates an elegant model of IR, uncluttered by the complexity that characterises English School and Liberal Institutionalist analysis. It focuses on a single type of international actor – the state. States, it assumes, possess sovereignty

insofar as they exercise (a) international autonomy, and (b) domestic hegemony, allowing them (a) to resist pressure from external actors, and (b) to control the people and territory within their borders. In an anarchic international system without a formal hierarchy, Realism also tends to assume the equality of all state actors. Although states may possess different amounts of power, they are essentially similar to one another in both form and function. Thus, both the United States and little Bhutan need to engage in IR to ensure their continued survival. They do so by maintaining a balance of power to ensure that no other actor will be able to dominate them and undermine their sovereignty. While the means by which they balance may differ – the US doing so internally by means of military and diplomatic investment and Bhutan doing so externally by means of alliance building – all states pursue power in order to ensure their own survival in a hostile, self-help environment.

Summary

- During the Cold War, US Realists recommended a policy of containment in which the USA strengthened and supported anti-Communist states, even if this meant supporting governments that were tyrannical.

- This was explained by the dual moral standard, in which a state's actions internationally are not subject to the same ideas of right and wrong as actions taken domestically.

- When balancing against the power of another actor in the international system, a state can balance internally by building up its own power or externally by allying with other actors.

Realism and the First World War

Although Realism developed as a theory of international relations after 1945, its focus on the causes of war makes it a useful tool for understanding the origins of the First World War. The following section will use three Realist concepts to analyse the roots of the conflict: power, survival and the security dilemma.

Power is a key concept in both Classical and Structural Realism. Because Realism denies the importance of English School institutions and Liberal regimes, the distribution of power among the states of the anarchic international system plays a central role in shaping international relations. The distribution of power in the international system can be described using the language of polarity – an idea first introduced in Chapter 3 of this subject guide. Polarity describes the number of great powers in an international society or system. These great powers are the actors most able to protect themselves through pure self-help – building up their own military power in order to deter attacks from other great powers. Small powers in the international system are often ignored by Realists because they lack the ability to defend their own interests. Instead, they must bandwagon with one or more great powers on the hope that their alliance will dissuade other actors from threatening their survival. Prior to the First World War, the world was inhabited by a wide range of great powers, including the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, France, Russia, Austria–Hungary, Italy, Japan and the Ottoman empire. Each of these states pursued its interests through the balance of power. This required access to enough power to deter attacks by any state or group of states that hoped to become hegemonic in the system. The great powers tried to achieve a stable balance of power through a combination of internal

balancing – building up their own power through investments in their armies and navies – and external balancing – signing treaties with other states to form alliances that would deter states from attacking by reducing their chances of a successful invasion.

By 1914, Europe was divided into two competing alliances. The Triple Alliance stretched across the heart of Europe and included Germany, Austria–Hungary and Italy. Of these states, Germany was by far the most powerful and therefore played a central role in deciding policy for the alliance as a whole. The Triple Entente was made up of the United Kingdom, France and Russia. Although the UK was the most influential of these states, each member of the Triple Entente carried their own authority thanks to their particular strengths. The UK was still the world's foremost naval and imperial power. The Royal Navy was larger than the next two fleets combined and the British empire controlled vast swathes of the world from Canada to Egypt to India to Australasia. However, it had a very small army by European standards, and was therefore less influential on the European continent than might be thought. Russia, on the other hand, had an immense army. Though poorly trained and equipped, it could put millions of soldiers into the field and had manpower resources far beyond any other state besides the USA. France was the linchpin of the Entente. In addition to a respectable overseas empire, it possessed an army almost equal in size to that of Germany. More importantly, its alliance with Russia and the UK meant that the Triple Alliance would be forced to fight any war on two fronts: a Western Front facing France and an Eastern Front facing Russia. Meanwhile, the non-European great powers either aligned themselves with one of the two alliances – as Japan did through its alliance with the UK – or sought a path of isolation from European conflicts – as the United States and the Ottoman empire tried unsuccessfully to do. Thus, the twin drivers of power and survival set the stage for the conflict that began to burn across Europe in the late summer of 1914.

The narrative of events that led to the First World War are well known and need not be recounted in great detail here.[1] However, we should consider how the security dilemma at the heart of Structural Realism can contribute to our understanding of these events. Remember that in an anarchic international system, every state must ensure its survival by any means necessary. Given the threats all around them, each state must be suspicious of the others' motives and goals. Thus, when Germany began to build a significant number of powerfully armed and armoured battleships in the first decade of the 1900s, the United Kingdom was forced to respond with a building programme of its own. The stated goal of German shipbuilding was simply to protect German trade and to help patrol the world's oceans. However, the United Kingdom had no way of knowing whether Germany planned to threaten either its overseas empire or its home islands. The security dilemma therefore sparked the Anglo–German naval race of the early 20th century, raising tensions between London and Berlin at a time when their economies were becoming more interconnected and their royal families were closely related by ties of blood. The same can be said of the events that precipitated war in 1914. Following the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist, Austria–Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia that demanded an Austria-led investigation of Serbia's complicity in the murder. Because Serbia had to protect its survival in the face of apparent Austrian aggression, it turned to its great power ally: Russia. Mutual suspicion between Austria and Serbia led to Russian involvement in the crisis. This precipitated a Russian military mobilisation, supposedly to defend little Serbia against Austria–Hungary.

[1] *For an insightful account of the First World War from a Realist perspective, read Kagan (1995) Chapter 2.*

Given the mutual suspicion created by the security dilemma, this prompted Germany to begin a mobilisation of its own – supposedly to defend German territory – forcing France to do likewise in order to forestall a German attack. This domino effect, in which the actions of one actor force others to do likewise, was made possible by the threatening environment created by the security dilemma. Without it, a full understanding of the causes of the First World War would be impossible.

Summary

- Structural Realism teaches us that the First World War began thanks to the security dilemma, which meant that any investments made in armaments by one state had to be echoed by similar policies in the others.

- To balance against one another, the great powers of Europe formed a pair of opposed alliances that were intended to deter war, but actually made it easier for conflict to spread from the borders of Serbia and Austria–Hungary to every corner continent.

Conclusion

Realism is one of IR's dominant theoretical traditions and focuses mainly on explanations of conflict and war in the international system. Focusing on political and military relations between states, it assumes these actors to be sovereign insofar as they possess international autonomy and domestic hegemony. These similar units compete for survival in an anarchic international system, pushed into self-help activity either by their Hobbesian human natures (Classical Realism) or by the anarchic structure of the system itself (Structural Realism). Though narrowly focused on conflict and war, Realism has had a major impact on the practice of IR through its influence on Cold War US foreign policy and remains a cornerstone of our discipline's understanding of the world.

Chapter overview

- Realist theory first gained prominence in the United States following the end of the Second World War, and tries to understand the historical persistence of war.

- The organising principle of Realism is the anarchic international system – a collection of sovereign states whose actions are only limited by power instead of English School institutions or Liberal regimes.

- Realism presents a highly simplified model of international behaviour that addresses the persistence of war but fails to capture many other aspects of IR.

- All Realists agree on the importance of three fundamental ideas: statism, survival and self-help.

- Classical Realists ascribe war to what they see as our flawed human nature.

- Structural Realist ascribe war to what they see as our rational response to the security dilemma created by the anarchic international system in which we live.

- During the Cold War, US Realists recommended a policy of containment in which the USA strengthened and supported anti-Communist states, even if this meant supporting governments that were tyrannical.

- This was explained by the dual moral standard, in which a state's actions internationally are not subject to the same ideas of right and wrong as actions taken domestically.

- When balancing against the power of another actor in the international system, a state can balance internally by building up its own power or externally by allying with other actors.

- Structural Realism teaches us that the First World War began thanks to the security dilemma, which meant that any investments made in armaments by one state had to be echoed by similar policies in the others.

- To balance against one another, the great powers of Europe formed a pair of opposed alliances that were intended to deter war, but actually made it easier for conflict to spread from the borders of Serbia and Austria–Hungary to every corner of the continent.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and discuss key terms and concepts associated with Realism

- describe the security dilemma as a cause of conflict between states

- contrast Realist theories of IR with those of the English School and Liberal Institutionalism

- use Realist concepts to understand the causes of the First World War.

Chapter vocabulary

- power
- international system
- war
- state of war
- statism
- survival
- self-help
- human nature
- structure
- security dilemma
- containment
- tyrannical states
- dual moral standard

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How do Classical and Structural Realism explain the persistence of interstate conflict?

2. According to Realism, will the anarchic international system ever establish a sustainable peace?

Notes

Chapter 9: Marxism

Theory is always for someone, and for some purpose.

Cox, R. 'Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations', *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 10(2) 1981, p.128.

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- locate Marxism as a branch of international relations (IR) theory
- introduce 'capitalism' and the class system as the organising principles of Marxism
- consider important Marxist concepts and assumptions about the nature of international relations
- apply Marxist concepts to analyse the causes and effects of the First World War.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define key terms and concepts associated with the Marxist approach to IR
- discuss international affairs in terms of relations between core, semi-peripheral and peripheral states in the world capitalist system
- explain how Marxism's focus on economic relations differs from perspectives offered by Liberalism and Realism.

Essential reading

Hobden, S. and R. Wyn Jones, 'Marxist theories of international relations' in BSO, Chapter 9.

'World-systems theory' in GCR.

Further reading and works cited

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Chapter synopsis

- Marxist theory has an intellectual heritage that stretches back to 1848, although it only became a powerful force in Western IR after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

- Marxism interprets the world through the lens of historical materialism, in which all political phenomena can be explained through the lens of economics.

- Marxism's organising principle is class conflict, which in a capitalist economy produces two distinct socio-economic groups: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

- By focusing on the link between politics and economics, Marxism is an important example of international political economy in IR.

- Marxists see the state as a mask for bourgeois power and national interest as a thin veil for the interests of society's rich and powerful.

- World systems theory analyses the relationship between the wealthy core and the impoverished periphery of the world economy.

- Marxism's focus on class conflict allows it to carry out transnational analyses of the global bourgeoisie and proletariat that help to explain how apparently different states can still cooperate in the interests of their wealthy rulers.

- The First World War has been explained as an expression of conflict between bourgeois groups for access to imperial resources and markets.

- Despite the end of formal imperialism, uneven development continues to divide the world into a dominant core and a subservient periphery, whose main purpose is to produce low-cost goods for sale to proletarians in core states.

Introduction

When Karl Marx co-wrote *The Communist manifesto* with Friedrich Engels in 1848, he had no idea that his worldview would still be affecting the social sciences over 150 years later. Indeed, the demise of Marxism has been prophesied many times. This happened most recently in 1991, when the fall of the Soviet Union seemed to consign Marxism to the 'dustbin of history'. Yet, 25 years later, Marxism remains a powerful intellectual force. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet bloc has opened new space for Marxist analyses of international relations. Before 1991, Western analysts risked being labelled Soviet sympathisers if they appeared too fond of Marx's work. Today there is no such threat. As a result, Marxist analysis has prospered over the past two decades. Stripped of its Soviet connotations, it has once more become recognised as a powerful philosophical critique of capitalism – once again the dominant form of economic organisation in the world. Unlike Liberal Institutionalism or Realism, Marxism focuses on the economic foundations of international relations. It argues that the

distribution of wealth has at least as much impact on IR as the political and military relationships of interest to Liberals and Realists. Many Marxists go even further, claiming that economic relations determine political outcomes. Money, they say, makes the world go around.

Marxism presents an unfamiliar and unsettling image of international relations. It focuses on the ways in which rich and powerful classes dominate the poor around the world. It relegates states to secondary importance in the world, viewing them as reflections of the socio-economic elites that run them. As such, Marxism overturns many Liberal and Realist assumptions – changing the focus of IR analysis and thereby presenting an entirely new picture of international relations.

Organising principles

Marxist theory analyses international relations from the point of view of socio-economic groups and their relationships. As opposed to Liberals' and Realists' focus on political relationships in an anarchic international arena, Marxism's main organising principle is **capitalism** – the global system by which goods and services are produced and distributed on the basis of market relations. In human terms, capitalism has produced two socio-economic **classes** – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Members of the bourgeoisie own the **means of production**, the systems by which goods are made and distributed. These include everything from the mines where resources are extracted to the factories where manufactured goods are produced to the stores where they are sold. The proletariat, on the other hand, works for the bourgeoisie. Proletarians exchange their labour for a fixed wage that represents only a small fraction of the total value of their work. According to Marx and his successors, the history of capitalism has been a history of struggle between these two socio-economic classes, with the proletariat trying unsuccessfully to free itself from the economic hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

Because it prefers economic explanations to political ones, Marxist IR addresses a different set of questions than either Liberalism or Realism. Rather than focusing on human interaction in the political sector, which deals with questions of governance and government, Marxism gives priority to interactions in the economic sector. It is therefore associated with international political economy (IPE) – a branch of IR that investigates links between the world's political and economic systems.[1] Whereas Liberal Institutionalism asks how to build a more peaceful world and Realism asks why wars persist, Marxism asks how to achieve **emancipation** for the proletariat. Marxists justify this research question with a line of reasoning that closely resembles the arguments of John Locke. Marxists argue that an international order based on an unjust distribution of wealth will prove unstable because it will encourage the poor to overthrow the system that keeps them destitute. The goal of Marxism is to create a society in which justice determines a fair distribution of wealth, leading to a society in which all individuals can achieve their potential without the advantages or disadvantages currently granted by their position in the world capitalist system.

[1] *International political economy is the focus of Chapter 11 of this subject guide.*

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 9, Section 1, pp.142–43.

Note the central role played by capitalism in Marxist analyses of international relations.

Concepts and assumptions

As you learned in Chapter 1 of this subject guide, Marxism has its intellectual roots in the 19th century. In 1848, the economist Karl Marx and the industrialist and philosopher Friedrich Engels published *The Communist manifesto*, a short pamphlet outlining their critique of Europe's economic and political systems. It was a time of revolutionary change in Europe. Industrialisation was overturning the centuries-old relationships that bound landowners to their tenant farmers, forcing huge numbers of landless poor people into cities where they had to find work in large and increasingly automated factories. The owners of these factories became hugely wealthy at their workers' expense, replacing aristocratic landowners as the most powerful social and economic class in society. The bourgeoisie bought their way into political power, passing laws and using elements of state power, such as the police, to suppress proletarian uprisings. Bourgeois control of the **relations of production** – including the law – was thereby used to cement their supremacy over the proletariat.

Marxism's focus on class conflict and economic relations over interstate rivalry and politics produces several interesting implications for the study of IR. First, Marxism identifies socio-economic classes as the main units of analysis. States – normally thought of as the main actors in IR – are relegated to secondary status as mere puppets of the socio-economic elite. A state's national interest is therefore determined by the interest of its bourgeoisie, making the state a mask for its socio-economic elite. A corollary of this assumption is that Marxists believe that wars are fought on behalf of bourgeois interests. In order to motivate the proletariat to fight on behalf of its bourgeois masters, states use the language of nationalism – cloaking a war's economic goals in patriotic fervour.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 9, Section 2, pp.143–45.

Activity

Once you have finished the reading, take a look at the 'base-superstructure' diagram posted on the VLE.

Consider the following questions:

1. What types of superstructure do bourgeois classes use to reinforce their control of a state's economic base?

2. Do you agree that domination of a state's means of production will lead to domination of its political and social systems as well?

None of Karl Marx's writing contains a fully developed theory of international relations. Marxist IR developed when various analysts and practitioners used Marx's ideas to cast a new light on various aspects of international affairs. One example of Marx's ideas being applied to IR can be found in Immanuel Wallerstein's *World systems theory*. This looks at international relations by dividing the world into three types of state, each of which holds a specific position in the world economy. Look at BSO, Figure 9.2, p.146. Core states are home to the wealthiest bourgeoisies on the planet. Their economies focus on high-value economic activities such as banking and investment, allowing them to reap the rewards of economic growth around the world. Peripheral states focus on low-value activities such as subsistence agriculture and the production of raw materials, leaving them with little access to the sources or benefits of economic growth. This leaves their bourgeoisies relatively poor

and their proletariats even poorer, making them much more unstable than the relatively prosperous states at the core of the world capitalist system. Semi-peripheral states stand in a transitional zone between these extremes. Some of these states, such as South Korea and Singapore, have successfully transitioned into the core of the world capitalist system. This has lifted their bourgeoisies into the top ranks of the global economic elite, and made life more bearable for their proletariats. Others, such as Russia and Venezuela, may be in the process of falling back into peripheral status. Thanks to core countries' access to international capital and resources, economic activity in the world capitalist system tends to reinforce the core's dominant international position, leaving peripheral and semi-peripheral states to make do with the few remaining sources of capital. Because Marxists see economics as determining political and social outcomes, this uneven economic structure is reflected in the uneven international distribution of political and social power.

▶▶ **Stop and read:** 'World-systems theory' in GCR.

Activity

Look at the map of global GDP on the VLE resources for this module. To what extent does the global distribution of political power match the distribution of economic power depicted in this map? Using the blank political map of the world provided on the VLE, label the countries of the world as parts of the core, semi-periphery or periphery.

The Marxist approach to IR analysis shares several assumptions with the theories you have already covered in this course. Like Realism, Marxism emphasises the importance of power – defined as the ability to bend others to your will (positive power) or resist others' attempts to bend you (negative power). The pursuit of power is interpreted as a primary driver of international behaviour in both theories. Unlike Realism, however, Marxism does not take the sovereign state as its unit of analysis. As you have learned, Marxism gives priority to socio-economic classes. States are simply masks used by bourgeoisies to reinforce their economic power. Even democratic governments are not truly 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. Rather, with apologies to US President Abraham Lincoln, they are 'of the bourgeoisie, by the bourgeoisie and for the bourgeoisie'. Marxists believe that states act internationally to ensure their elite's access to resources and markets around the world. They act domestically to suppress the rebellious tendencies of their national proletariat, sometimes through coercion and sometimes through cooption – buying their loyalty with goods and services taken from peripheral states. Either way, the picture presented by Marxist analysis is unlike that presented by any other theory you have covered so far.

Like Liberal Institutionalism, Marxism accepts a range of non-state actors as participants in IR. It also accepts Liberalism's claim that international actors are entwined in a global system of interdependence, though Marxism identifies the international bourgeoisies as the primary beneficiaries of this interaction. Unlike Liberals, Marxists have no faith in the ability of regimes and international organisations to improve the condition of proletarians in international society. After all, the states responsible for the development of regimes are merely masks for the bourgeois classes who control them. As a result, any regimes they create will be designed to benefit their bourgeois masters. The proletariat will never receive an equal share of the benefits accruing from regime-formation, reinforcing the dominance of the bourgeoisie in the world capitalist system.

Summary

- Marxist theory has an intellectual heritage that stretches back to 1848, although it only became a powerful force in Western IR after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

- Marxism interprets the world through the lens of historical materialism, in which all political phenomena can be explained through the lens of economics.

- Marxism's organising principle is class conflict, which in a capitalist economy produces two distinct socio-economic groups: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

- By focusing on the link between politics and economics, Marxism is an important example of international political economy in IR.

- Marxists see the state as a mask for bourgeois power and national interest as a thin veil for the interests of society's rich and powerful.

- World systems theory analyses the relationship between the wealthy core and the impoverished periphery of the world economy.

⯈⯈ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 9, Section 3, pp.145–47.

Applications

Marxism uncovers economic relationships that are often masked by theoretical approaches such as the English school, Liberalism and Realism. In this sense, Marxism is a powerful **critical theory**. Marxism's assumption of a global division of labour between proletarian workers and bourgeois owners provides a lens by which you can analyse divisions within the states that inhabit the anarchic international system. If every state contains a proletariat and a bourgeoisie, it should be possible to develop transnational alliances between these socio-economic groups. Thus, members of the proletariat in industrialised Canada should be able to work with members of the proletariat in the underdeveloped economy of Malawi in pursuit of their shared goals. Likewise, the Canadian bourgeoisie can ally itself with its Malawian counterpart to resist proletarian threats to their privileges. In such a contest, Marxist analysis predicts that bourgeois goals will win out over their proletarian counterparts for the simple reason that economic elites control the levers of power in the economy and in the political superstructures that support it. Thus, both Canada and Malawi will line up on the side of their bourgeois elites to oppose proletarians' attempts to redress the unequal distribution of economic and political power. States' hostile reactions to popular uprisings such as the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement may support this line of argument.

It is worth asking under what conditions one bourgeois state may abandon or attack another. For example, during the Arab Spring in 2011, the United States eventually threw its support behind popular forces opposing the Egyptian regime headed by Hosni Mubarak. How would Marxist analysis explain this change? Two answers follow from the preceding discussion. First, the bourgeois forces controlling the US government may have thought that their support for the Mubarak regime was undermining their position at home by alienating the US proletariat, and abroad by undermining the USA's ability to guarantee elite access to resources and markets. Second, the popular forces of change in Egypt might have been 'captured' by the Egyptian bourgeoisie, which chose to join the revolt when it saw its superior position in the Egyptian economy being threatened

by Hosni Mubarak's inability to guarantee social stability and economic growth. Egypt's return to military rule a year later gives some credence to this hypothesis.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Communist political project in the last decade of the 20th century foreshadowed the global triumph of capitalist economic theories. Ironically, this has reinvigorated Marxism's place in international relations. Today, many of the regimes and institutions described by Liberal institutionalism reflect the priorities of national and global bourgeoisies. Many of the practices and values that characterise interactions in international society likewise reflect capitalist dogma. Finally, there is a clear correlation between centres of economic power and centres of political power, indicating a deep, if unexpected, link between Marxist and Realist models of IR.

Marxism and the First World War

The First World War led directly to the first major use of Marxist theory for the purposes of international analysis. The man responsible was not an academic or a diplomat in the Foreign Office. It was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov – better known as Lenin. Lenin was a Marxist revolutionary in the early 20th century and would become the first leader of the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. A few months before the revolution swept him into power, Lenin wrote a short pamphlet in which he tried to explain the causes of the First World War in Marxist terms. The pamphlet was called *Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism*, and it remains a classic to this day. In it, Lenin argues that the interstate conflict that led to the First World War was a consequence of the capitalist economic system that had evolved in the Western world over the preceding century. One of his key points is that the division of the world into separate sovereign states had radically altered Marx's analysis of world politics. State borders divide the global proletariat into separate groups, allowing their elites to turn national proletariats against one another through the use of nationalism. Nationalism, Lenin explains, is simply a tool used by national bourgeoisies to turn the global proletariat against itself, convincing workers to kill off their fellow labourers in the name of national interest. Lenin decried this use of nationalism to mask the true economic goals of bourgeois elites: imperial expansion that would guarantee their access to resources and markets.

Lenin saw imperialist competition for resources and markets as the true cause of the First World War – an extension of capitalist competition to the international political stage. In fact, Lenin argued, imperialism served to stabilise states' domestic class conflicts. The imperial dominance of a few core states allowed their bourgeoisies to 'buy off' their national proletariats with wealth siphoned from the global periphery. Imperialism was a way to redistribute wealth away from workers on the periphery of the world economy and into the pockets of workers in the 'core', making their lives just comfortable enough that they would not rebel against their bourgeois masters. Even though imperialism is no longer a primary institution of international society, this process of cooption is reminiscent of the **uneven globalisation** that defines modern capitalism. After all, modern supply chains mean that all but the poorest people in developed states can buy cheap goods made by workers in the developing world who get paid next to nothing for their labour. They do the work, you get the discount and the owners get the profits. Lenin would not be impressed.

Summary

- Marxism's focus on class conflict allows it to carry out transnational analyses of the global bourgeoisie and proletariat that help to explain how apparently different states can still cooperate in the interests of their wealthy rulers.

- The First World War has been explained as an expression of conflict between bourgeois groups for access to imperial resources and markets.

- Despite the end of formal imperialism, uneven development continues to divide the world into a dominant core and a subservient periphery, whose main purpose is to produce low-cost goods for sale to proletarians in core states.

Conclusion

The Marxist critique of international relations introduces a new element into IR analysis: economic determinism. As one approach to the study of international political economy, Marxism investigates ways in which the distribution of economic power around the world affects the organisation of the international political system. In so doing, it forces you to think about IR from a very different point of view. Whereas Liberalism and Realism tend to see political interaction as more important than activity in other sectors, Marxism turns their world on its head – explaining political and social outcomes on the basis of their connection to the economic structures and systems from which they derive. As you will see in upcoming discussions of globalisation and the global financial crisis, Marxism still has a lot to teach us about the world in which we live.

Chapter overview

- Marxist theory has an intellectual heritage that stretches back to 1848, although it only became a powerful force in Western IR after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

- Marxism interprets the world through the lens of historical materialism, in which all political phenomena can be explained through the lens of economics.

- Marxism's organising principle is class conflict, which in a capitalist economy produces two distinct socio-economic groups: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

- By focusing on the link between politics and economics, Marxism is an important example of international political economy in IR.

- Marxists see the state as a mask for bourgeois power and national interest as a thin veil for the interests of society's rich and powerful.

- World systems theory analyses the relationship between the wealthy core and the impoverished periphery of the world economy.

- Marxism's focus on class conflict allows it to carry out transnational analyses of the global bourgeoisie and proletariat that help to explain how apparently different states can still cooperate in the interests of their wealthy rulers.

- The First World War has been explained as an expression of conflict between bourgeois groups for access to imperial resources and markets.

- Despite the end of formal imperialism, uneven development continues to divide the world into a dominant core and a subservient periphery, whose main purpose is to produce low-cost goods for sale to proletarians in core states.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define key terms and concepts associated with the Marxist approach to IR

- discuss international affairs in terms of relations between core, semi-peripheral and peripheral states in the world capitalist system

- explain how Marxism's focus on economic relations differs from perspectives offered by Liberalism and Realism.

Chapter vocabulary

- capitalism
- class
- means of production
- emancipation
- relations of production
- subsistence
- critical theory
- uneven globalisation

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How do Marxists use the world capitalist systems to explain international relations?
2. How do bourgeoisies control the states they lead?
3. How does Marxism account for the uneven levels of power present in international society?

Notes

Chapter 10: Constructivism and gender theory

Anarchy is what states make of it.

Alexander Wendt

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- outline alternative theoretical approaches to IR, namely Constructivism and gender theory
- illustrate ways in which these approaches can be used to better understand international events and phenomena.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define the vocabulary terms in bold
- explain why many scholars question mainstream approaches to IR
- explain the organising principles and main assumptions of Constructivism and gender theory
- make use of these theories to analyse events and concepts in IR.

Essential reading

Barnett, M. 'Social constructivism' in BSO, Chapter 10.
Tucker, J.A. 'Gender in world politics' in BSO, Chapter 17.

Further reading and works cited

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Fierke, K.M. 'Constructivism' in Dunne, T., M. Kurki and S. Smith (eds) *International relations theories: discipline and diversity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) second edition.

Halliday, F. 'Hidden from international relations: women and the international arena' in his *Rethinking international relations*. (London: Macmillan, 1994) [ISBN 0774805080].

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Tickner, J.A. 'You just don't understand: troubled engagements between feminism and IR theorists', *International Studies Quarterly* 41(4) 1997, pp.611–32.

Tickner, J.A. and L. Sjoberg 'Feminism' in Dunne, T., M. Kurki and S. Smith (eds) *International relations theories: discipline and diversity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) second edition.

Wendt, A. 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organisation* 46(2) 1992, pp.391–425.

Youngs, G. 'From practice to theory: feminist international relations and "gender mainstreaming"', *International Politics* 45(6) 2008, pp.688–702.

Chapter synopsis

- Constructivism is one of the newest theories of IR, focusing on the role of ideas in international politics.

- Unlike Liberalism, Realism and Marxism, Constructivism is not a rational choice theory. Instead, it suggests that behaviours are shaped mainly by an actor's social construction of reality.

- Constructivism explains why two actors faced with the same situation can choose two different policy options based on the social facts they choose to accept or ignore.

- Constructivism is particularly interested in how informal behaviours become ingrained in international society through the life cycle of norms – a process similar to the evolution of English School institutions.

- Securitisation is one example of Constructivism in action, illustrating how actors choose to frame topics as 'security' issues to increase their importance on the global agenda.

- Gender theory analyses the relationship between gender and the structure of international relations, focusing especially on the nature of patriarchy.

- Gender theory includes a wide array of feminist voices, from liberals to radicals.

- The nature of security is a field in which gender theory has questioned traditional definitions by moving the focus of discussion away from the state and towards the well-being of individuals and their communities.

Introduction

The English School, Liberal Institutionalist, Realist and Marxist models of IR have been around long enough that they have become mainstream theories in our discipline. As you have already seen, each of them has a lot to tell us about the world in which we live. None, however, provides a complete picture of international affairs. Each of them excludes certain actors and interactions from their analysis, leaving parts of reality unexplored. This became problematic in 1991, when all of IR's mainstream theories failed to predict the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War bipolarity. This was especially damaging for Realism and Liberalism, the two most important theories of the late 20th century. Their failure to predict the end of the Cold War opened space for alternative ways of looking at IR. This chapter will introduce three of these alternatives: Social Constructivism, Post-structuralism and gender theory.

Each of these alternative theories questions some of the basic assumptions that define mainstream theories. Social Constructivism questions the

materialism of Liberal Institutionalism, Realism and Marxism by focusing on the role of ideas in IR. Post-structuralism throws doubt on fundamental assumptions such as the central role played by states in international relations, an assumption shared by Realists, Liberal Institutionalists and members of the English School alike. Gender theory uncovers the privileged position given to masculinity in all mainstream models of IR, particularly in the field of security and war. Thus, each of the alternative approaches to IR discussed in this chapter chip away at the certainties of our discipline's most important principles and assumptions in order to shed light on aspects of IR that mainstream analysts simply ignore.

Social Constructivism

Social Constructivism is a theory of international relations that questions the bases of international society. It emphasises the role of ideas in IR. After all, two states faced with the same international environment may act in very different ways. This is neatly illustrated by the conflict between Realists and Liberals. Realism and Liberalism agree that the international arena is defined by structural anarchy – the absence of a final judge to settle disputes and dictate binding laws. Moreover, both theories use **rational choice** to conclude that states will respond to this anarchy in specific ways. Realists claim that anarchy leads to security dilemmas, forcing states to pursue self-help in order to ensure their survival in a fundamentally hostile international system. Liberals assert that rational states will recognise the futility of competition, opting instead to build strong regimes to address their shared problems. Constructivism asks why these two theories arrive at such opposite conclusions about state behaviour given the fact that they begin with the same premise: international anarchy. If states are rational actors with set interests, Constructivists argue that they should always act in a predictable way – either as Realist self-helpers or as Liberal regime-builders. Historically, however, states have responded to the world in very different ways. Some, like Sweden, spent much of the 20th century acting like Liberal Institutionalists. Others, like Russia, reacted to the same international environment as Structural Realists. Constructivism looks at this odd situation and concludes that you cannot understand the world as a set of clearly defined cause-and-effect relationships. One cause can have many different effects, depending on how it is perceived. If there is a riot going on in your neighbourhood, you may decide to lock yourself in your house or you may decide to band together with your neighbours. Either strategy may be rational, depending on how you perceive both the threat and your neighbours. Constructivists extend this metaphor to international society, whose anarchic structure elicits different responses from different states. Some hunker down and start arming themselves against potential threats. Others join collective security regimes, hoping for strength and stability in numbers. States, like people, react to their contexts in different ways, depending on how they perceive their situations. Some do so through isolation, and others through engagement. Alexander Wendt, one of the most important thinkers in Social Constructivism, sums up this idea in a simple statement: 'Anarchy is what states make of it.'[1]

[1] *Wendt (1992).*

▶▶ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 10, Sections 1–2, pp.156–57.

Note the similarity between Constructivist and English School world views, particularly when it comes to how norms shape actors' international behaviour.

Constructivism argues that theories based on rational choice are misguided. They argue that the international society in which we live is not objectively fixed. Instead, they see international society as a product of the **social construction of reality**. This means that aspects of IR like anarchy, sovereignty, regimes and the security dilemma are products of human action. Unlike rocks or oceans, these **social facts** depend on human interactions to make them real. Were we all to disappear from the face of the earth, they would too. As a result, Social Constructivists claim that humans are more than rational computers that react to the world we find around them, as rational choice would have you believe. We create and reproduce the societies we inhabit, and we can choose to change them if our perception of reality changes. From a Social Constructivist perspective, Realists are wrong when they claim that states have no alternative to mutual suspicion, selfishness and the security dilemma. Alternatives exist, but Realists choose not to accept them. Likewise, Liberals are wrong if they claim that international anarchy generates any objective need to build a Liberal order based on interdependence, regimes and liberal democracy. These are only likely outcomes because Liberals choose them. Thus, according to Social Constructivism, international anarchy can manifest itself as a Realist world of conflicting states, as a Liberal world of cooperating states, or as some other form of society altogether. The way states define their national interest within an anarchical society is not dictated by the structures they inhabit. It is socially constructed by their perceptions of the world in which they live.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 10, Section 3, pp.157–62.

Activity

Once you have completed the readings, consider the following questions:

1. Why do Constructivists disagree with the materialist models of international society embraced by Realists, Liberals and Marxists?

2. To what extent does the English School's interest in norms and informal institutions make it a forerunner of Social Constructivism?

Social Constructivism makes several claims about the world in which we live. First, there is the link between **identity** and national interest. Constructivists believe that states' interests are derived from the way they perceive themselves and those around them. A constructivist analysis of a state's national interest therefore requires an understanding of its core values. These values define what the sate considers important and will affect the way it perceives other actors in international society. If a state perceives its neighbour as sharing values similar to its own, it is more likely to pursue a peaceful and cooperative relationship. If a state views its neighbour as radically different, their relationship is likely to be competitive or conflictual. Thus, states with radically different identities are likely to behave as Realists, while those with similar identities are likely to behave as Liberals.

A second claim made by Social Constructivists deals with **regulative rules** and **constitutive rules**, which shape actors' behaviour and identity. These are reminiscent of the English School's rules of behaviour and rules of membership, which were first introduced in Chapter 6 of this subject guide. Regulative and constitutive rules shape actors' perceptions of what is appropriate behaviour on the international stage. These are not set in stone. If a group of states construct a set of rules that reward competition or conflict, as European international society did prior to the First World

War, their interactions will resemble those predicted by Realism. If, on the other hand, states construct a set of rules that reward cooperation, their international society will resemble Liberal Institutionalism. States in an anarchic international society are not forced to choose Realist conflict or Liberal cooperation. They are free to select the rules that best suit their perceptions of the world around them. This is what Alexander Wendt means when he said that 'anarchy is what states make of it'.

A third claim made by Social Constructivists is that actors' perceptions of what is good and normal tend to become ingrained in international society over time as part of the life cycle of norms. This traces the evolution of norms from their initial spread across international society – a process called diffusion – to their formal institutionalisation as regulative and constitutive rules. This cycle is the main topic covered by the next set of readings and the activity that follows.

➤➤ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 10, Section 4, pp.163–66.

Activity

Using the table below, explain the role played by each of the following terms in the development of a socially constructed norm.

Institutional isomorphism	
Socialisation	
Norm internalisation	

Social Constructivism has been a successful IR theory because it tells us things about the world that are both interesting and useful. One important application of Social Constructivism to problems in IR is securitisation. This concept was formulated by a group of scholars known as the Copenhagen School, whose most prominent members are Professors Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan. Securitisation theory highlights the way that we often use the language of 'security' to emphasise the importance of some issues over others. War is a good example of how language can be used to justify a state's use of extraordinary methods to pursue its national interest. Politics is full of wars against impersonal foes: the 'war on terror', the 'war on drugs' and the 'war on poverty'. Making these issues into matters of security helps a state mobilise public support and suppress opposition. There is some doubt as to whether securitising issues is always helpful. Making something a matter of security raises its higher importance and draws the public's attention. It can also militarise an issue, a step that can actually get in the way of effective problem solving. Does it help the fight against poverty to declare 'war' on it? Was it useful for the USA to declare a war on terror after 9/11, or should they have pursued Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda through established criminal procedures? Such an approach would have avoided

the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq, possibly avoiding the subsequent unrest in Iraq and its immediate neighbours. There is no clear answer to this question, but it is worth asking whether a war footing is always the best way for a state to grapple with the problems that face it. You will return to this idea in Chapter 17, when you will turn your attention to human security and non-traditional security threats.

Summary

- Constructivism is one of the newest theories of IR, focusing on the role of ideas in international politics.

- Unlike Liberalism, Realism and Marxism, Constructivism is not a rational choice theory. Instead, it suggests that behaviours are shaped mainly by an actor's social construction of reality.

- Constructivism explains why two actors faced with the same situation can choose two different policy options based on the social facts they choose to accept or ignore.

- Constructivism is particularly interested in how informal behaviours become ingrained in international society through the life cycle of norms – a process similar to the evolution of English School institutions.

- Securitisation is one example of Constructivism in action, illustrating how actors choose to frame topics as 'security' issues to increase their importance on the global agenda.

Activity

Think of a particular political issue – other than those just mentioned – and describe what you would do to 'securitise' it. Do you think that this would help or hinder dealing with the problem? List some reasons for and against securitisation.

Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Gender theory

Gender is a concept that pervades all of the world's societies. As such, it should be no surprise that its influence extends deep into the realm of IR. Gender theory highlights the influence of 'gendered' thinking on human ideas and behaviour. What does this mean? First, you need to realise that there is a difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to physical differences between men and women. Gender is something quite different. It refers to socially constructed ideas about what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine'. While sex is fairly constant across the planet, attitudes to gender vary widely. In the Western world, masculinity has long been associated with a set of idealised values including bravery, strength and leadership. Classically imagined feminine virtues include tenderness, kindness and empathy. Gender also includes negative attributes such as masculine cruelty and feminine weakness. Clearly these are stereotypical images of what men and women are really like, and often bear little resemblance to reality. Nevertheless, they help to illustrate that our society is permeated by assumptions based on these images. In most of the world, gender has provided a basis for the widespread exclusion and marginalisation of women from positions of political and military leadership. Gender theory suggests that this is because war and politics have long been associated with 'masculine' values, making it difficult for

women to rise to the top in these areas. This has resulted in widespread **patriarchy** – rule by men – in which women have been pushed into secondary roles. Over the past century, women have increasingly baulked at their relegation to secondary status, giving rise to one of the most powerful forces in the social sciences today: **feminism**.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 17, Sections 2–3, pp.259–60.

Feminists approach their analysis of international relations from a number of different angles. For some, a key concern is the unjustified exclusion of women from traditionally 'masculine' areas. As a result, it is important to demonstrate that women are entirely capable of possessing the attributes required for, say, military service or tough political leadership. The goal of these Liberal Feminists is a world in which women are as free as men to pursue jobs from which they are currently discouraged by virtue of unjustified assumptions about gender roles. More radical gender theorists disagree. They think that mere equality would be a disastrous victory for masculine values. From their perspective, the problem is not that women do not have sufficient seniority in the current world system, but that the present international system – fixated on war, conflict, balances of power and so on – embodies the dominance of idealised masculine values. We might be able to build a better international system, and a better world, if we use the insights of gender theory to stop privileging an idealised, outdated and unhealthy idea of masculinity. The goal for radical gender theorists is not to create a world in which women play leading roles by becoming more masculine. They hope to create a world where values currently associated with masculinity are no longer so dominant. Their goal is not to join the patriarchy. It is to overthrow it.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 17, Section 4, pp.260–63.

Activity

Using the table below, explain gender theory's critique of the following approaches to IR.

Liberalism	
Constructivism	
Marxism	

An important part of gender theory's analysis of IR focuses on the often hidden role played by women in conflict. Men engage in the most public and obvious aspects of war: bearing weapons, wearing uniforms and engaging directly in conflict. There are many instances of women doing likewise, but such activities are still overwhelmingly dominated by men (see BSO, Case Study 1, p.264). Women, meanwhile, tend to play a supporting role in times of conflict: producing the soldiers of the future, maintaining life at home while their men fight, and representing 'something to be protected' in the minds of those at the front. In reality, however, women have often suffered as badly as men, experiencing systematic abuse at the hands of enemy troops as well as their own countrymen. Scholars researching security from a gendered perspective therefore argue that the particular forms of suffering faced by women in

wartime deserve more attention than they currently receive. They also call for a rethinking of security away from definitions that prioritise the security of the state and towards definitions that prioritise the well-being of the individual and her or his **community**.

Summary

- Gender theory analyses the relationship between gender and the structure of international relations, focusing especially on the nature of patriarchy.

- Gender theory includes a wide array of feminist voices, from liberals to radicals.

- The nature of security is a field in which gender theory has questioned traditional definitions by moving the focus of discussion away from the state and towards the well-being of individuals and their communities.

⏩ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 17, Section 5, pp.263–66.

Activity

How does gender theory's understanding of security and violence differ from the definitions normally accepted by Realists? How do you think this difference affects their definitions of war and peace?

Activity

In the space below, draw up a list of the qualities that you think a good military leader needs to have. Now go through your list asking whether each is a masculine or feminine quality. Explain why you think so.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity

Use what you have learned about either Social Constructivism or gender theory to defend each of the following statements. Post your responses to the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

1. A state's foreign policy will change following a revolution that alters the way in which it perceives its place in the world.

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Over time, dissimilar states in similar environments will adopt increasingly similar norms.

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Female leaders have to try harder than their male counterparts to prove their ability to deal with issues of national security.

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. The prioritisation of feminine qualities in IR would change the violence with which states often pursue their foreign policies goals.

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Conclusion

Although IR is dominated by mainstream theories like Liberal Institutionalism and Realism, alternative models have been developing that question the mainstream consensus. Social Constructivism and gender theory are two such models. They question the organising principles and basic assumptions of mainstream IR, uncovering previously ignored aspects of international affairs. Social Constructivism questions the materialist bases of Liberalism, Realism and Marxism. Echoing the earlier theories of the English School, it embraces a leading role for ideas and informal norms as constitutive and regulatory rules that affect both who takes part in international affairs, and how they are meant to act on the international stage. Through the process of socialisation and phenomena such as institutional isomorphism, Social Constructivism delves into fundamental questions about how norms develop and become sedimented features of international society. In so doing, it opens new avenues of investigation that may deepen our understanding of the world around us. Gender theory approaches mainstream theories in a different way, questioning the ways in which they understand 'masculinity' and 'femininity' on the world stage. It uncovers aspects of IR that are normally masked by our discipline's patriarchal worldview, including ways in which we define security. Like Marxism, gender theory seeks to replace existing relations of power with a new model that invests new influence in subordinated segment of human society. Unlike Marxism, it seeks to do so by altering the social meanings given to gender, replacing masculinity's privileged position with one that more accurately reflects the different characteristics of the sexes.

Chapter overview

- Constructivism is one of the newest theories of IR, focusing on the role of ideas in international politics.

- Unlike Liberalism, Realism and Marxism, Constructivism is not a rational choice theory. Instead, it suggests that behaviours are shaped mainly by an actor's social construction of reality.

- Constructivism explains why two actors faced with the same situation can choose two different policy options based on the social facts they choose to accept or ignore.

- Constructivism is particularly interested in how informal behaviours become ingrained in international society through the life cycle of norms – a process similar to the evolution of English School institutions.

- Securitisation is one example of Constructivism in action, illustrating how actors choose to frame topics as 'security' issues to increase their importance on the global agenda.

- Gender theory analyses the relationship between gender and the structure of international relations, focusing especially on the nature of patriarchy.

- Gender theory includes a wide array of feminist voices, from liberals to radicals.

- The nature of security is a field in which gender theory has questioned traditional definitions by moving the focus of discussion away from the state and towards the well-being of individuals and their communities.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define the vocabulary terms in bold
- explain why many scholars question mainstream approaches to IR
- explain the organising principles and main assumptions of Constructivism and gender theory
- make use of these theories to analyse events and concepts in IR.

Chapter vocabulary

- materialism
- rational choice
- social construction of reality
- social facts
- identity
- regulative rules
- constitutive rules
- life cycle of norms
- diffusion
- institutionalisation
- gender
- patriarchy
- feminism
- community

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. What does Alexander Wendt mean when he says that 'anarchy is what states make of it'?

2. How do norms influence the nature of international society?

3. Is it true that 'masculine' ideas dominate mainstream approaches to IR?

Chapter 11: International political economy

> 'In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give to another.'
>
> *Voltaire*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- locate international political economy (IPE) as a branch of international relations (IR) theory
- outline the evolution of the global economic system since 1945
- introduce mainstream and alternative models of the world economy
- analyse the causes and effects of the 2008 world financial crisis using IPE tools and concepts.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define key terms and concepts associated with the IPE approach to IR
- describe the world economy from Mercantilist, Liberal and Marxist perspectives
- explain the evolution of global economic institutions from the Mercantilist, Liberal and Constructivist perspectives.

Essential reading

Woods, N. 'International political economy in an age of globalization' in *BSO*, Chapter 16.

'Mercantilism' in GCR.

'Free trade' in GCR.

'Beggar-thy-neighbour policies' in *GCR*.

Further reading and works cited

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Chapter synopsis

- IPE is a sub-discipline of IR that analyses connections between the international political and economic systems.

- Politics and economics have been linked since the earliest days of humanity, when governments first developed to coordinate the production and distribution of goods and services.

- The evolution of the modern state can be traced to the economic developments of the early modern period, which was dominated by mercantilist ideas until the rise of capitalist economics in the late 18th century.

- IPE reads political history as a function of economic interactions, including the ongoing battle between supporters of free trade and protectionism.

- The Bretton Woods system evolved after the Second World War to manage three economic issues: the regulation of trade, currency exchange and economic development.

- The withdrawal of the USA from the gold standard marked the end of Bretton Woods, although its institutional embodiments – the GATT, IMF and World Bank – continued to play a role in the global economy.

- Stagflation in developed states during the 1970s and 1980s led banks to lend large amounts to states in the developing world, causing a Latin American debt crisis when the region's governments were unable to repay.

- This provided a new job for the IMF – backing international loans in return for the enforcement of structural adjustment programmes that forced government to sell off state assets, reduce government spending, lower corporate and sales taxes, and deregulate their economies.

- This liberal economic programme became known as the Washington Consensus.

- By 1991, the Washington Consensus was replaced by a less severe form of liberal ideology that encouraged free markets without drastically undermining the power of the state.

- The global financial crisis of 2008 showed the weakness of liberal economic orthodoxy and the importance of state regulation and power to properly functioning markets.

- IPE is divided into three dominant schools of thought – Liberalism, Mercantilism and Marxism – that mirror the Liberal–Realist–Marxist division of IR theory.

- IPE is similarly divided on the role of institutions in the world economy, with different thinkers adopting arguments that mirror IR's Liberals, Realists, Constructivists and members of the English School.

Introduction

International political economy (IPE) is a sub-discipline of international relations that analyses connections between the world's international political and economic systems. Although writers and thinkers have thought about this link for centuries, IPE only developed as a branch of IR in the 1970s and 1980s. Much of the early work in IPE was done by Susan Strange, who was fascinated by the relationship between sovereign political authorities and transnational markets – a relationship that she describes as increasingly tilted in favour of markets. This was an era of economic crises: a food crisis that led to spiralling prices from 1972 to 1974; the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 that saw oil prices spike and economic power shift to oil producing states; and a sovereign debt crisis in the developing world that came to a head with defaults in several Latin American states that had borrowed too much money from international creditors the decade before. These events were preceded by the 1971 collapse of the **Bretton Woods** system – the international financial, development and trading regime set up in 1947 to manage international economic issues. These economic dislocations and the political instability that followed highlighted the impact of the global economy on international relations. In the years since, IPE has developed into an important sub-discipline of IR, with its own theories, research priorities and policy recommendations.

Unlike the ideas discussed previously in this course, IPE is not a theory of IR. Rather, it is an approach to international analysis that focuses on the influence of economics on politics. This differentiates it from mainstream IR, which tends to prioritise political interactions over economic ones. Of the theories studied so far, only Marxism comes close to IPE's 'economy first' methodology. IPE is therefore a sub-discipline of IR. It has its own set of contending theories that try to explain the impact of economics on political relations. These have grown out of the economic history of international society, and mirror the Liberal–Realist–Marxist divisions within IR itself. The chapter that follows cannot delve too deeply into each of these theories. Instead, it will introduce key historical developments that led to the present world capitalist system. It will then summarise IPE's three main theoretical approaches: Liberalism, Mercantilism and Marxism. The chapter concludes by looking at the norms, rules and practices that shape the global economy, focusing on the different ways in which Realism, Mercantilism, Liberalism and Constructivism understand the world's major economic institutions.

Origins of the international economy to 1945

Trade has been a feature of international interaction since long before the advent of the sovereign state and international society. As early as 40,000 years ago, flint was transported across hundreds of kilometres from mines in the Holy Cross Mountains of Poland to other parts of what is now Eastern and Central Europe. The exchange of goods has been an important part of human interaction since the earliest days of our species – predating the first permanent settlements by many millennia.[1] At some point around 2000 BC, the barter system started to be replaced by forms of legal tender – a commodity or currency whose value was guaranteed by

[1] *Buzan and Little (2000) pp.123, 126–128.*

a political community and could ease the process of exchanging one good for another. This helped to link kingdoms' economies and political systems – with the former relying on the latter for the stable currencies that were so important to efficient systems of trade. The link between economics and politics deepened as political communities became more sophisticated. Charles Tilly goes so far as to argue that the ability of states to mobilise wealth was the key to their success over other types of international units, including empires and city-states.[2] For much of human history, however, long-distance trade was limited by the capacity of our economic systems. It was expensive and risky to carry goods over land routes such as the Silk Road that joined China to the Eastern Mediterranean from the 3rd century BC. Perishable items could not be carried at all, as it often took years for goods to travel from stop to stop on their way across Central Asia. Oceanic transport was limited by the technology of the day, which limited boats to largely coastal voyages.

[2] Tilly (1975) p.42.

This changed with the growth of European sea power in the 16th and 17th centuries, which allowed ships to carry relatively large cargoes at relatively low cost across the world's oceans. However, this trade came at a price. Importing spices, silk, coffee and other Asiatic goods cost European states a lot of their gold and silver – the only forms of currency accepted by their Asian trading partners. This led Europe's trading states to impose different forms of Mercantilism – an economic system in which the state imposes strict controls on trade, including quotas and **tariffs** on imports and strict controls on the export of precious metals. This economic system at home was complemented by the acquisition of colonial empires abroad, from which the mother country could acquire cheaper sources of things like sugar, coffee, spices and cotton. Trading with one's own colonies also meant that commerce did not involve the export of precious metals to another political power, thereby increasing the capital available to the domestic economy.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'Mercantilism' in GCR.

By the end of the 18th century, the traders, manufacturers and financiers of Europe were beginning to chafe under the limits that Mercantilism imposed on their profitability. People also began to question whether a state's wealth could truly be judged by its supply of precious metals, one of Mercantilism's organising principles. In 1776, the Scottish writer Adam Smith published *The wealth of nations*. It defined wealth as the labour and production of a state rather than its supply of gold and silver. Because the protectionist policies of Mercantilism limits trade by imposing tariffs and quotas, Smith claims that it provides a flawed roadmap to prosperity. Instead, Smith calls for a reduction in state regulation of trade and a greater emphasis on the 'invisible hand' of market relations. This will spur greater productivity, greater economic specialisation and greater wealth.[3] Smith's work became an important statement in favour of free trade – the idea that an economy is most efficient when it does not limit the import and export of goods and services, when the government maintains a limited role in business, and when states use **comparative advantage** to produce goods for the domestic and international markets. Contrary to popular belief, Smith does not call for the state's complete withdrawal from the economy. Only the state, he claims, can ensure that justice is not overcome by the drive for profit and that businesses do not form monopolies and cartels that warp market relations.

[3] Smith (1991).

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'Free trade' in GCR.

The battle between protectionism and free trade has raged through political economy since Smith's time. The 19th century saw dominant economic actors in Britain, France and the Netherlands support free trade, while states with underdeveloped industrial sectors used protectionist policies to shield their domestic industries from foreign competition. Nearly all industrialising states, whether protectionist or free trade, also sought new imperial possessions in the non-European world. These colonies could be used for their resources and their markets – doing double duty by supplying the raw materials needed for production and the consumers needed to drive demand for manufactured goods. By the 1870s, global industrial production had increased to such an extent that it began to outrun demand, leading many states to return to protectionist systems of imperial preference that gave better terms to goods traded within their empires than to goods imported from other states. As the 20th century dawned, even Britain erected protectionist walls around its imperial markets. This was the basis of Lenin's *Imperialism, the highest form of capitalism*, which saw the political division of the globe among European empires as the direct consequence of Europe's capitalist economic system. Imperialism, according to Lenin, was a system that allowed metropolitan capitals to keep colonies economically dependent and mother countries rich.

The First World War was as devastating to the global economy as it was to the global political system. It shattered the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian economies. It left all European states – even Britain – indebted to the United States of America. It forced defeated states to pay large reparations to the victorious allies, undermining their ability to get back on their feet and making them more vulnerable to political parties of the extreme left – Communists – and the extreme right – Fascists. Finally, it led to the Crash of 1929, which saw Wall Street share prices fall precipitously, and the Great Depression that poisoned the global economy until the Second World War. These developments brought about a resurgence of protectionism in the form of 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policies enacted in the name of nationalism.

Summary

- IPE is a sub-discipline of IR that analyses connections between the international political and economic systems.

- Politics and economics have been linked since the earliest days of humanity, when governments first developed to coordinate the production and distribution of goods and services.

- The evolution of the modern state can be traced to the economic developments of the early modern period, which was dominated by mercantilist ideas until the rise of capitalist economics in the late 18th century.

- IPE reads political history as a function of economic interactions, including the ongoing struggle between supporters of free trade and protectionism.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'Beggar-thy-neighbour policies' in GCR.

Bretton Woods

The Bretton Woods system grew out of a series of agreements signed by 44 allied states following an economic and financial conference at Bretton Woods in the USA in 1944. This conference identified three major problems with the interwar economic system that had to be addressed

if another Great Depression was to be avoided. The USA emerged from the Second World War with most of the world's industrial and financial capacity, putting it in a position from which it could exercise economic hegemony and dictate the terms of the post-1945 economic system. Three particular issues were dealt with at the conference. The first recognised that a new system of currency exchange was needed to provide a stable foundation for the international economy. The Bretton Woods system therefore called for a return to the **gold standard**, in which all currencies were pegged to a specific value in gold as measured against a $35 per ounce exchange rate for the US dollar. To avoid opportunism, states agreed that the currency regime was to be managed by an **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, which began operations in 1947.

The second issue at Bretton Woods dealt with the need to create a fair system to regulate international trade. Although free trade was the USA's preferred option, leaders in Washington realised that war-torn states would need to use some protectionist policies to allow their domestic economies to rebuild without being swamped by US industry. They therefore signed the **General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT)**, which served as a forum in which states were encouraged to progressively lower their tariff barriers through mutual negotiation.

The third and final issue of interest to the Bretton Woods conference was the rebuilding of Europe and the development of the rest of the world. States recognised that this would require large amounts of capital, both public and private. They therefore set up the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) – now called the **World Bank** – to serve as a clearing house for international development loans. Like the IMF, the World Bank began operations in 1947 with headquarters in Washington DC. The reason is simple. The USA was the unquestioned hegemon of the world economy at the end of the Second World War. It therefore paid the lion's share of the IBRD's and IMF's operating costs and had the biggest voice in the governance structures of both international organisations.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 16, Boxes 16.1, 16.2 and 16.4, pp.16, 245 and 247.

For the first two decades of the Cold War, Bretton Woods formed the economic cornerstone of the Western bloc. This began to change in the 1960s, when the economies of the USA's allies in Europe and East Asia began to catch up with US industrial output. Increased competition from Germany, Japan and South Korea reduced Washington's ability to underwrite Bretton Woods' currency system, leading to President Richard Nixon's withdrawal from the gold standard and the collapse of the post-war system of fixed exchange rates. Although the IMF survived as an organisation, its role in the international economy was greatly diminished and the world's currencies were allowed to 'float' on private **currency markets**.

Summary

- The Bretton Woods system evolved after the Second World War to manage three economic issues: the regulation of trade, currency exchange and economic development.

- The withdrawal of the USA from the gold standard marked the end of Bretton Woods, although its institutional embodiments – the GATT, IMF and World Bank – continued to play a role in the global economy.

⯈⯈ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 16, Box 16.3, p.246.

The Washington Consensus

The end of the Bretton Woods system coincided with a series of blows to the Western bloc economy: a food crisis in the early 1970s that saw international food prices spiral upwards, a decision by Arab oil-producing states to embargo petroleum sales to the West in 1973 that sent oil prices up by 400 per cent, and subsequent actions by the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) at the end of the decade to increase oil prices from $2.50 to $40 per barrel. These shocks pushed many of the world's economies into a combination of high inflation and low economic growth, called **stagflation**. Stagflation limited investment opportunities in the developed world just as deregulation in the financial sector encouraged banks and lenders to make massive loans to states in the developing world. Chasing high returns, banks loaned massive quantities of cash in the second half of the 1970s. By the early 1980s, states like Argentina, Brazil and Mexico were unable to pay their creditors and began to default. This led international investors to stop lending, drying up the money supply and ushering in the Latin American debt crisis.

Among its many effects, the debt crisis introduced a new role for the IMF, which had lacked direction since the collapse of the Bretton Woods currency regime in 1971. Instead of managing fixed currencies, it became responsible for ensuring that indebted states could repay their international creditors. The IMF began to force debtor states to accept structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that compelled them to sell off state assets, reduce government spending, lower corporate and sales taxes, and deregulate their economies. These steps freed up capital for states to repay their international loans, but also reduced their ability to provide citizens with vital services. The result was a decade of severe economic hardship for citizens of developing countries, record profits for international lenders and political instability in debtor states. These policies became known as the **Washington Consensus** – a series of economic policies that reflected the USA's new neo-liberal economic interests.

The severe terms imposed on debtor states by the Washington Consensus were softened following the end of the Cold War, when the states of the Communist bloc began the transition back into the world capitalist system. Although the IMF continued to impose conditions on debtors, economic liberals came to realise that the long-term political costs of the Washington Consensus outweighed the short-term profits to be made. By 2000, a new post-Cold War economic order seemed to be taking shape. The GATT was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, leading to a more formal system of trade dispute resolution. The European Union (EU) was formed out of the European Community in 1993, encouraging economic and political integration in Western and Central Europe. This culminated in the creation of the Euro currency in 2002. Rapidly developing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China (the **BRIC** states) began to compete with the USA and Europe, promising a new era of economic growth in regions that had experienced over a century of relative decline. Even the 2001 terror attacks on the USA could not slow international economic integration. The future seemed bright indeed.

The **global financial crisis** of 2007–08 brought this happy time to an end. States were forced to intervene with vast amounts of taxpayers'

money to support banks that had taken advantage of the **deregulation** and **liberalisation** regimes of the Washington Consensus. Freed from regulation, they went on to make very profitable – and very risky – bets on bad loans. The worst offenders were in the US housing market, where individuals with no income were encouraged to take out mortgages on their homes that they could not repay. The failure of borrowers to repay these ill-conceived loans brought on the **sub-prime crisis** – pushing banks and lending agencies to the brink of collapse and sparking the financial crisis itself. In the wake of the crisis, global economic power seemed to shift from the USA to new actors in East Asia. With it came very real changes to the norms, rules and practices of international society. The final impact of these changes is still playing out today, and is not as straightforward as it seemed in 2008. China is not as robust as we may have thought and the USA is not as vulnerable. That said, the 2008 crisis marked an important moment in international political economy as the economic consequences of a system-wide regime failure brought on a wide range of political transformations across the globe.

Summary

- Stagflation in developed states during the 1970s and 1980s led banks to lend large amounts to states in the developing world, leading to a Latin American debt crisis when the region's governments were unable to repay.

- This provided a new job for the IMF – backing international loans in return for the enforcement of structural adjustment programmes that forced governments to sell off state assets, reduce government spending, lower corporate and sales taxes, and deregulate their economies.

- This liberal economic programme became known as the Washington Consensus.

- By 1991, the Washington Consensus was replaced by a less severe form of liberal ideology that encouraged free markets without drastically undermining the power of the state.

- The global financial crisis of 2008 showed the weakness of liberal economic orthodoxy and the importance of state regulation and power to properly functioning markets.

⇒ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 16, Sections 1–2, pp.244–48.

Activity

What does Case Study 1 on p.248 tell you about the role of governments in free markets around the world? Can these markets survive without state intervention?

Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Three approaches to IPE

Although it is sometimes considered a subject in its own right, IPE first emerged as a sub-discipline of international relations. This has affected IPE's theoretical approaches, which closely resemble IR's. These are normally categorised under three main headings: Liberal, Mercantilist and Marxist. Recalling what you learned in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this subject guide, this triumvirate of theories should look pretty familiar. Liberal IPE traces its roots to the same kinds of sources as Liberalism in

IR. It assumes that actors – be they states, corporations or individuals – use rational choice to maximise their self-interest. They do so by creating markets to produce, distribute and consume goods and services. These markets are made up of norms, rules and practices that shape actors' economic behaviour. Therefore, the market is a form of Liberal regime that helps actors coordinate and cooperate to solve shared problems. Economic Liberalism argues that the international economy will work most efficiently when all states adopt market relations. Just as Liberalism claims that the universal spread of liberal democracy will build a peaceful political society around the world, so Economic Liberalism claims that the universal spread of market relations will result in global increases in wealth.

If Liberalism in IPE is mirrored in Liberalism in IR, IPE's Mercantilist tradition has a partner in Realism. Mercantilism assumes that actors are aggressive and conflictual. The goal of Mercantilism is not to increase global wealth, but to increase a state's economic power. This is achieved through the regulation of trade, the limitation of imports and the subordination of economic life to the needs of the state. Remember that the Mercantilist model was the dominant form of economic organisation in most of the world until the second half of the 20th century, when it began to lose out to free trade and Liberalism. It still plays a major role in many global economic decisions. When a government tries to 'protect' a domestic industry by raising tariffs to make imported goods more expensive, it is following Mercantilist logic. When a state devalues its currency to make its exports more competitive on the global stage, it is following Mercantilist logic. When a state puts its political power to work in order to support one of its companies overseas, Mercantilist logic is often at work. These things happen all the time, illustrating the as-yet incomplete nature of Liberalism's ascendency over Mercantilist approaches to IPE.

Finally, IPE has been heavily influenced by Marxism. Marxism is unique insofar as its IPE and IR wings are identical in most respects. Both see class conflict between bourgeois owners and proletarian workers as the fundamental driver of human history. Although humans can be very nice individually, they are combative when put into groups. Thus, the economy is a struggle between the two main economic 'groups': the classes. The bourgeoisie oppresses the proletariat by paying them a tiny fraction of the profits that owners make from their workers' labour. The proletariat, meanwhile, tries to overturn the unequal distribution of economic power. Their attempts to do so are limited by the political and cultural superstructure that bourgeois leaders create to support their position in the economy. This includes legal systems that limit workers' rights, taxation systems that transfer public funds to private economic interests, and schools and media that glorify short-term economic growth over long-term economic and political progress. Marxism's prescription for the global economy is similar to its prescription for international society: revolution. Only a full-scale revolt can overturn the base and superstructure of the capitalist world system, allowing a new – and hopefully more just – economic and political order to emerge.

IPE has also been influenced by other developments in IR. The English School's work on institutions has a parallel in the Institutionalist school of IPE. Social Constructivism has also had an impact on the economic side of the ledger, leading to new studies into how ideas, beliefs and ideologies influence the development of economic and political systems in international society. Gender theory likewise has its IPE counterpart – fertilising the relatively young discipline of IPE with ideas harvested from

different fields of IR. Even discussions of globalisation in IPE reflect IR's ongoing debate about the meaning and nature of this ongoing process. Like IR, IPE has some who support globalisation as a source of social progress. Others are sceptical about its novelty, pointing to much older examples of globalisation in the global economy. Still others are critical of its impact on people around the world, particularly the poorest members of the human species.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 16, Sections 3–4, pp.249–53.

Activity

Make a chart that identifies similarities and differences between IPE's main theories and their IR counterparts. What kinds of changes have been made to IR theory to make it relevant to the economic context in which IPE operates?

Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Global institutions of IPE

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth returning to the issue of global economic institutions and their impact on political and economic relationships in international society. Remember that institutions are understood differently by various branches of IR and IPE. Realists and Mercantilists claim that institutions can only emerge when the dominant powers in the anarchic international system want to formalise rules that reinforce their own power. When powerful states see their interests served by coordination with other powerful states, they may form 'clubs' such as the G7 and the G20 that allow them to manage the global economy more effectively. Each of these institutions is naturally unstable because the powerful states within it are seeking relative gains to enrich themselves at one another's expense.

Liberals in IPE and IR both disagree with the Realist/Mercantilist approach to institutions. For Liberals, institutions are a problem-solving tool that states use in pursuit of solutions to shared problems. According to Liberal theory, institutions create absolute gains, in which everyone improves their position through cooperation. For Liberals, institutions are not a zero-sum game in which there are clear winners and losers. Rather, everyone involved in an institution should find their positions improved by their participation. This improvement may not be equal. Furthermore, some states may take advantage of an institution by breaking the rules while everyone else follows them. These free-riders try to maximise their own benefits by cheating. For example, if the states of the world agree to limit their production of carbon in order to control climate change, a state such as Canada or Australia might 'cheat' by refusing to reduce their carbon footprint on the grounds that such actions would damage their economies. These states flout the rules of a global institution to benefit themselves while expecting everyone else to cut emissions in order to deal with the global problem at hand. Controlling this cheating behaviour – often called opportunism – is an ongoing struggle in many international economic and political institutions.

Constructivists in IPE and IR – as well as members of the English School – have a broader definition of institutions that includes informal norms and codes of conduct. Behaviour, they argue, is shaped by the way in which we perceive reality as much as it is by the 'facts' of reality itself. Explaining

phenomena like opportunism is therefore a matter of understanding the perceptions of the states and actors involved in a given institution. If a state places its domestic economy above global political stability and it perceives a given institution as damaging to business at home, then opportunism is almost inevitable. Avoiding opportunism is therefore a matter of changing perceptions – convincing international actors that their well-being is best served by accepting the limitations imposed by the norms, rules and practices of international institutions.

➥ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 16, Sections 5–6, pp.253–6.

Summary

- IPE is divided into three dominant schools of thought – Liberalism, Mercantilism and Marxism – that mirror the Liberal–Realist–Marxist division of IR theory.

- IPE is similarly divided on the role of institutions in the world economy, with different thinkers adopting arguments that mirror IR's Liberals, Realists, Constructivists and members of the English School.

Conclusion

From Columbus to Bretton Woods to the Washington Consensus, IPE has a lot to tell us about the way the world works. Its main contribution to international relations is found in its nuanced understanding of the connection between international politics and the global economy. In the modern world, where global capitalism is the dominant form of economic system, this connection is more important than ever. It is only through the study of IPE – its history, its theories and its prescriptions for the future – that IR can fully account for the economy's powerful impact on the international society in which we all live.

Chapter overview

- IPE is a sub-discipline of IR that analyses connections between the international political and economic systems.

- Politics and economics have been linked since the earliest days of humanity, when governments first developed to coordinate the production and distribution of goods and services.

- The evolution of the modern state can be traced to the economic developments of the early modern period, which was dominated by mercantilist ideas until the rise of capitalist economics in the late 18th century.

- IPE reads political history as a function of economic interactions, including the ongoing battle between supporters of free trade and protectionism.

- The Bretton Woods system evolved after the Second World War to manage three economic issues: the regulation of trade, currency exchange and economic development.

- The withdrawal of the USA from the gold standard marked the end of Bretton Woods, although its institutional embodiments – the GATT, IMF and World Bank – continued to play a role in the global economy.

- Stagflation in developed states during the 1970s and 1980s led banks to lend large amounts to states in the developing world, causing a Latin American debt crisis when the region's governments were unable to repay.

- This provided a new job for the IMF – backing international loans in return for the enforcement of structural adjustment programmes that forced government to sell off state assets, reduce government spending, lower corporate and sales taxes, and deregulate their economies.

- This liberal economic programme became known as the Washington Consensus.

- By 1991, the Washington Consensus was replaced by a less severe form of liberal ideology that encouraged free markets without drastically undermining the power of the state.

- The global financial crisis of 2008 showed the weakness of liberal economic orthodoxy and the importance of state regulation and power to properly functioning markets.

- IPE is divided into three dominant schools of thought – Liberalism, Mercantilism and Marxism – that mirror the Liberal–Realist–Marxist division of IR theory.

- IPE is similarly divided on the role of institutions in the world economy, with different thinkers adopting arguments that mirror IR's Liberals, Realists, Constructivists and members of the English School.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define key terms and concepts associated with the IPE approach to IR
- describe the world economy from Mercantilist, Liberal and Marxist perspectives
- explain the evolution of global economic institutions from the Mercantilist, Liberal and Constructivist perspectives.

Chapter vocabulary

- Bretton Woods
- tariffs
- comparative advantage
- gold standard
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT)
- World Bank
- currency markets
- stagflation
- Washington Consensus
- BRIC
- global financial crisis
- deregulation
- liberalisation
- sub-prime crisis

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Is Thomas Friedman right when he argues that globalisation was a fact in the international economy well before the First World War?

2. Was the Bretton Woods system merely a tool used by the United States to bolster its hegemonic position in the Western economy?

3. Are IPE's main theoretical approaches merely reflections of those that dominate international relations?

Notes

Part 4: Key concepts in international relations

Notes

Chapter 12: The state

War made the state and the state made war.

Charles Tilly.

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- explain the rise of the state and the associated concept of 'sovereignty'
- assess the significance of the Peace of Westphalia (1648)
- discuss the success of the state in the 20th century
- outline the role and significance of non-state actors
- assess some of the criticisms directed at state-centrism.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the evolution of the sovereign state since 1648
- differentiate between legal, interdependence, domestic and Vatellian forms of sovereignty
- describe some of the challenges and opportunities facing states in an era of globalisation
- evaluate the role of non-state actors in international relations
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Linklater, A. 'Globalisation and the transformation of political community' in BSO, Chapter 32.

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Chapter synopsis

- Until the 17th century, states were just one of many political organisations in a world that included overlapping sets of empires, feudal fiefs, religious communities and tribal chiefdoms.

- The centralisation of political power in the hands of a single sovereign marks the beginning of the modern state, which is defined by its exclusive right to sovereign authority within its territorial jurisdiction.

- Centralised states proved particularly good at raising the money and manpower needed to fight wars, allowing them to out-compete many other forms of political unit.

- The Peace of Westphalia (1648) formalised several aspects of sovereignty and statehood, including the ruler's right to determine the domestic systems of his or her state and the legal equality of all states, particularly their right to non-intervention.

- In reality, states enjoy different degrees of Vatellian, interdependence, international legal and domestic sovereignty.

- Statehood reached an apex in the 20th century, when the power and number of states in the world were boosted by total war and decolonisation.

- The requirements for legal statehood are listed in the Montevideo Convention of 1933: a permanent population, a defined territory, government and the ability to enter into relations with other states.

- The spread of statehood also led to an increasing number of failed states, which do not possess true sovereignty, and quasi-states that are not recognised by the rest of international society.

- Thanks to their ability to make foreign policy, organise domestic societies and manage globalisation, states remain central actors in IR.

- TNCs are an important type of non-state actor that can mobilise huge economic resources and, in some instances, limit the autonomy of the states in which they operate.

- NGOs often fulfil roles that states are unable or unwilling to do, sometimes limiting states' autonomy and even replacing states as providers of public goods.

- Terrorist groups and transnational criminal organisations threaten the integrity of states by challenging their claims of control and potentially undermining the public's faith in their own political leaders.

- International law – though not an actor itself – limits the range of acceptable behaviour open to states.

- States face several severe tests over the next century, including their ability to regulate enormous TNCs, manage transnational issues such as climate change and migration, and deal with challenges to their sovereignty from international organisations and domestic actors.

- The actions of some states raise difficult questions about when it is legitimate to intervene in a state's affairs to help or protect its citizens.

- Some analysts question IR's statist approach to security, pointing out that states themselves are often the biggest threat to the well-being of their people.

Introduction

The first three sections of this subject guide have focused on the evolution of international society and a range of modern theories and concepts. Together, these have given you a range of critical tools with which to analyse issues facing international society today. Now that you have these under your belt, let's turn our attention to some of the broad, system-level issues at the heart of contemporary IR.

As you have seen throughout this subject guide, analysing international relations requires us to think carefully about who and what constitutes an actor in international society. IR scholars have thought a great deal about this issue. Some have been resolutely statist in their approach, prioritising the state as the primary form of political community on the planet. Others reject the statist approach. They argue that globalisation has radically altered the global security environment since 1989, forcing us to think of the world more in terms of non-state actors. Some have pushed this new approach to its limits. A recent work of popular IR by Parag Khanna, *How to run the world* (2011) discusses world politics as if states hardly matter at all. He argues that states do not really matter in IR. Instead, he looks to an assortment of units and individuals: from transnational corporations (TNCs) and NGOs to celebrities, entrepreneurs and faith communities. Khanna argues that the new global reality in which we live bears little resemblance to the traditional view of IR as the study of how states make policies, determine strategies, protect their citizens and organise, plan and fight wars.

The main purpose of this chapter is to assess statist and anti-statist claims. It looks first at how state-centric international society emerged, and why. It will then explore why the state has been such a successful international actor, especially in the 20th century. It then considers the role of non-state actors in IR, suggesting that arguments that non-state actors are replacing the state have been overblown. Finally, it will look at recent criticism of states and state sovereignty, and consider the state's role as the primary source of security at the international level.

The rise of the sovereign state

⯈ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 21, Section 2, pp.321–23.

Activity

Using the material in the readings and the glossary, define each of the following terms, noting especially the differences between them.

Country:

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Nation:

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State:

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Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

States have existed for centuries and are now such a familiar part of the furniture of IR that we rarely question their presence. We often take it for granted that they have always been, and always will be features of international society. This is a historically flawed proposition. Though states are an extremely well-established type of political community, they have not always existed in forms that we would recognise today. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that they will necessarily remain central to IR in the future.

As Kal Holsti points out, 15th-century Europe was dotted with 'hundreds of different polities, overlapping jurisdictions, a low degree of differentiation between private and public realms and divided loyalties'.[1] Until a few hundred years ago, sovereign states were – at best – marginal players in international society. When the term 'sovereign' was used prior to the mid-17th century, it signified a ruler: be it a king, a prince or a pope. The political communities of the day were considered the personal fiefs of their sovereigns, and were often arranged as parts of an overlapping system of local, regional and continental authorities. This system was known as feudalism. In a feudal society, an individual's loyalty was divided among many masters. For example, a peasant in 15th-century Saxony held allegiance to their local lord – the Elector of Saxony. He or she also held allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, who nominally led the loose confederation of principalities that existed across modern-day Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and northern Italy.

[1] Holsti (2004) p.31.

On top of these loyalties came the peasant's obedience to the pope as the head of Western Christendom – a loyalty that sometimes came into conflict with allegiance to secular lords, kings and emperors. Individuals living in feudal societies were members of a dizzying array of interrelated political communities. This is not the case today, when citizens owe political allegiance only to their state of citizenship.

A number of major changes in and around the 16th century transformed the feudal international society of medieval Europe into one that is recognisable today, replacing overlapping communities with the exclusive sovereignty of the territorial state. The first change coincided with the rise of royal power over the local power of minor lords. The victory of kings and queens over their smaller competitors was made possible by ruthless campaigns that undermined political communities that challenged royal authority. Duchies, baronies and counties were subjugated by royal power, extinguishing threats to kingly power 'from below' and uniting a hodge-podge of fiefs into a single **country**.

This process of centralisation was accompanied by efforts to free royal authority from external systems of power such as the system of spiritual power centred on the pope in Rome. Separation from these systems created autonomous political communities centred on the person of the monarch. King Henry VIII's rejection of papal authority in the 1534 Act of Supremacy is an excellent illustration. This made the English king – instead of the pope – supreme head of the Church in England and freed the English state from political intervention 'from above'.

Centralised royal power was also bolstered by developments in jurisprudence and commerce. Legally, the power of kings and queens was justified by principles such as 'what pleases the prince has the force of law' and 'what the king wills, the law wills'. These legal concepts fused judicial authority around the person of the monarch and his or her court to such an extent that 'the court' became synonymous with the state's institutions of justice. The transition to modern statehood was made possible by money. Early modern Europe was an arena of almost constant warfare and, as Richard Campanaro is fond of saying, wars are expensive. Thanks to their centralised bureaucracies and decision-making processes, royal states proved uniquely capable of raising the revenue and credit needed to fight – a process that proved more difficult for the decentralised empires that competed with states for primacy in the international society of the day.

Sovereignty is the defining principle of statehood. The question of which came first is immaterial insofar as one is inseparable from the other. It is as difficult to imagine the modern state without sovereignty as it is to define sovereignty without reference to the modern state. Even so, defining sovereignty is a tricky business. It is both an aspiration and an institution – identifying both who can legitimately act in international society (the sovereign state) and how they should act towards one another (mutual non-intervention). As the English School would say, it is both a rule of membership and a rule of behaviour in international society.

Sovereignty itself consists of two main characteristics:

1. the idea that the state should not be subject to any foreign power

2. the idea that the state is the supreme authority within its territorial jurisdiction.

The rise of sovereignty as an organising principle in international society did not go unchallenged. Some of the opposition came from other forms of political community, like the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. These had the most to lose from the creation of legally sovereign states, and

actively campaigned against them. Establishing the principle of sovereignty therefore involved a good deal of struggle and bloodshed. What we now call the 'wars of religion' in Europe – conducted between the newly formed Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic papacy – were in part fought to determine which kind of political community would dominate Europe. The burning question at the heart of this **endemic warfare** was to whom populations and territories owed their loyalty: their local lord, the pope in Rome, the Holy Roman Emperor or their state's monarch.

Summary

- Until the 17th century, states were just one of many political organisations in a world that included overlapping sets of empires, feudal fiefs, religious communities and tribal chiefdoms.

- The centralisation of political power in the hands of a single sovereign marks the beginning of the modern state, which is defined by its exclusive right to sovereign authority within its territorial jurisdiction.

- Centralised states proved particularly good at raising the money and manpower needed to fight wars, allowing them to out-compete many other forms of political unit.

The Peace of Westphalia

The longest and bloodiest of Europe's wars of religion raged across Europe for 30 years from 1618 to 1648. It was only ended when the warring parties found themselves so bloodied and bankrupt that further warfare threatened to turn their populations against them. In the treaties that followed – collectively referred to as the **Peace of Westphalia** – sovereignty was formally established as an institution of international society. There are many myths surrounding the Peace of Westphalia, and many observers claim that it is given too much importance in terms of establishing sovereignty on a sound legal footing. Sovereign states had, after all, developed in England and France as early as the mid-1500s. Nevertheless, the Peace of Westphalia is important in several respects.

First, Westphalia reinforced a principle first enshrined in the Peace of Augsburg (1555) that the religion of the sovereign would also be the religion of his or her subjects – in Latin: *cuius regio, eius religio*. Second, Westphalia declared the legal equality of all sovereign political communities. In doing so, it laid the foundations for a system of international law based on formal treaty obligations between legally equal states, replacing earlier forms of diplomacy based on rather vague emanations from God or Nature. Finally, Westphalia enshrined its provisions in a pair of multilateral treaties that received the consent of all the major powers of Europe. In this sense, Westphalia was truly a watershed moment. As the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau observed over 100 years later, the Westphalia settlement 'will perhaps for ever remain the foundation of our international system'. Rousseau's enthusiasm for Westphalia had nothing to do with the progressive enlightenment principles with which he is normally associated. Instead, Rousseau recognised that the Peace of Westphalia established a degree of order at the international level by discouraging states from interfering in one another's affairs. The international society that Westphalia helped to create was not especially progressive from today's point of view. Although it provided for increased religious freedom, its terms did not protect individual rights. It did not seek to promote justice. It certainly did not have anything to do with the promotion of democracy. It simply enshrined the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states.

In practice, the principle of non-intervention was never completely adhered to. According to Stephen Krasner (2002), the principle of sovereignty has created a society based on 'organised hypocrisy'. It is a society shaped by institutions – like sovereignty – to which states pay lip service, but regularly ignore when it comes to dealing with weak and vulnerable neighbours. Krasner points out that states that talk so piously about sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention are the same states that, in the 19th century, conquered vast swathes of the globe with little concern for the sovereign rights of others. Krasner tries to understand the weaknesses of sovereignty by separating it into four components: Vatellian sovereignty, which describes a state's ability to determine its own domestic political structures; interdependence sovereignty, which describes a state's ability to control the flow of ideas, goods and people across its borders; international legal sovereignty, which describes the recognition granted to a sovereign state by other states in international society; and domestic sovereignty, which describes a state's ability to control the populations and territories over which it claims jurisdiction. By breaking sovereignty up in this way, Krasner hopes to more accurately describe the sovereign status of different states around the world. Some, like the USA, have very high degrees of Vatellian, legal and domestic sovereignty, but have voluntarily sacrificed aspects of their interdependence sovereignty by joining the World Trade Organization (WTO). Others, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, have claims to international legal sovereignty but are unable to exert sovereignty in its other forms, making it a **quasi-state**. Taiwan, meanwhile, does not have full international legal sovereignty, but does possess some degree of Vatellian, interdependence and domestic sovereignty. Sovereignty and statehood are more complex than they first appear.

Activity

Use the table below to consider each of the following states and the extent to which they are able to claim the sovereignties listed (full, partial, minimal, none).

Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Germany	International legal:
	Interdependence:
	Domestic:
	Vatellian:
North Korea	International legal:
	Interdependence:
	Domestic:
	Vatellian:
Syria	International legal:
	Interdependence:
	Domestic:
	Vatellian:
Somalia	International legal:
	Interdependence:
	Domestic:
	Vatellian:

Summary

- The Peace of Westphalia (1648) formalised several aspects of sovereignty and statehood, including the ruler's right to determine the domestic systems of his or her state and the legal equality of all states, particularly their right to non-intervention.

- In reality, states today enjoy different degrees of Vatellian, interdependence, international legal and domestic sovereignty.

State success

Krasner's point about states' hypocritical attitude towards sovereignty is well taken. As an institution of international society, sovereignty is regularly violated by the very states who claim to protect it. What Krasner fails to explain is why such a flawed idea became so popular in the 20th century and remains so popular in the 21st. If the measure of something is the degree to which it is imitated and copied by others, then the sovereign state has been the great political success story of the last 100 years.

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. If so, then one measure of the state's success as a model for political organisation has been its adoption by actors who oppose other aspects of international society. During the Cold War, this was especially true in the Communist world. Although the Soviet Union and its allies opposed many of the norms, rules and practices that defined international society during the Cold War, they remained vocal supporters of states' sovereign rights. They were especially fond of the principle of sovereign independence as a way of asserting themselves against the US-dominated Western bloc. A strong state, the Soviets argued, was the only firm bedrock upon which socialism could be constructed and sovereignty was the most obvious political principle with which to defend their socialist experiments against external capitalist threats. Even as late as the 1970s and 1980s, the USSR was arguing that Western powers should stop interfering in its domestic affairs in the name of human rights. Significantly, the People's Republic of China continues to use the same argument today. Even the so-called Islamic State, which operates in Iraq and Syria, makes a claim to statehood in its name.

A second measure of the state's success in the 20th and 21st centuries are the increasing number of states around the world. The figures tell the story. In 1900 there were nearly a dozen European empires, but only a few dozen sovereign states. By 1919, the number of empires had diminished while the number of states recognised under international law rose enormously, largely as a result of the peace settlements that ended the First World War. By 1948, the number of recognised states had risen to 58 and continued to rise in the 1960s and 1970s as former colonies achieved independence. The popularity of the state as a form of political community did not end there. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet power, the tally of states ballooned once again. By 2010 they numbered 194. To become a full member of international society – and receive the legal protection it affords – states must meet the four basic qualifications for statehood identified by Article 1 of the **Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States**, adopted by the Organization of American States in 1933. It reads:

> The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.[2]

[2] *Organization of American States 'The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States',* The Avalon Project, Yale Law School http://avalon.law.yale. edu/20th_century/intam03.asp, *[accessed 15 December 2015].*

Of course, not all these states were particularly successful as political communities. At least a few proved incapable of meeting the most basic requirements of sovereignty, collapsing into **failed states**. Many of these possess, at most, one of Krasner's four aspects of sovereignty – normally of the international legal variety. These are recognised by the international community and hold seats at global forums like the UN, but have no power to enforce their jurisdictional claims at home. At the other end of the spectrum from failed states is the quasi-state of Taiwan, which has its own government, territory and population as well as claims to domestic, interdependence and Vatellian sovereignty. It has everything required of a state except international recognition from other states. This severely limits its ability to enter into normal relations with others and therefore makes it something other than a legal, de jure, state.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 32, Sections 1–3, pp.499–503.

Activity

As you work your way through the readings, consider each of the following questions:

1. Why have states proven to be such a successful form of political community?

2. What capabilities do states possess that non-state actors do not?

3. How has warfare shaped the evolution of the state?

This brief survey begs the question why states and the principle of sovereignty have been so successful on the international stage. Compared to non-state actors, states can do things that others cannot. States and states alone have the power to raise taxes, issue passports, print money, pass laws, wage war, put you in prison and – in some jurisdictions – kill you legally. In competitive terms, no non-state actor can match the state in terms of its competences and authority. For one thing, states remain the most effective instrument for making foreign policy. As we will discuss shortly, non-state actors do lots of important things around the world. However, these pale into insignificance when set alongside the actions of states. Internationally, only states can formally declare war and make peace. Only states are permitted to vote in the UN General Assembly and Security Council. Only states can make treaties and recognise other states as sovereign. They therefore hold a special place in international society as the only legitimate representatives of territories and populations on the global stage. Sovereignty is particularly desirable because it affords some degree of legal protection to weaker actors in the international system. As we have already said, the principle of non-intervention provides an imperfect guarantee against invasion. However, sovereignty can at least be referred to by less powerful states to protest the actions of their powerful neighbours on the grounds that such actions undermine their independence and autonomy. Sovereignty was an important shield against foreign interference when many new states were coming into international society in the 1950s and 1960s. It provided them with a way to escape the foreign domination of their colonial past. Perhaps this explains why, even today, aspiring political communities from Kurdistan to Tibet see statehood as their highest goal.

Another reason for a state's success is its unique ability to build a relationship with citizens and subjects. Indeed, the whole point of being a citizen of a state (note that it's impossible to be a citizen of anything else) is that citizenship allows you to make demands of your state that you cannot make of a corporation, an NGO or any other non-state actor. States are supposed to have the capacity to deliver **public goods** that their citizens demand – such as security and education. Moreover, they are

judged on the basis of their ability to deliver these goods. The successful delivery of public goods explains why authoritarian states like the People's Republic of China are viewed in a relatively positive light by their citizens, who repay the state's efforts with their personal loyalty. Whether or not non-state actors such as the EU prove themselves willing and able to provide these goods remains to be seen, though the EU's (non)-response to the 2015 European migration crisis does not bode well. The plight of refugees and migrants illustrates the state's value to its citizens, preventing them from becoming **stateless** and thereby losing access to the public goods provided as a condition of citizenship.

Finally, states have been successful because they are so well suited to the modern global economy. Globalisation has been a mixed bag for states. Many scholars today focus on the inadequacy of states' abilities to deal with problems generated by globalisation. Other analysts point out that globalisation would be impossible without states to create the political, social and economic conditions in which globalisation can spread. The most successful and powerful states in international society have benefited greatly from globalisation. The case of China is instructive. China, as we have already mentioned, has a strong attachment to the principle of sovereignty, which it uses to protect its domestic society from foreign intervention. Yet, this self-same state had no problem joining the world economy during the 1990s, adopting a model of **state capitalism** that blends public and private ownership of the means of production. Since then, China has derived enormous material legitimacy from its participation in the world capitalist system, providing it with the material capabilities to deliver public goods to its citizens and to increase its economic and political power.

All that being said, states and Westphalian sovereignty face a number of challenges in modern international society. Globalisation, national fragmentation, cosmopolitanism and neo-medievalism threaten different aspects of statehood and will push states to continue their evolution towards new forms of political community. What shape these new forms take is one of the great questions facing us in the 21st century.

Summary

- Statehood reached an apex in the 20th century, when the power and number of states in the world were boosted by total war and decolonisation.

- The requirements for legal statehood are listed in the Montevideo Convention of 1933: a permanent population, a defined territory, government and the ability to enter into relations with other states.

- The spread of statehood also led to an increasing number of failed states, which do not possess true sovereignty, and quasi-states that are not recognised by the rest of international society.

- Thanks to their ability to make foreign policy, organise domestic societies and manage globalisation, states remain central actors in IR.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 32, Section 5, pp.503–08.

Activity

Use the table below to describe the challenges posed to Westphalian sovereignty by each of the following terms.

IR term	Challenge to sovereignty
Globalisation	
National fragmentation	
Cosmopolitanism	
Neo-medievalism	

Non-state actors

The state does things that no other international actor is able, willing or permitted to do. This does not mean that non-state actors are powerless in international society. Let's take a look at some of the most important non-state actors on the global scene today.

Transnational corporations

Thanks to the phenomenon of globalisation, national economies are more interdependent than ever, with an unprecedented level of trade in goods and services crossing international borders. In the capitalist world system, large corporations can operate in several states at once, moving people, goods and money between offices, factories and stores in many countries. These transnational or multinational corporations (TNCs or MNCs) may have their headquarters in a 'home state', but will conduct operations in many others at the same time. As a result of these transnational activities, vast sums of private capital move around the world every day. They trade in corporate shares, national currencies, government bonds and other financial instruments. The size of private financial markets and transnational corporations dwarfs the national economies of most small and medium-sized states, leading some to wonder just how much autonomy states can realistically claim in the face of modern economic forces. Can the average government really do as it pleases, even if it means acting against the wishes of some of the largest corporations operating on its soil, or defying the will of the market? Standard and Poor's – a private credit-rating company – downgraded US government debt in April 2011, leading to financial turbulence that rocked the most powerful state in the world. Such influence might indicate that state autonomy is more limited than classical definitions of sovereignty would have us believe.

⏵⏵ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 21, Section 3, pp.323–26.

Activity

Use the table below to consider examples in which TNCs and states limit one another's ability to act as they please in the global economy. Two examples are given.

State power over TNCs	TNCs' power over states
Example: States enforce environmental regulations.	Example: TNCs engage in regulatory arbitrage.

Non-governmental organisations

A large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participate in modern IR, providing aid and services across state borders. Examples include Amnesty International, which campaigns for human rights, and the Red Cross, which provides emergency relief to those in urgent distress, especially in conflict zones. Some NGOs seek to minimise their association with political issues and focus exclusively on helping individuals in need. Others, such as the environmental campaigning group Greenpeace, are more explicitly political in their aims. Taken collectively, the scale of NGOs' operations and the resources at their disposal – especially when compared with those of poor and underdeveloped states in whose territory they often operate – can make them significant local, regional and international players. In some parts of the world, an uneven distribution of NGO and state capabilities has led non-state actors to take on some of the state's responsibilities, particularly in the provision of public goods. This raises the question of how dependent some governments may be on goods and services provided by the non-governmental sector.

⏵⏵ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 21, Section 5, pp.328–31.

Activity

When an NGO provides citizens with aid and services, is it undermining those citizens' relationship with their state? Do you think this is positive or negative? Why?

Terrorist groups

Since the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC on 11 September 2001, terrorism has become a matter of intense focus for states around the world. The prevailing sentiment before 9/11 was that terrorism was a serious but manageable problem. It has now assumed a much greater significance in the eyes of the world's governments. The 'new terrorists', as they are now referred to in IR literature, combine several characteristics: a powerful ideology, an element of surprise in their attacks, a **global network** of allies and supporters, and an understanding of modern technology. The nightmare scenario for counterterrorism planners is the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – that is, nuclear, chemical or biological weapons – by one of these non-state groups. The WMD threat is all the more frightening because the familiar concept of deterrence, whereby states discourage attacks through the threat of severe retaliation, is hard to apply against individuals and non-state groups.

Mutually assured destruction (MAD) is of little use against an actor who doesn't have any strategic resources to threaten with destruction, allowing terrorist groups to circumvent the normal constraints placed on interstate violence in international society.

Transnational criminals and their political impact

Another type of non-state actor that has been studied with great interest includes all of those who engage in transnational criminal behaviour for material gain. The activities of these groups should not be confused with the petty crime of small gangs and lone individuals. What we are looking at here is a multitrillion-dollar industry trafficking in black market arms, drugs and – increasingly – people. These activities have global implications. First, criminal financial flows can be so big and the profits involved so enormous that those wielding these surpluses can engage in a number of activities – such as bribing officials or killing policemen – that threaten the integrity of states. Indeed, there is a close correlation between the power of organised crime and the presence of failed states around the world. The nature of transnational criminal activity means that it threatens the ability of states to control the flow of people, goods and ideas across their borders, endangering a cornerstone of sovereignty and the Westphalian system.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 21, Section 4, pp.326–28.

Activity

Think of an ongoing situation in which a state's sovereignty is constrained by the activities of terrorists and/or criminals. What effect has this had on the state involved? Use the space below to note down your ideas.

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International law

In an earlier discussion, we described a state's unique capacity to enact laws governing the behaviour of its citizens. While this judicial power was once reserved for the state, this is arguably no longer the case. National laws today stand alongside a growing body of international law. International treaties and legal frameworks have existed for hundreds of

years. See BSO, Box 18.2, p.277 for some important examples. The 20th century saw the rise of truly global legal codes and institutions, such as those associated with the UN. The legal agreements concluded in these intergovernmental organisations are enforced on states and individuals by systems of supranational courts, including the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). International law is not itself a non-state actor. Rather, it is an institution of international society that is supported and enforced by a powerful set of international organisations. Once accepted, it clearly influences how states behave. Laws against torture deem it illegal for states to engage in such activity, as do the international laws governing the rights of minorities and individuals. Significant conventions such as the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide play an important part in determining what states are and are not allowed to do in international society. This does not mean that all states will always obey the law. States can and do break it, particularly when they feel that the rewards of doing so outweigh potential sanctions from the international community. In most cases, however, the existence of international laws and conventions means that states can no longer do whatever they want to their own citizens without creating real problems for themselves in the eyes of international society. This shapes their behaviour in ways unheard of before the 20th century.

Summary

- TNCs are an important type of non-state actor that can mobilise huge economic resources and, in some instances, limit the autonomy of the states in which they operate.

- NGOs often fulfil roles that states are unable or unwilling to do, sometimes limiting states' autonomy and even replacing states as providers of public goods.

- Terrorist groups and transnational criminal organisations threaten the integrity of states by challenging their claims of control and potentially undermining the public's faith in their own political leaders.

- International law – though not an actor itself – limits the range of acceptable behaviour open to states.

▸▸ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 18, Sections 2 and 6, pp.275–76 and 285–87.

Activity

As you consider the readings, think about how each of the following theoretical approaches would react to this statement: 'International law provides states with a viable alternative to the use of force.' Use the table below to note down your responses.

Realism	
Liberalism	
The English School	
Marxism	

Problems with sovereign states

So far, we have looked at the success of the sovereign state as an actor in international society. In what follows, we will look at some of the problems that writers have identified with statism and with the state itself.

One problem regarding the state has already been mentioned – by looking at states and states alone, one gets only a partial picture of the totality of contemporary IR. Another obvious limit to statism is that many of the non-state actors we have looked at can be a good deal more influential than the states in which they operate. Take, for instance, some of the giant oil companies or massive agri-businesses that dominate world trade. When pitted against the economic resources of poorer states, one hardly has to be a rocket scientist (or tenured IR professor) to guess that the transnational corporation (TNC) is likely to win in a battle of influence. TNCs might not have the same legal authority as small states, but they almost certainly have more influence on global affairs. This is the sort of argument popularised by Susan Strange in her work on international political economy in the 1980s and 1990s.

Another critical argument against the state focuses on what they cannot do. David Held does not think that our current international order based on a system of sovereign states is really up to the job of managing international crises. He argues that the post-1945 international order is threatened by 'an intersection and combination of humanitarian economic and environmental crises'. Self-interested states, he argues, have neither the resources nor the will nor the imagination to deal with these transnational problems. The world in which we live is deeply interconnected, but the tools that states have at their disposal are locked into the Westphalian system of sovereign states. Held calls this the paradox of our times. 'The collective issues we must grapple with are increasingly global' he notes, yet the means for addressing them are 'national and local, weak and incomplete'.

The idea that the state is not 'fit for purpose' is not new. It was a main point of concern for E.H. Carr, who came to a similar conclusion on the eve of the Second World War. In *The twenty years' crisis*, Carr was prescient. He notes that neither the problems facing the world economy nor those confronting Europe could be solved by isolated nation states. He argues that in time Europe would have to move towards a new order composed of large, functionally efficient units within a new European federation where sovereignty would be pooled or shared. Carr argues that the idea of sovereignty was 'invented after the break-up of the mediaeval system' and was in a process of transition. Although this was unlikely to lead to the total disappearance of the state, some sort of change to the traditional international system was clearly on its way. What Carr termed a 'new international order' was in the making.

This critical view of the state remains at the heart of post-war discussions among IR policy-makers and academics. It provided the basis for rethinking Europe after its 30 years crisis between the end of the First and Second World Wars. This period was marked by a profound failure of the state to deliver prosperity and order to its citizens. In the new Europe designed after 1945, states still constituted the foundation of an emerging European community. Indeed, two states in particular – France and Germany – were the main drivers behind the European project. Still, to achieve its long-term ambitions of peace and economic growth, some loss of sovereignty by Europe's member states was unavoidable. Some states were prepared to trade some of their constitutional independence in

return for the benefits that flow from closer European association. Others, like the United Kingdom, have proved far less happy to trade away their international autonomy. Nevertheless, every European state has taken part in this process, bargaining away one aspect of its sovereignty in order to reinforce another.

The sovereignty debate is not limited to post-Second World War Europe. It has continued to rage following the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of states in many parts of the world. As Nicholas Wheeler argues in *Saving strangers*, the world faced a stark choice in the 1990s. It could either accept the traditional rules of an order that banned any interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, or it could attempt to create a new set of rules that would permit intervention in the interest of humanity. There is little doubting where Wheeler stands on the issue. He is firmly in favour of **humanitarian intervention**. But this intervention, no matter how well intentioned, presents problems for the international community. Where would all this interventionism end? Who decides to intervene, and for what reasons? Is there not a danger that – in the name of defending human rights in a foreign territory with a different culture and completely different set of values – one will end up undermining the principle of sovereignty that has served the international system reasonably well and to which there was no obvious alternative? Such question raise uncomfortable issues for the world's sovereign states that we would do well to investigate further.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 32, Section 5, pp.508–10.

Activity

How has globalisation problematised the state's relationship with its citizens? What does this mean for the state's ability to maintain its position as the dominant form of political community in international society?

Post your responses in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers. Once you have posted your work, respond to a post by one of your peers. Send them a note to let them know what you think.

Security and the state

Analysts have criticised the statist approach to IR on the grounds that it leads to a fundamental misunderstanding of security in the modern world. The traditional approach to security focuses on the security of the state and its capacity to resist destruction or subjugation, usually at the hands of another state. This has put a lot of emphasis on a state's military capabilities, its economic base, and the strength of the bureaucratic systems that channel the latter into the former. According to a new generation of writers, this line of analysis is misconceived. The real object of security, they argue, should not be states but rather the individual human beings who make up their populations. When looked at in these terms, the state is as much a cause of global disorder as it is a source of international peace and stability.

First, there are many cases in which states themselves are sources of insecurity. In North Korea and Zimbabwe for example, the governing regime regards the maintenance of its grip on power as the government's first priority. This means that the most likely source of violence, arbitrary detention and material suffering stems not from some foreign threat or external actor, but from the state itself. Where this is the case, increasing the strength of a state will serve only to increase its capacity for oppression,

rendering many of its people less secure. Bolstering state power does not always lead to improved security conditions for ordinary citizens.

A second reason not to make the state the sole object of security is that it may prioritise the well-being of narrow elites who hold positions of power. Governing classes often prioritise high levels of military investment, even when the threat of external invasion appears to be small. An obsessive focus upon the security of 'the state' in scholarship provides this stubbornly defiant thinking with intellectual justification. Given that the most likely sources of danger to ordinary human beings stem from poverty, ill health, lack of education and economic underdevelopment, a focus on meeting the needs of individuals may be a more effective route to security than boosting the size and number of one's cannons.

Summary

- States face several severe tests over the next century, including their ability to regulate enormous TNCs, manage transnational issues such as climate change and migration, and deal with challenges to their sovereignty from international organisations and domestic actors.

- The actions of some states raise difficult questions about when it is legitimate to intervene in a state's affairs to help or protect its citizens.

- Some analysts question IR's statist approach to security, pointing out that states themselves are often the biggest threat to the well-being of their people.

Conclusion

In spite of the many challenges that face it, the state survives as a central institution of international society and seems likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. States face an array of challenges to their sovereign authority and autonomy. However, they remain the only actors capable of assembling the resources, legitimacy and organisation needed to protect citizens against foreign invasion and provide the types of public goods demanded by a modern population. There is no doubt that TNCs, NGOs, terrorists, criminals and international lawyers affect states' behaviour. However, these non-state actors operate in an environment structured around states' political, economic and social power. A diverse array of other actors may play the game of international affairs, but only in a society where states make the rules and punish those who break them. That being the case, it seems unlikely that the state will disappear from the international arena any time soon.

Activity

Assess the various criticisms made of the state and sovereignty. Do they convince you that we have to move beyond the state and establish some form of world government?

Chapter overview

- Until the 17th century, states were just one of many political organisations in a world that included overlapping sets of empires, feudal fiefs, religious communities and tribal chiefdoms.

- The centralisation of political power in the hands of a single sovereign marks the beginning of the modern state, which is defined by its exclusive right to sovereign authority within its territorial jurisdiction.

- Centralised states proved particularly good at raising the money and manpower needed to fight wars, allowing them to out-compete many other forms of political unit.

- The Peace of Westphalia (1648) formalised several aspects of sovereignty and statehood, including the ruler's right to determine the domestic systems of his or her state and the legal equality of all states, particularly their right to non-intervention.

- In reality, states enjoy different degrees of Vatellian, interdependence, international legal and domestic sovereignty.

- Statehood reached an apex in the 20th century, when the power and number of states in the world were boosted by total war and decolonisation.

- The requirements for legal statehood are listed in the Montevideo Convention of 1933: a permanent population, a defined territory, government and the ability to enter into relations with other states.

- The spread of statehood also led to an increasing number of failed states, which do not possess true sovereignty, and quasi-states that are not recognised by the rest of international society.

- Thanks to their ability to make foreign policy, organise domestic societies and manage globalisation, states remain central actors in IR.

- TNCs are an important type of non-state actor that can mobilise huge economic resources and, in some instances, limit the autonomy of the states in which they operate.

- NGOs often fulfil roles that states are unable or unwilling to do, sometimes limiting states' autonomy and even replacing states as providers of public goods.

- Terrorist groups and transnational criminal organisations threaten the integrity of states by challenging their claims of control and potentially undermining the public's faith in their own political leaders.

- International law – though not an actor itself – limits the range of acceptable behaviour open to states.

- States face several severe tests over the next century, including their ability to regulate enormous TNCs, manage transnational issues such as climate change and migration, and deal with challenges to their sovereignty from international organisations and domestic actors.

- The actions of some states raise difficult questions about when it is legitimate to intervene in a state's affairs to help or protect its citizens.

- Some analysts question IR's statist approach to security, pointing out that states themselves are often the biggest threat to the well-being of their people.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the evolution of the sovereign state since 1648

- differentiate between legal, interdependence, domestic and Vatellian forms of sovereignty

- describe some of the challenges and opportunities facing states in an era of globalisation

- evaluate the role of non-state actors in international relations
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- states
- country
- sovereignty
- endemic warfare
- Peace of Westphalia
- quasi-states
- failed states
- public goods
- stateless
- state capitalism
- global network
- humanitarian intervention

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. What does it mean for a state to be 'sovereign'?
2. What do you think represents the greatest challenge to the primacy of the state as the leading actor in IR?
3. Do you think that there will ever be a world government?
4. 'It is impossible for states to be properly sovereign with a globalised economy of the sort the world has today.' Discuss.

Notes

Chapter 13: War

The social institution known as war survived the agrarian revolution of c.6000 BC and the industrial and scientific revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It should be a safe prediction to expect war to adapt, or be adapted, to whatever changes technologies, economies and social and political mores will lay up for us in the future.

Gray, C. *Another bloody century*. (London: Phoenix, 2006).

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- understand the meaning of war in IR
- explain its causes at different levels of analysis
- differentiate between forms of interstate and intrastate war
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of just war theory
- explain how Liberal foreign policy can lead to warfare.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of 'war' in IR
- explain some of its causes
- assess actors' reasons for waging war
- differentiate between different types of war
- discuss the place of justice in warfare.

Essential reading

Breuilly, J. 'Nationalism' in BSO, Chapter 25.
Sheehan, M. 'The changing character of war' in BSO, Chapter 14.
Tickner, J.A. 'Gender in world politics' in BSO, Chapter 17.
'Humanitarian intervention' in GCR.
'Just war' in GCR.

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Organski, A.F. and J. Kugler *The war ledger*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980).

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Van Ham, P. 'The power of war: why Europe needs it', *International Politics* 47(6) 2010, pp.574–95.

Walt, S.M. *Revolution and war*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

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Waltz, K.N. *Man, state and war*. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1959).

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Chapter synopsis

- War, understood as organised violence carried on by political units against each other, is a central topic in the study of IR.

- Carl von Clausewitz describes war as a rational tool used by political leaders to achieve their goals.

- Many Realists describe war as a rational response to the anarchical structure of international society or the shifting distribution of power between states.

- Other IR scholars see war as a product of leaders' miscalculations or perceptions of fear, interest, prestige and revenge.

- Wars are often fought for material gain: for territorial acquisition, resource and market access, or to defend the existing economic system.

- Wars fought for faith and identity are most often fought between members of the same faith or identity group, although these can spill over into conflicts with other nations.

- Revolutionary wars aim to transform or overthrow the existing structure of international society, supporting Clausewitz's description of war as a rational political tool.

- In the post-Cold War world, 'new wars' have become increasingly common in states that are unable to provide their citizens with public goods, leading to violent conflict between identity groups within these states.

- Liberal wars are fought to preserve the existing institutions of international society and to extend the liberal 'zone of peace' hypothesised in Democratic Peace Theory.

- There is a heated debate between supporters of humanitarian intervention and critics who see it as a mask for Western imperialism.

- Justice in war is judged by two sets of criteria: how justly has a war begun (*jus ad bellum*) and how justly has a war been prosecuted (*jus in bello*).

- International law plays a main role in determining the legitimacy of war.

- The legality of WMDs, including nuclear weapons, remains highly contentious. The status of unconventional fighters, such as terrorists, is similarly complex.

Introduction

War has been a part of world affairs for so long that it's easy to see it as a natural condition in foreign affairs. It has been called 'the sport of kings', fought in the interests of monarchs and emperors. It has been called 'a racket', fought to make profits for industrialists and financiers.[1] It has also been called 'politics by other means', a necessary part of statecraft in a world of potentially hostile neighbours. Some see it as a consequence of states' imperial ambitions or the anarchic character of the international system – causes located at the unit and system level of analysis respectively. The Classical Realists described in Chapter 8 find its causes at the level of the individual, concluding that war is symptomatic of our flawed human nature. However we describe it, **war** – used here to mean 'organised violence carried on by political units against each other' – is as old as recorded history. As the distinguished writer on war, Sir Michael Howard, observes, those who yearn for peace probably assume that war is deeply abnormal. Those who study the world in all its complexity, however, soon come to realise that war is a deeply ingrained part of our social lives. This points to something fairly self-evident for students of IR: it is absolutely vital to take war seriously and not turn away from the subject because it involves one set of human beings killing another. War is an uncomfortable reality in IR, and must be tackled head-on if we are to gain any understanding of how to avoid it when possible and win it when necessary.

Wars take many forms and can be fought by a variety of actors. Wars have had an enormous impact on the shape of international society today. As the US sociologist Charles Tilly observes, states and wars have an intimate relationship that goes back at least 1,000 years. He argues persuasively that states dominate the world today because they proved themselves to be the only political organisations able to mobilise the material resources needed to fight protracted wars in distant corners of the globe. He sees

[1] *Butler (2003) p.1.*

war in general as a battlefield on which states have slain empires, city-states, nomadic nations and all of their other political rivals. That is why Tilly says, 'war makes the state and the state makes war'.[2] Others disagree with Tilly's inherent statism. They point out that wars are often fought between non-state actors. According to them, the only thing one really needs to fight a war is an armed group ready to do battle and there is not a clear dividing line between war as a state activity and lower-level forms of non-state armed conflict. The conflict raging across Syria and Iraq at the time of writing exemplifies the potential of modern non-state actors to fight protracted conflicts, and even to seize territory and populations from existing states.

In this chapter you will deal with some of the most difficult issues surrounding war, focusing first on competing explanations of its causes. You will then move on to discuss our reasons for going to war, including profit, faith and revolutionary zeal. The focus then moves to two types of war before concluding with some reflections on how we justify them.

[2] Tilly (1975) p.42.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 14, Sections 1–2, pp.216–18.

Activities

Although he died in 1831, Carl von Clausewitz's writings on war remain central to our understanding of the phenomenon. Use the table below to organise his definitions of war and its purpose.

Definition of war	
Purpose of war	

Now, thinking like Clausewitz, organise the terms in the glossary below by placing them in the appropriate box based on whether they describe war's enduring nature or its particular forms.

Nature of war	Form of war

Glossary: battlespace, bombing, random chance, citizen armies, communication, guerrilla, political goals, siege, trench, uncertainty, violence

Why we fight

If we accept Clausewitz's claim that there are many types of war, it follows that no single model will be able to explain them all. As such, there is not a universal theory of war. However, it is possible to identify elements of the nature of war that persist in human history. If we again agree with Clausewitz that wars represent a rational means to achieve a political goal, we should be able to explain why specific wars occur in a given time, place and manner. IR's contribution to this strand of war studies has been to identify two causes of armed conflicts between political units. One is connected to the anarchical structure of the international system, which encourages states to use war as a political tool. The other describes wars in terms of the changing distribution of power between actors in international society.

The IR scholar normally identified with the structural theory of war is Kenneth Waltz, discussed at length in Chapter 8 of this subject guide. Waltz is a central figure in Structural Realism thanks to two books: *Man, state and war* (1959; 2001) and *Theory of international politics* (1979). War, he argues, is not inherent in human nature; it is a product of the anarchic international system in which we live. As discussed in Chapter 8, Realist anarchy generates a security dilemma that encourages states to arm themselves in order to ensure their survival. This does not mean that they will go to war at all times and under any circumstances. Some international mechanisms prevent IR from degenerating into a war of all against all. One such mechanism is **nuclear deterrence** – a policy summed up as 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD). During the Cold War, MAD was so successful that at one point, Waltz argued, peace would be enhanced – and war made less likely – by widespread nuclear proliferation. There are problems with this claim. As you will remember from Chapter 3, the absence of direct confrontations between the superpowers during the Cold War did not make the era a peaceful one. It simply shifted war away from conflict between nuclear states and towards proxy wars in the developing world where superpower confrontations could play out without the threat of a nuclear holocaust. This **stability-instability paradox** continues to operate today, creating relative order in relations between nuclear armed states while encouraging wars in the rest of the world.

According to another IR scholar, A.F. Organski, wars are most likely to occur when international society experiences a decisive shift from one great power to another. Organski claims that international society has a 'fundamental problem' that can very easily 'set the whole [international] system sliding almost irretrievably towards war'. He identifies this as the different 'rates of growth among the great powers', which will result in an ever-changing distribution of power among them. Over time, states' uneven development will allow some to surge ahead while others are left behind. The danger point for international society arrives when a rising power overtakes a stagnant or declining state. It is at this transitional moment, Organski concludes, that wars are most likely to break out.

IR scholars remain deeply divided over these general theories of war. Some, like Niall Ferguson, think that they lead to gross oversimplifications of reality. Others claim that they ignore the many forms that wars can take. They argue that neither Waltz nor Organski can adequately explain the many reasons that states fight. According to the Austrian–US political scientist John Stoessinger, war is neither impersonal nor structurally determined. One cannot simply blame it on events or anarchy. Stoessinger

claims that wars are fought by men and women whose knowledge of the world is imperfect. This means that they are never in full possession of the 'facts' and therefore make mistakes. Stoessinger argues that most wars start because of someone's miscalculation or misperception, be it an underestimation of war's costs, or an overestimation of one's ability to fight to a successful conclusion. Think about North Korea's decision to invade South Korea in 1951. North Korea may have assumed that it would win quickly – which was likely with significant Soviet aid. On this basis it felt confident enough to attack. As it turned out, this was a massive miscalculation based on incomplete intelligence about the strategic position of South Korea, an underestimation of the international community's opposition to aggression, and an overestimation of the support it would gain from its Soviet ally.

The complicated question of 'why states fight' has been addressed more recently by Richard Ned Lebow. He has advanced a novel – if controversial – way of thinking about war. He claims that nearly all theories of war suffer from dependence on rationalist and structural explanations. Rather than linking the causes of war to international anarchy or politicians' miscalculations, Lebow argues that we need to explore the motives driving those who start a conflict. He identifies four such motives: fear, interest, standing and revenge. Using an original data set, he goes on to show that in most cases wars occur either as a way to improve a state's standing or as a way to 'get even' with states who have made successful territorial grabs.

There is no easy way to assess these theories. Each needs to be weighed on its own merits on the basis of how useful they are at explaining different kinds of conflict. While Waltz and Organski provide us with theories that make broad generalisations about large-scale wars as an IR phenomenon, they cannot explain the motives and perceptions that propel leaders into conflict. Writers like Stoessinger and Lebow help us to understand how real people make foreign policy decisions under highly stressful circumstances. Each approach to war has its own costs and benefits. Though they are good at describing individuals' motives, Stoessinger and Lebow sometimes get so close to the actors that they lose sight of the structural context in which their decisions are made. On the other hand, Waltz and Organski can tell us about the context in which wars begin but not about the individuals whose decisions actually precipitate it. As we've said many times in this subject guide, different theories highlight and ignore different aspects of reality. In this case, you need to be careful to choose the right type of theory to answer your preferred question about war.

Summary

- War, understood as organised violence carried on by political units against each other, is a central topic in the study of IR.
- Carl von Clausewitz describes war as a rational tool used by political leaders to achieve their goals.
- Many Realists describe war as a rational response to the anarchical structure of international society or the shifting distribution of power between states.
- Other IR scholars see war as a product of leaders' miscalculations or perceptions of fear, interest, prestige and revenge.

Activity

Using the table below, revisit the theories of war outlined above and try to apply each of them to explain the outbreak of the First World War discussed in Chapter 2.

Theory of war	Explanation of the First World War
Waltz	
Organski	
Stoessinger	
Lebow	

Wars in particular

➤➤ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 14, Sections 3–5, pp.218–24.

Activity

As you work your way through the readings, use the table below to organise terms associated with modern and post-modern warfare. Two examples from the readings are provided.

Modern war	Post-modern war
Industrialised warfare	Media warfare

The general arguments about the causes of war discussed in the previous section are useful and intellectually suggestive, but we still need a more exact taxonomy of why wars are fought. This section will discuss three such causes with deep historical roots: profit, faith and revolution.

Profit

Wars are sometimes fought for honour, occasionally for glory and often for profit. In any reckoning of the causes of war, material gain will be near the top of the list. Material gain may be measured in terms of additional territory acquired (think of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066),

or access to potentially profitable markets (think of the Opium wars waged by Western states to pry open the markets of China during the 19th century), or access to vital commodities and resources (from gold and spices to slaves to oil). Even the brutal wars of aggression launched by Nazi Germany and imperial Japan in the 1930s and 1940s had underlying economic rationales. Democratic states prefer to explain their international behaviour in more noble terms, but even the USA – arguably the most liberal of the great powers – has gone to war for material gain. This is not to say that the USA's every military action has had an immediate economic rationale. It was definitely not true in the Cold War when its main purpose was to contain the USSR. Nor is it true today as it continues to wage war in Afghanistan against the Taliban. However, the USA's desire to keep the world safe for capitalism remains a central driver of US foreign policy, indicating the important link between political, military and economic considerations in international society. This line of argument is particularly popular among Marxist and IPE analysts, who see political action as a function of economic decision-making.

Faith and identity

Wars have also been waged in the name of specific sets of ideas and values. These range from Europe's wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries, to the ideological struggle of the Cold War. Of all these ideas and values, religion has been an especially potent source of conflict. Two of the world's most influential faiths – Islam and Christianity – have witnessed many wars over the centuries. Most have been fought between members of the same religion (as in Reformation Europe and modern Iraq), though others have been fought between different faiths (as during the Crusades and the Indo–Pakistani wars of the 20th century). War between religious communities is not inevitable. After all, both Islam and Christianity are 'religions of the book' – part of the Judeo–Christian–Islamic tradition of Abrahamic faiths. Both openly preach a doctrine of harmony while proclaiming their belief in the same monotheistic God. That being said, one's beliefs can certainly breed intolerance towards a different faith. One simply cannot generalise about interfaith cooperation and conflict. As Fred Halliday has pointed out, Islam and Christianity co-existed for centuries and have played important roles in each other's evolution. For long periods of time, however, their relationship has been problematic. Because both are evangelical faiths, both are well suited to imperial expansion. It is no coincidence that each religion has provided a spiritual foundation for a number of great empires. Some scholars even argue that the European identity and the notion of 'the West' were forged by Christendom's extended conflict with Islam, just as many segments of Islam have come to define themselves against the largely Christian West.

The importance of religion in shaping modern war has become the subject of recent scholarship in IR. The reason for this resurgence of interest is linked to the recent rise of religion as a global political phenomenon, and to IR's increasing involvement with the politics of culture and identity. The field has proved to be contentious. This became only too obvious when in 1993 the well-known US political scientist, Samuel Huntington, published his hugely influential essay, 'The **clash of civilisations**'. This article draws attention to what Huntington feels is a growing cultural gap between Islam – which he characterises as a deeply traditional and almost pre-modern religion – and the modern, secular West. Huntington has been heavily criticised for oversimplifying the complex character of two of the world's great faiths, and for underestimating the many ways in which Islam and modernity continue to co-exist. For a time, it looked

like Huntington would fade back into the mists of academia. However, his thesis became the focus of heated debate following the attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001. In the years since 9/11, his critics have continued to assail him by claiming that his analysis fuels the very 'clash' that he purports to describe. However, he has his followers. They insist that Huntington is not arguing for conflict any more than he is making a theological case for Christianity. Rather, they think that he is drawing attention to something that has largely been ignored by secular scholars: the importance of thinking seriously about faith and identity as one – and only one – of the possible causes of war.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 25, Section 3, 'A clash of civilisations?', pp.420–21.

Activity

On the VLE, look at the map showing the cultural divisions described in Samuel Huntington's work. Would you subdivide any of the civilisations that he identifies? Would you group together two or more civilisations that he has decided to separate? What other critiques might you level at his division of the world?

Revolution

If faith and ideology have been one source of conflict in international society, the rise of revolutionary states has been another. As US neo-Realist Stephen Walt puts it, 'revolutions intensify the security competition between states and sharply increase the risk of war'. The French Revolution is an exemplary case study of how revolutions in powerful states can increase the overall likelihood of conflict in international society. Concerned that revolution in France would spark similar uprisings across Europe, Hapsburg Austria invaded France in 1792. This convinced the French government that its security depended on the forceful destruction of tyranny and feudalism across the continent, a cause that saw France develop the first modern citizen army. Fuelled by nationalism, the armies of Revolutionary France swept all before them before falling under the command of a charismatic and brilliant artillery commander: Napoleon Bonaparte. Only in 1815 were they finally defeated, and even then the revolutionary ideas that motivated them continued to percolate through European society, upsetting the status quo and sparking conflicts from Greece to Belgium to Poland. Revolution, it turns out, is not for the faint of heart.

Soviet Bolsheviks pursued a similar strategy with regard to its enemies in the years immediately following the October Revolution of 1917, sparking the civil war that raged from 1918 to 1921. As in France a century earlier, Soviet leaders like Leon Trotsky insisted that the only foundation for a sustainable peace was an entirely new political and economic order. Admittedly, this would involve the use of revolutionary violence. For Trotsky and his followers, international revolution was a means to an end. War was a tool with which to eliminate ideologies that Soviet leaders blamed for the world's injustices: capitalism and imperialism. This ideology of revolutionary war came to an abrupt end following Trotsky's exile and Stalin's rise to dominance in the late 1920s.

Throughout most of the 20th century, nationalist revolutions have turned to violence to overthrow imperial domination. These 'wars of national liberation' forced Europeans to withdraw from their colonies in Africa and Asia after the Second World War, and even handed the USA its biggest military defeat of the Cold War era. This began during the Second World War when the Vietnamese fought a war of resistance against

Japanese occupation. Following Japan's defeat, and over the objections of Vietnamese nationalists, France was reinstated as the imperial master of French Indochina. Supported by the Soviet Union – which saw it in its interests to oppose capitalist imperialism – Vietnamese nationalists forced France to withdraw from Southeast Asia in 1954. The USA then entered the fray as the main ally of South Vietnam, an anti-communist authoritarian state that held sovereignty over the southern half of the country. Following two decades of escalation and retreat, the war in Vietnam ended in 1975 when the country was finally united under the communist government of North Vietnam. By then, the longest war of the post-1945 period had claimed tens of thousands of French and US lives, led to the death of over one and half million Vietnamese, spawned a major anti-war movement in the West, and deepened an already important split in the communist world between China and the USSR. Vietnam may not have been a major war between great powers, but its impact on international affairs should not be underestimated.

Summary

- Wars are often fought for material gain: for territorial acquisition, resource and market access, or to defend the existing economic system.
- Wars fought for faith and identity are most often fought between members of the same faith or identity group, although these can spill over into conflicts with other nations.
- Revolutionary wars aim to transform or overthrow the existing structure of international society, supporting Clausewitz's description of war as a rational political tool.

Activity

Compare the motivations behind the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and NATO's 2011 intervention in the Libyan civil war. Is it possible to identify a single dominant motive in these interventions, or must we deal with a collection of different motivations that drive international behaviour? How would you prioritise them?

New wars

If wars of national liberation fought against Western imperialism were commonplace before the 1990s, wars caused by the break-up of failed states have become far more prevalent in the years since. Some writers argue that military competition prior to 1989/1991 was either between different kinds of states – like the USSR and the USA – or for the establishment of new states – as in Vietnam. Others point out the importance of civil wars in this period, though even these were often driven by the battle between supporters of the USA and supporters of the Soviet Union. Civil wars are nothing new. The USA experienced a brutal internal war between 1861 and 1865 that killed nearly 650,000 soldiers (more US deaths than in all the foreign wars that the USA has fought since 1865). In the centuries before 1945, England, China, Russia, France and Spain all experienced civil wars in which groups fought to either take over or separate from the state. During the Cold War, these conflicts continued to rock states from Congo to El Salvador to Cambodia. Since the end of the Cold War, these civil – or more precisely intrastate wars – have become even more common. They are by-products of long-standing domestic conflicts that had been papered over by the Cold War until the superpowers' withdrawal of economic and political support from their

clients around 1989/1991. This withdrawal of support caused developing states – already traumatised and brutalised by the Cold War – to implode. The resulting civil wars have made life quite literally 'poor, nasty, brutish and short' for the millions affected by them.

These wars take many forms as factions, clans, tribal groups, nations and profit seekers attempt to secede from pre-existing states (as with the Tamils in Sri Lanka and Russians in Eastern Ukraine), gain control of state power (as in Angola and Mozambique), or acquire access to lucrative commodities such as oil and other valuable raw materials (as continues to happen across Syria and Iraq). These 'new wars', as Mary Kaldor calls them, have several characteristics. They take place in states whose economies can no longer provide for their citizens' needs. Unable to provide their citizens with **public goods**, states lose the loyalty of their populations and armed forces. Violence becomes increasingly privatised as criminal gangs and paramilitary groups gain control of people and territory. Political power shifts from the state to local identity groups, each of whom tries to defend its home territory against its neighbours. As violence increases, the line between 'soldier' and 'civilian' gets blurred, resulting in mass civilian casualties as armed identity groups attempt to 'ethnically cleanse' the areas they control. The result is a 'new war' in which mass civilian casualties, systematic rape and genocide become legitimate tactics in eyes of political leaders whose main aim is to defend and extend their identity group's territorial reach.

New wars do not tend to remain localised for long. They often draw international players into their civil conflicts, creating highly complex 'internationalised civil wars' that feature a wide range of local and foreign participants. New wars may be fought at a very local scale in the name of local identities. Thanks to globalisation, however, they tend to involve what Kaldor terms a 'myriad of transnational connections' as well. As a result, these new wars are often conducted with the world's media present and – more often than not – local forces can count on some forms of external support from foreign governments or expatriate populations. Although they appear local, new wars are anything but. They draw in foreign states that can ill-afford to stand idly by while another states falls apart, spreading the impact of civil conflicts through the length and breadth of international society. These bring powerful new weapons and tactics to bear, using the fruits of the **revolution in military affairs (RMA)** to prosecute wars in distant lands, against obscure enemies and for causes that often defy easy definition.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 14, Section 6, pp.224–27.

Activity

Use the table below to organise terms from the readings associated with new wars and postWestphalian warfare. Are they similar to the characteristics of modern and post-modern war?

Post-Westphalian warfare

Liberal wars

When thinking about the causes of war in the modern world, we have to consider the important role played by the 'liberal' West. By and large, the West has viewed its post-Cold War foreign policy as benign. Its strategic purpose after 1991 was simply to do as little as possible on the assumption that there was no serious enemy left to fight. Instead of military intervention, the USA and its allies tried to spread the political and economic values that had been so successful in seeing off the Soviet adversary. Herein lay a contradiction. If any governments 'out there' refused to accept the Western definition of order, what could be done to force these **rogue states** to play by the rules?

This was an especially vexing problem for the USA. Having slain the Soviet 'dragon', the USA found itself confronted by a series of small rogue states such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea. These did not have the material capabilities of the USSR. Neither did they seem to pose much of an ideological threat. Still, these states denied freedom to their own people and – more importantly – threatened the liberal international order by supporting terrorism, seeking to acquire **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)**, and flouting the norms, rules and practices of international society. The scene was set for an extended conflict that has flared on and off ever since. It has featured a number of Western moves against these states, including the 1991 Gulf War to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. These Western interventions culminated in the Anglo-American decision to launch a 'liberal war' against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Ba'ath regime in 2003 – a war aimed at dragging the rogue state back into compliance with the West's 'liberal' international society. In the language of Democratic Peace Theory, the USA and its allies tried to force rogue states into the Michael Doyle's 'zone of peace' by replacing their existing governments with Western-style representative democracies.

The 2003 Iraq War has proved highly controversial and did not end the ongoing debate about what kind of foreign policy the West should have vis-à-vis the non-Liberal and non-Western world. Is it justifiable for the West to intervene into the affairs of other countries for broadly liberal reasons, such as to protect human rights or to end genocide? Critics on the left, like the US radical Noam Chomsky, argue that Western posturing about **humanitarian intervention** is only a pretext for Western imperialism. Other commentators are not so certain. Foreign policy always involved difficult choices. Though one should be suspicious of grand and benevolent claims made by powerful states, they are often the only actors capable and willing of ensuring that civil and human rights are protected. As former British Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted when he made the case for humanitarian interventions on no less than five occasions between 1997 and 2007, the West cannot be guided solely by hard-headed calculations of the national interest. Neither should it be constrained by the dogma that nobody – under any circumstances – can intervene in the domestic affairs of other states. In a world where states kill their own people and slaughter whole ethnic groups – as Blair argued was happening in Kosovo in 1998–99 and Iraq in 2003 – the West was faced with a simple choice: either to intervene to protect the **liberal rights** of the weak or to close its eyes and allow oppressive governments to continue doing harm. There was no third way. In the interests of protecting liberal rights, war became the preferred policy option.

Summary

- In the post-Cold War world, 'new wars' have become increasingly common in states that are unable to provide their citizens with public goods, leading to violent conflict between identity groups within these states.

- Liberal wars are fought to preserve the existing institutions of international society and to extend the liberal 'zone of peace' hypothesised in Democratic Peace Theory.

- There is a heated debate between supporters of humanitarian intervention and critics who see it as a mask for Western imperialism.

⇥ **Stop and read**: 'Humanitarian intervention' in GCR.

Activity

In March 2011, the UNSC passed resolution S/RES/1973 (2011), permitting international intervention in the Libyan civil war to set up no-fly zones and use any other 'necessary measures' to protect civilians from the Gaddafi regime. Read through the provisions made in this resolution, which is posted on the VLE. Does the Libyan intervention count as a 'Liberal war'? How successful was the Libyan intervention in protecting civilians and extending the Liberal 'zone of peace'?

Just wars: *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*

Attempts to spread Liberal values through the barrel of a gun lead us to our last problem: is there any such thing as a 'just war'? The question of **justice** in battle is a very old one. Alex Bellamy calls it a 'two-thousand-year-old conversation about the legitimacy of war'. The question still resonates in the modern era, as policy-makers discovered during the 2003 Iraq War. This was an especially interesting conflict in which both parties claimed to have justice on their side. The USA and its allies argued that Iraq had ignored the United Nations for over 10 years. They argued that Iraq threatened the territorial integrity of other states and made prisoners of its own people. As was made clear in the public protests that followed the Anglo-American invasion, many millions around the world clearly did not agree. Opponents to this intervention insisted that the war was not only unnecessary but was also unjust. Iraq, they argued, did not present an immediate threat to its neighbours. It was sufficiently contained by UN resolutions and no-fly zones. There were, moreover, alternatives to invasion. Opponents pointed out that the US-led coalition had no United Nations mandate, and that the invasion involved the armies and airforces of several powerful states intervening in the internal affairs of a rather weak one. The Iraq War not only contravened the basic international principle of state sovereignty – one of the bases of international society – but violated the very principles of international law that the coalition claimed to defend.

The specific issues posed by the 2003 Iraq War point to a more general set of questions that have been debated for centuries by moral philosophers, diplomats, politicians and theologians. This concerns the ethics of war and what kinds of war may or may not be deemed to be 'just'. Some IR thinkers, particularly those of the Realist school, find these musings on the justice of war to be beside the point. 'Wars happen and that is that' they insist. They see no point worrying about morality. The main aim, they say, is to win the war and not worry too much about its causes or the means employed to win it. According to pacifists, the problem with just wars is that they make conflicts more likely by providing participants with a moral cover story. They have therefore been critical of the just war tradition,

arguing that wars are by definition barbaric and can therefore never be justified by morality or ethics.

It is often assumed that the just war tradition derives from a Western and Christian discourse by St Thomas Aquinas – one of the West's most influential medieval theologians. This is not strictly true. Just war theory draws on many traditions and can be found in many civilisations, from the Holy Quran to the Bhagavad Gita. Just war traditions come in many shapes and sizes. In its Western guise the theory embraces two sets of criteria. The first, *jus ad bellum*, sets criteria to judge whether an actor's choice to go to war is justified. The second set of criteria, *jus in bello*, sets criteria to determine whether a war is being fought 'in a just manner'. In broader terms, the just war tradition attempts to reconcile three things: the notion that taking human life is seriously wrong; the idea that states have a duty to defend their citizens and to defend justice; and the position that protecting innocent human life and defending important moral values sometimes requires the use of force. There is, however, one important point to keep in mind. Deciding that a war is just does not mean that it is good. A just war is permissible in international society because it is the lesser of two evils, but remains an evil nonetheless.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 17, Section 5, pp.287–89 and 'Just war' in GCR.

Activity

How have *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* changed over the past century? Is there an objective, universal moral basis for declaring some wars 'just' and others 'unjust'?

The just war tradition raises many difficult questions. For example, can a justifiable war be waged in an unjust manner, yet still be just in terms of its goals? Alternatively, can a war that began unjustly be fought in a just fashion? Can a war be just when vast numbers of innocent civilians are killed as a result? In purely quantitative terms, how many deaths does it take to conclude that a war originally seen as just is just no more? These are not easy questions, and only become more difficult over time. Take the question of proportionality, a classic case of *jus in bello*. Should a war be fought using maximum firepower in the hope of bringing it to the earliest possible end? Alternatively, should those waging war adopt a more cautious approach, reducing the number of casualties in the short-term with the attendant risk of increasing the duration of the conflict? As British academic Chris Brown points out, in spite of its many difficulties and inconsistencies, the just war tradition plays a critical role in our thinking about armed conflict, providing 'a way of thinking that is relevant in all circumstances where force is used'.

Nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons present an especially difficult problem for the just war tradition. For many policy-makers and writers, nuclear arms can readily be justified on the grounds that they have deterred war between the great powers since 1945. As you saw in Chapter 3, the Soviet Union and the USA were kept from each other's throats by 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD), which ensured that an attack by either party would result in the destruction of both. If you agree that deterrence worked in the Cold War, you will agree that nuclear weapons saved millions of lives – perhaps even saving human civilisation. Does that justify nuclear proliferation? What if deterrence fails? Would nuclear war be justified if it were conducted against an unambiguously aggressive and irrational state led by insane leaders? As political theorist Michael Waltzer grimly remarks in his landmark 1977

study, *Just and unjust wars*, it is never easy to work out what constitutes a just war, but given their destructive, indiscriminate character, 'nuclear weapons' would seem to 'explode the theory of just war' altogether.

Terrorism

Just war theory has also been part of the more recent debate on international **terrorism**. Liberals normally make the case that Western societies should fight their enemies – even those willing to undertake indiscriminate attacks against civilians – using morally justifiable means. The tools used to prosecute wars should be proportionate to the threat, employing means that are authorised by the international community. As the so-called 'war on terror' has unfolded, however, a number of Western states have decided to remove their moral gloves in order to combat the terrorist threat using morally dubious means. The USA, for example, has used torture to acquire information that we are told has saved thousands of lives. Western states continue to use unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) – drones – to execute suspected terrorists in other states without any form of trial. How are we to judge these actions? Are they justified because the West is under attack from ruthless opponents who cannot be deterred by normal means? Are they unjustified because they undermine the very values that the West is claiming to defend? It is these kinds of difficult questions that the just war tradition is needed to answer.

Summary

- Justice in war is judged by two sets of criteria: how justly has a war begun (*jus ad bellum*) and how justly a war has been prosecuted (*jus in bello*).
- International law plays a main role in determining the legitimacy of war.
- The legality of WMDs, including nuclear weapons, remains highly contentious. The status of unconventional fighters, such as terrorists, is similarly complex.

Activity

How do you think the following approaches to IR would deal with the causes of war and the just war tradition? What sorts of causes would each identify? What sorts of conflicts, if any, would they consider just? Use the table below to address their positions on the causes and justice of war.

Approach	Causes of war?	Just wars?
Realism		
Liberalism		
Marxism		
Constructivism		

Conclusion

War is arguably the oldest topic in international relations. It is also one of the most uncomfortable, studying humanity at its most brutal and barbaric. It is important that we do not turn our heads at the sight of it. After all, war in one form or another has been a part of human interaction since the earliest historical records. Over the intervening millennia, its forms have undoubtedly changed. From the advent of total war to the revolution in military affairs, the ways in which we fight have been transformed by our forms of social organisation and by the material technologies we can bring to the fight. Today's 'new wars' are the latest evolution of this ancient phenomenon, a negative consequence of globalisation that is sometimes overlooked. Will war ever disappear from the human experience? Maybe it will, but perhaps not in our lifetimes. Until then, we had best study its causes and effects in order to make it as infrequent and as just as possible.

Chapter overview

- War, understood as organised violence carried on by political units against each other, is a central topic in the study of IR.
- Carl von Clausewitz describes war as a rational tool used by political leaders to achieve their goals.
- Many Realists describe war as a rational response to the anarchical structure of international society or the shifting distribution of power between states.
- Other IR scholars see war as a product of leaders' miscalculations or perceptions of fear, interest, prestige and revenge.
- Wars are often fought for material gain: for territorial acquisition, resource and market access, or to defend the existing economic system.
- Wars fought for faith and identity are most often fought between members of the same faith or identity group, although these can spill over into conflicts with other nations.
- Revolutionary wars aim to transform or overthrow the existing structure of international society, supporting Clausewitz's description of war as a rational political tool.
- In the post-Cold War world, 'new wars' have become increasingly common in states that are unable to provide their citizens with public goods, leading to violent conflict between identity groups within these states.
- Liberal wars are fought to preserve the existing institutions of international society and to extend the liberal 'zone of peace' hypothesised in Democratic Peace Theory.
- There is a heated debate between supporters of humanitarian intervention and critics who see it as a mask for Western imperialism.
- Justice in war is judged by two sets of criteria: how justly has a war begun (*jus ad bellum*) and how justly has a war been prosecuted (*jus in bello*).
- International law plays a main role in determining the legitimacy of war.

- The legality of WMDs, including nuclear weapons, remains highly contentious. The status of unconventional fighters, such as terrorists, is similarly complex.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of 'war' in IR
- explain some of its causes
- assess actors' reasons for waging war
- differentiate between different types of war
- discuss the place of justice in warfare.

Chapter vocabulary

- war
- nuclear deterrence
- stability-instability paradox
- clash of civilisations
- public goods
- revolution in military affairs (RMA)
- rogue states
- weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- humanitarian intervention
- liberal rights
- justice
- terrorism

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. How would you define war?
2. How many different types of war can you identify?
3. Critically assess two structural theories of war.
4. Is it ever possible to justify war?

Notes

Chapter 14: Peace

> I prefer the most unfair peace to the most righteous war.
>
> *Cicero* (106–43 BC)

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- familiarise you with different definitions of peace
- explore various theories associated with it
- understand the political forms that peace has assumed
- assess whether the world is more peaceful today than at other points in history.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain why some peace treaties succeed and others fail
- assess the impact of peace movements in the Cold War
- evaluate the significance of peace processes since the end of the Cold War
- assess the evidence supporting the thesis that the world is becoming more peaceful
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

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Chapter synopsis

- Peace research was the original focus of international relations.

- Peace is often defined as the absence of war. Others see peace as an absence of structural violence, meaning that war may be necessary to create a more just society and therefore a more sustainable peace.

- Realists advocate the preservation of peace through the acquisition of power – deterring aggression through the threat of severe retaliation.

- Liberals see Realist policies as self-defeating, preferring the kinds of claims made by Immanuel Kant and democratic peace theory. Both claim that the roots of peace are to be found in the domestic political systems adopted by the states of the world.

- Some Liberals advocate an important role for international law, which they say might be able to replace force as a guarantor of states' security.

- Peace conferences have been studied at great length, particularly the successes of the Congress of Vienna and the failures of the Paris Peace Conference.

- Peace treaties are more successful when their signatories agree on core values, when winners and losers are bound to the same post-war institutions, and when all parties clearly understand the meaning of a treaty.

- Peace movements emerge out of civil society to discourage state leaders from taking steps that may lead to violent conflict.

- The legacy of peace movements is contested by those who see them as irrelevant – Realists and Marxists – and those who see them as responsible for changing perceptions and making peace more likely – Liberals and Constructivists.

- Peace processes are complex negotiations that require significant political will on both sides of a conflict, third-party actors who can build and maintain trust between the opposing sides, and a general willingness to compromise.

- Many peace processes require an international peacekeeping force to insert itself between combatants to monitor, disarm and demobilise combatants.

- Whether or not you think the world is becoming more peaceful depends on how you define and measure it, with many statistical indicators showing that the world is less warlike today than in decades past.

- The 21st century has seen a dramatic drop in the number of wars between states, but an increase in the number of civil and new wars.

Introduction

The study of peace, its meaning and the conditions in which it occurs have a long history in international relations. When the Hon. Major David Davies founded the first academic position specialising in IR in 1919, he hoped to 'herald in a new world, freed from the menace of war'. In the century since, IR's library of peace research has grown dramatically. This chapter introduces you to some of this library, focusing on what peace is, how it has been pursued through treaties and settlements, the influence of peace movements and some peace processes in recent history.

As you saw in the last chapter of this subject guide, the modern world has undoubtedly been shaped by war. It has also been shaped by peace. Given a choice, most individuals and states prefer peace to war. It does not kill them or their citizens, it allows economies to function smoothly, it does not inhibit trade and is generally less expensive than war. Instinctively, peace also seems morally superior. There is a special place in human history for figures who have struggled for their causes through non-violent means, including Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. By the same measure, there is little sympathy for 'warmongers'. Being labelled warlike in the modern world carries political risks. It can lead to accusations of war crimes, sealing the fate of leaders like Serbian leader Slobodan Miloševic, who died in prison while he was before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 2006. Even when a war crimes prosecution is out of the question, the 'warmonger' label can gravely damage a political reputation, as both British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President George W. Bush have discovered since leading the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

This chapter will explore a few of the topics associated with peace, starting with basic definitions of the concept. You will then examine Realist and Liberal theories of peace before moving on to three important practical expressions of peace in the contemporary international system: peace treaties or settlements, peace movements and peace processes. We will wrap up the chapter by considering whether or not the world is becoming a more peaceful place.

The meaning of peace

What is 'peace'? The instinctual answer is to define it as the opposite of war – an absence of armed conflict between political units. This common sense approach is fine for starters, but what about periods of peace that are mere interludes between conflicts? What about states that are at peace but are preparing for war, as was the case in the interwar and Cold

War periods? Is it enough to define peace as the absence of war between states? Is a destitute refugee living in a temporary camp in a state that is not at war truly living in peace? Obviously, our definition of peace needs more thought.

A second issue revolves around the desirability of peace. As we have already indicated, peace is seen as something worth pursuing and war as something worth avoiding. However, peace is not always unambiguously positive. For instance, when faced with the rise of imperial Japan in the 1930s, was it better for China to seek some form of peace or should they have taken measures to defend themselves and thereby provoke a full-scale war with Japan? Is it better to accept an unjust order – and thus preserve the peace – or to take up arms to oppose injustice? In human terms, and other things being equal, peace is preferable to war. However, because other things are never equal, peace at any cost is sometimes an obstacle to justice.

It may be helpful to think about peace in non-military terms. This has been done by Norwegian peace researcher, Johan Galtung. In his view, peace is more than the absence of overt personal violence. It implies something far more active. Under the heading of peace, Galtung includes positive measures undertaken by states, individuals and civil society groups to create a culture of peace that not only excludes war, but also ends forms of **structural violence** that limit an individual's ability to fulfil their potential. Peace, in Galtung's view, requires not only an absence of war – which he defines as 'negative peace' – but also an absence of the social injustice caused by structural violence – which he defines as 'positive peace'. As long as people are starving in Somalia or unable to go to school for reasons of gender, class, ethnicity or identity, they will only ever be able to achieve peace in its negative form. Indeed, so long as these structures of violence persist, we will be unable to speak of 'peace' in any meaningful sense.

Summary

- Peace research was the original focus of international relations.

- Peace is often defined as the absence of war. Others see peace as an absence of structural violence, meaning that war may be necessary to create a more just society and therefore a more sustainable peace.

⏭ **Stop and read**: Galtung, J. 'Violence, peace and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6(3) 1969, pp.167–68, 183–86.

⏭ **Stop and read**: 'Structural violence' in GCR.

Activity

Use the table below to organise the glossary terms below as forms of personal and structural violence.

Personal violence	Structural violence

Glossary: bombing, child labour, economic exploitation, illiteracy, murder, poverty, racism, rape, sexism, social exclusion, suicide, theft, torture

Theories of peace

Galtung's theory of negative and positive peace is one of the many contributions made by peace researchers over the years. They continue to grapple with fundamental questions, particularly how peace – be it positive or negative peace – can be achieved. For the most influential answers, we must turn back to Realist and Liberal theory.

Realists accept that peace may be a good thing. Some brands of Realism argue that the only ways to achieve it are by preserving a **balance of power** between the various states. Others claim that the only way to avoid invasion is by building up one's own military capabilities, or by acquiring nuclear weapons to deter interstate war. Resolutions against war and the weapons of war are all very well, they say. The Nobel Peace Prize is a fine thing. However, at the end of the day, Realists maintain that the most effective way to ensure peace is through deterrence – raising the costs of war for those who might be tempted to start one. The more resolute, tough and unambiguously strong you are as a state, the more likely you are to enforce peaceful relations with potential aggressors. The worst possible thing that Realists believe a state can do is to give an impression of weakness. This would only encourage others to be more aggressive. It was just such a dynamic, they argue, that allowed the Second World War to happen when none of the Great Powers proved willing to oppose Germany's, Japan's or Italy's revisionist ambitions. For Realists, peace must be built from a clear position of strength and supported by significant military capacity.

Statism is common thread in all Realist ideas about peace. Classical and Structural Realists agree that peace is defined as the absence of violent political conflict between states. This excludes Galtung's individual-level 'positive peace', focusing instead on peace as a unit- and system-level phenomenon. Realists' main interest is **national security** – the protection of the sovereign state against potential threats.

⏵⏵ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 15, Sections 1–2, pp.230–31.

Activity

Is 'national security' the same thing as 'peace'? Can a state achieve one without also achieving the other?

The Realist view is often criticised. In public discussions, pacifists – who are opposed to violence in any form – object to the contradictions implicit in Realism's programme of arming for peace. Liberals use Realist theory to point out that hoping for peace while preparing for war makes others in the international system feel insecure, leading to the security dilemma that is still at the heart of mainstream IR. They argue that there must be a more sustainable way to create a peaceful world order. Although Liberals accept that power is and will remain important in world politics, they see the pursuit of military power alone as an unsustainable basis for long-term peace.

As discussed in Chapter 7 of this subject guide, the 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant describes a programme for perpetual peace in some detail. This includes, among other things, opposition to secret treaties and to states intervening to alter 'the constitution or government' of another state. More interesting still is his stated view that perpetual peace can only be guaranteed when the 'civil constitution of every state should be republican'. In plain English, Kant argues that peace will only

be possible when every European state undergoes major domestic political reforms, leading to the creation of non-authoritarian forms of government that will be disinclined to fight fellow democracies. By linking the idea of peace to states' domestic systems of government, Kant lays the foundation for what is now known in IR as democratic peace theory (DPT). As discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, this is the belief that liberal democracies might go to war with illiberal and undemocratic states, but will not fight another democracy. In the economic sector, DPT is associated with the idea that market relations and economic interdependence promote cooperative interstate behaviour. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, this 'free trade theory of peace' was advanced by a variety of influential thinkers. The 19th-century English writer Richard Cobden believed that increased commerce would weaken the case for war. In 1909, Norman Angel published *The great illusion*, in which he argues that war in the early 20th century was becoming increasingly unlikely. In an era of increasingly interdependent economies, he claimed that it was not in anyone's interest to go to war. The great Austrian-American economist Joseph Schumpeter insisted that the modern, integrated capitalist economy made states inherently peaceful and, by definition, opposed to conquest.

Although the theory that economic interdependence makes war less likely was dealt a major blow in 1914, its advocates did not give up the cause. As the First World War continued, those making a case for peace found a powerful advocate in US President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson remains a controversial figure, but he was no simple-minded utopian. The world, he insists, came to grief in 1914 because statesmen continued to think that it was possible to achieve peace by accumulating arms and maintaining a highly unstable balance of power. At the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson argued that it was time to create a world where international law would replace the law of the jungle, allowing international organisations like the League of Nations to restrain states' tendency to resort to violence as the means of achieving security.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 15, Section 3, pp.232–34.

Activity

Now that you are familiar with Realism's and Liberalism's programmes for peace, use the table below to organise your views of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Liberalism		Realism	
Strengths		Strengths	
Weaknesses		Weaknesses	

As noted in the historical chapters of this subject guide, the liberal tendency in IR after the First World War did not stop another war, and President Wilson himself lost credibility in the years after 1918. Still, Wilsonian ideas live on. Even today, a strong case is made by John Ikenberry that the extended period of peace between Western powers

since 1945 is based on Wilsonian ideas. The post-1945 international order in the Western world was created by a quintessentially liberal power – the USA. It built on theories of free trade, democratic governance and the importance of international organisations like the UN. In the years since 1945, a successful peace has been constructed not because the USA has more tanks, planes and submarines than its enemies, but because the USA and the West drew on the Liberal tradition of peacemaking, speeding up the region's reconstruction after four decades of profound disturbance between 1914 and 1945.

Summary

- Realists advocate the preservation of peace through the acquisition of power – deterring aggression through the threat of severe retaliation.

- Liberals see Realist policies as self-defeating, preferring the kinds of claims made by Immanuel Kant and Democratic Peace Theory. Both claim that the roots of peace are found in the domestic political systems adopted by the states of the world.

- Some Liberals advocate an important role for international law, which they say might be able to replace force as a guarantor of states' security.

Peace treaties

When wars end, it is up to those left behind to construct sustainable peace. This is never easy. Winners often want to punish losers, as they did after the First World War. More often than not, wars leave behind broken economies, resentment and suspicion – all of which make a stable international society far more difficult to achieve. Furthermore, when a war ends, its causes do not necessarily disappear. This is why some peace settlements – and again we return to those made after the First World War – proved so spectacularly unsuccessful.

The best way to ensure peace following an extended war remains hotly contested in IR, with every theoretical approach proposing its own roadmap. There is a vast literature on the Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648 to end the Thirty Years' War. As you have already learned, it laid the legal foundation for the institution of state sovereignty and brought some measure of order to Europe's anarchic international society. The Congress of Vienna (1814–5) has been the subject of even more extensive research. This has paid special attention to the peace settlement's reliance on great powers to manage international society through the 'Concert of Europe'. To many in IR, the Congress of Vienna produced one of the most successful peace settlements of all time, using a **concert of powers** to build the 'Long Peace' that kept Europe more or less stable throughout the 19th century. The Paris Peace Conference that led to the **Versailles Peace Treaty** in 1919 has also been the subject of intense debate, as have the various treaties and settlements that brought the Second World War and the Cold War to their very different conclusions.

⯈⯈ **Stop and read**: 'Concert of powers' in GCR.

Treaties are a form of agreement entered into by sovereign states. They are agreements between consenting parties, and can therefore assume a legally binding character. This gives treaties special importance in international law insofar as they can demand **compliance** from their signatories. Some states therefore see any treaty as a threat to its international autonomy. They can therefore create serious problems for some politicians,

especially US ones. In part, this is because the upper house of the US Congress, the Senate, has to ratify any treaty by a two-thirds majority. Thanks to domestic pressures, this often proves impossible. Since George Washington's farewell address, there has been a suspicion that any legally binding international agreements might limit US sovereignty and entangle it in distant disputes. This had political consequences when Congress refused to ratify the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919 and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol governing climate change, and when it revoked the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty signed with the Soviet Union in 1972.

There is no single theory explaining how treaties operate in international society. Three general points, however, are worth keeping in mind. First, a treaty is more likely to create peace when its signatories agree on core values. The failure of the USSR, USA and UK to agree on common values helps to explain why their peace talks failed to produce a treaty to end the Second World War. Likewise, the growing harmony between the superpowers in the late 1980s helps to explain why the treaties that ended the Cold War – such as that which reunified Germany – were more successful. It also explains the achievements of the European Union: a treaty-based organisation that brings together like-minded states to cooperate in their mutual interest. Yet even when states share the same values, they can still disagree. This was certainly the case in 1989, when Britain and France disagreed strongly about the future shape of Europe; with Britain hoping that NATO would play the leading role in European security while France preferred that security become the responsibility of the European Community (today's European Union).

A second point to consider is why some peace settlements successfully lay the foundations for peace while others collapse. Successful peace settlements tend to be inclusive, drawing winners and losers alike into a shared set of norms, rules and practices. Unsuccessful settlements are often deliberately exclusive, barring a war's losers from full membership in international society. At Versailles in 1919, the victorious Allies excluded Germany from the League of Nations, imposed punitive reparations and forced it to accept full responsibility for the outbreak of war. Germany's exclusion had consequences that led directly to Hitler's rise and the Second World War. By 1945, both the USA and the UK had learned some lessons from 1919 and set out to reintegrate Germany into Western international society. The result was a prosperous and engaged Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), which acted as a bulwark against Soviet advances into the Western bloc.

The third issue relates to diplomacy and the ambiguous wording often used in peace agreements to get everyone 'on board'. Ambiguity is at the heart of diplomacy. It is why diplomats and their legal advisers dominate the drafting and signing of treaties. In the long term, ambiguity can create all sorts of disputes. This was a problem following final agreement over German unification and the new Germany's membership of NATO in 1990. The USSR, and later the Russian Federation, assumed that the agreement implied that NATO would not extend its reach into the new Germany. The USA read the agreement very differently, and encouraged Germany to accept membership in the North Atlantic **security community**. The results have been problematic for post-Cold War order in Europe. They created a situation that left the Russian Federation feeling betrayed and increasingly distrustful of the former Western bloc. This did not matter too much when Russia was weak and divided in the 1990s. However, once NATO began enlarging in earnest, bringing the organisation right up to the borders of the Russian Federation itself, the dangers of ambiguity began

to ripple through the international system. In the years since, Russia has taken an increasingly active stance against NATO and EU expansion. The short and brutal war in Georgia in 2008 was one unfortunate, if indirect, consequence. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is another.

Summary

- Peace conferences have been studied at great length, particularly the successes of the Congress of Vienna and the failures of the Paris Peace Conference.

- Peace treaties are more successful when their signatories agree on core values, when winners and losers are bound to the same post-war institutions, and when all parties clearly understand the meaning of a treaty.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 18, Box 18.2, p.277.

Activity

Box 18.2 in the textbook lists six of the most important legal treaties in international history. What do these short summaries tell you about the relationship between wars and the development of international law? Create your own list of what makes a peace treaty successful. Share your list with your peers in the VLE discussion forum.

Peace movements

Peace treaties are formal agreements made between states. Peace movements are more informal. Instead of being organised by a state, they spring from **civil society** with the aim of challenging authority. This helps to explain why governments tend to be suspicious of them. This was certainly the case during the Cold War, when unofficial peace movements in the West emerged to challenge conventional thinking by questioning the extent of the Soviet threat and the necessity of mutually assured destruction. How effective they were in slowing the arms race or thwarting a specific military policy remains unclear. 'Not very' would seem to be the most obvious answer. Still, the amount of time Western governments invested in combating peace movements indicates that they were regarded as relevant actors by those in power.

Movements for peace go back much further than the Cold War. The first Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded in 1901. Indeed, it was the appalling carnage of the First World War that led to the first mass peace movements. These assumed a number of forms, most coherently expressed in the creation of thousands of League of Nations Union branches in the 1920s and 1930s. These were dedicated to the ideal of peace through **disarmament** and collective security. In the USA, there was an equally strong response to the war. In the 1930s, this took the form of the Neutrality Acts, legislation motivated by the country's isolationism. Opposition to war spawned its own literature in the interwar years. One of the best-selling books of that period was *All quiet on the western front* by Eric Maria Remarque, a German veteran. It describes, in graphic detail, the futility and brutality of the First World War. First published in 1928, it went on to sell 2.5 million copies in its first 18 months and was later made into a popular Hollywood film. After seizing power in 1933, the Nazis banned and burned it, considering it a threat to their militant ideology.

Peace movements during the Cold War were driven by a shared fear of nuclear war. The first great popular movement arose in the late 1950s and reached a climax following the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It faded away

as relations between the two superpowers improved during the period of **détente**. It emerged again in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the Cold War again threatened to heat up following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the election of US President Ronald Reagan and the deployment of a new generation of short-range nuclear missiles in Europe. This incarnation of the anti-war movement was more balanced than its 1950s predecessor, which had mostly blamed the USA for the Cold War. In the 1980s, this argument was qualified by what English historian Edward P. Thompson called 'shared superpower responsibility', which asserted that the conflict would continue until both superpowers removed themselves from Europe.

In the wider IR literature on peace movements, two issues remain important. One concerns the role the peace movement played in bringing the Cold War to an end. Here, opinion is divided between those who view it as having been virtually irrelevant – a position popular with Realists and Marxists – and those who feel it changed the international atmosphere in Europe, paving the way for the thaw in relations that led to the events of 1989.

The other issue concerns the legacy of the peace movement. Some view it as a minor footnote in the history of the Cold War. Others feel that the issues which drove the movement still remain, including nuclear proliferation and the danger of war. As a result, peace movements are likely to re-emerge when global conflict threatens, as witnessed by the mass demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. There is no easy way to resolve this particular debate. One legacy, however, seems certain to continue: the institutionalisation of peace research established centres in Europe and North America. The movement as it was originally constituted may have lost some of its appeal in the post-Cold War period. However, the serious research on peace that it spawned still goes on.

Summary

- Peace movements emerge out of civil society to discourage state leaders from taking steps that may lead to violent conflict.
- The legacy of peace movements is contested by those who see them as irrelevant – Realists and Marxists – and those who see them as responsible for changing perceptions and making peace more likely – Liberals and Constructivists.

Activity

Take a second to consider which mainstream and alternative approaches to IR would sympathise with the role of peace movements in ending the Cold War. Write them down in the space below.

Peace processes

A third way of thinking about peace and its political significance in international affairs is to look briefly at what is generically defined as 'peace processes'. These have become a permanent feature of the post-Cold War international landscape. Though their success in bringing real peace is hotly disputed, one thing is clear. There have been lots of them – from the Middle

East to Sri Lanka, from Northern Ireland to South Africa, from Cambodia to Sudan. It is impossible to summarise all that has been written about these examples. However, a few general points are in order.

The first has to do with definition. Like the word 'peace', a peace process can be defined in many different ways. Here it is used to mean a political process in which political conflicts are resolved through non-violent negotiation. These conflicts can be interstate, civil, or one of the internationalised 'new wars' discussed in the previous chapter. Peace processes operate at several different levels and involve a mixture of diplomacy, persuasion, negotiation, confidence-building measures, mediation and lengthy dialogue between the various parties, sometimes official but often off the record.

Second, peace processes normally stretch over many years. As British negotiator Jonathan Powell points out in his reflections on his time in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, peace does not break out overnight. It is necessary to first establish whether the parties actually want peace. It is then essential to win over as many intransigents as possible, particularly among groups dedicated to continued conflict. Only then can you get everybody sitting around the negotiating table. Still, you cannot be sure that you will achieve a sustainable peace. In the case of Northern Ireland, British and Irish diplomats had to exercise an enormous amount of patience and diplomatic skill. They also had to sort out various outstanding problems common to most peace processes. These include the shape of post-conflict policing, the representative character of new political institutions, and the very difficult issue of disarmament. This last issue nearly destroyed the peace process in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, and pushed Northern Ireland's power-sharing government to brink of collapse in 2015.

A third general point regards the indispensable role of third-party mediators and external actors in helping to push peace processes along. If the parties to a conflict want to exchange war for peace, an external voice is essential to encourage them and guarantee their agreements as a way of building trust. Outside actors must therefore play the role of the honest broker, willing to mobilise material and ideational resources to support all sides. Real problems can arise when the outsider is not seen as a disinterested referee. This is one reason why the Israeli–Palestinian peace process has been stalled for so long. While the USA should be the key third party, it is perceived by many in the region to be biased due to its 'special relationship' with Israel and its hostile actions towards Arab states over the past decade. Consequently, the USA is no longer regarded as a disinterested referee and the peace process is stuck until a new broker can emerge or the USA can repair its relationship with the Palestinian cause.

A fourth issue relates to what peace processes can deliver. Even when processes are successful, nobody is going to be entirely satisfied with the result. As Roger MacGuinty shows in his comparative analysis, peace processes can fail entirely and leave a conflict even more volatile than before. This may now be the case following the collapse of the talks between the Palestinians and Israel. Indeed, one of the main arguments against relaunching the peace process in 2008 was that another failure would likely poison the conflict to such an extent that there was every chance of things getting worse. Like any international action, peace processes are not without risk.

Finally, there are many situations in the world where the best one can hope for is an armed truce or stalemate, managed – however imperfectly – by international **peacekeeping** forces provided by the UN. This is the situation in many deeply divided societies from Sub-Saharan

Africa to the Balkans. UN peacekeepers today undertake a variety of complex tasks, from helping to build sustainable institutions of global governance, to human rights monitoring, to security sector reform, to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. Despite imperfections in the system, there is no indication that demand for the UN's services is waning. In 2005, the organisation had just over 60,000 peacekeeping personnel in the field. In 2012 there were nearly 100,000. By 2015, this number was over 123,000 deployed in 16 separate peacekeeping operations. On this basis alone one can argue that if the UN did not exist, the international community would have to invent it in order to do the difficult and often thankless jobs that most states would prefer not to do themselves.

Summary

- Peace processes are complex negotiations that require significant political will on both sides of a conflict, third-party actors who can build and maintain trust between the opposing sides, and a general willingness to compromise.

- Many peace processes require an international peacekeeping force to insert itself between combatants to monitor, disarm and demobilise combatants.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 20, Sections 3–4, pp.310–15.

Activity

Define each of the following terms and indicate what kind of peace (think of Johan Galtung) it is trying to achieve.

	Definition	Positive or negative peace
Preventive diplomacy		
Peacemaking		
Peace enforcement		
Peacekeeping		
Peacebuilding		

A more peaceful world?

Is the world is becoming more 'peaceful'? The answer one often gets is a resounding 'No'. The collapse of state sovereignty in large swathes of Iraq and Syria, the rise of rogue de facto states in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Libya, continuing insurgencies in Afghanistan, nearly 30,000 dead in an ongoing war against drug cartels in Mexico, Russian intervention in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, potential state failure in Pakistan, terrorist bombs going off around the world – all embedded

within a wider '**war on terror**' – seem to point to a world sliding into ever-greater conflict. Furthermore, how can we talk of peace when so much continues to be spent on arms? As the Stockholm Institute of Peace Research has shown, worldwide military expenditure in 2014 totalled an estimated $1.76 trillion, an increase of more than $600 billion since 2001 and $200 billion more than was spent in the final years of the Cold War.

However, not all evidence points in the direction of increasing conflict. Recent research into war suggests something rather less gloomy – far from becoming more frequent and bloodier, wars are less common and less bloody than they were in the 20th century. This is certainly not the impression one gets from reading, watching or listening to the news. Nevertheless, the numbers indicate that the regional wars fought before the 1990s were much more devastating than those fought since. Naturally there are exceptions. The ongoing wars in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the civil war in Syria have been especially deadly. From a statistical point of view, however, it is the overall averages that count. These tell us that whereas a standard international conflict during the Cold War killed around 20,000 people a year, that average has fallen to 6,000 deaths per year in the 20 years since. In the early 21st century, the number dropped to 'only' 3,000. It is a significant reduction that remains lower than the 20th century average, even after the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts are taken into account.

Another important indication of this trend is the decline in the number of wars fought between states. Here again the statistics tell a very different story to the common sense view that the world is becoming bloodier. Whereas in the 1950s there were, on average, just over six interstate conflicts each year, that number dropped to just one by the turn of the century. Moreover, none of these were fought between the great powers. In fact, when considered over the longer term, there has not been a single war fought between major Western states for 60 years. This is unprecedented. As Evan Luard points out, it is a change of spectacular proportions, and is perhaps the single most striking discontinuity that the history of warfare has produced.

This situation has been neatly summarised in the Human Security Report for 2012–13. It points out that, although relatively little scholarly attention has been directed at the issue – perhaps because peace is less exciting than war – the decline in both the number and intensity of wars since 1989 has been striking. Between 2011 and 2012, the number of conflicts being waged dropped from 37 to 34. Wars defined as 'high intensity' conflicts – resulting in over 1,000 more battle deaths a year – dropped by 78 per cent between 1988 and 2008 and remain steady at around six per year.[1] We should not discount the significance of peace processes in bringing about this reduction. It is true that new and appalling wars either began or continued after 1989. Nevertheless, the general trend in terms of casualties and conflicts indicates that the international system is not as hopelessly gloomy as some journalists, academics and politicians would have us believe. We live in a dangerous world, but not in a world without hope.

[1] *Human Security Report 2013.*

Summary

- Whether or not you think the world is becoming more peaceful depends on how you define and measure peace, with many statistical indicators showing that the world is less warlike today than in decades past.
- The 21st century has seen a dramatic drop in the number of wars between states, but an increase in the number of civil and new wars.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: Figures 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2 in *Human Security Report 2013.*

Activity

Using the figures posted on the VLE, identify trends in the number and intensity of conflicts since the end of the Cold War. Share your observations with your peers in the VLE's discussion forum.

Conclusion

Why are interstate wars less common today than in the past? There are several explanations. One stresses the growing difficulty of holding onto conquests and of economically exploiting territories after one has invaded them. Another looks at the scale of destruction caused by conventional modern wars, which makes them unsustainable over the medium or long term. The view expressed by some theorists puts great store on the important part played by public opinion in undermining states' inclinations to go to war again. The end of the Cold War also played a critical role in reducing the incidence of war by cutting off or reducing the supply of arms and support to states and insurgencies alike. There is certainly a strong correlation between the conclusion of the superpower conflict and the reduced number of wars in many parts of the world.

To this list, we should add two other explanations for the movement away from war: the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons and the pacifying role of globalisation. Both positions are problematic. Those who stress the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons appear to forget that the possession of nuclear weapons helps to drive the very security dilemma that Realists blame for the persistence of war. Meanwhile, globalisation can just as easily cause competitive anxieties as cooperative behaviour. However, even sceptics have to concede something here: weapons of mass destruction (WMD) can make states act cautiously, as has been the case with relations between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, growing economic ties provide material incentives for states to resolve their differences peacefully. The economic argument is an especially interesting one. Growing trade did not prevent the First World War from breaking out. Nearly 100 years later, the advance of capitalism in the most integrated parts of the world – here taken to mean the EU, the Transatlantic region and East Asia – has led states in these areas to resolve their differences by means other than armed force. Whether this will eventually remove all sources of tension in international society is highly unlikely. Nevertheless, it may, in time, lead the international system further down the road towards peace.

Chapter overview

- Peace research was the original focus of international relations.
- Peace is often defined as the absence of war. Others see peace as an absence of structural violence, meaning that war may be necessary to create a more just society and therefore a more sustainable peace.
- Realists advocate the preservation of peace through the acquisition of power – deterring aggression through the threat of severe retaliation.
- Liberals see Realist policies as self-defeating, preferring the kinds of claims made by Immanuel Kant and democratic peace theory. Both claim that the roots of peace are to be found in the domestic political systems adopted by the states of the world.

- Some Liberals advocate an important role for international law, which they say might be able to replace force as a guarantor of states' security.

- Peace conferences have been studied at great length, particularly the successes of the Congress of Vienna and the failures of the Paris Peace Conference.

- Peace treaties are more successful when their signatories agree on core values, when winners and losers are bound to the same post-war institutions, and when all parties clearly understand the meaning of a treaty.

- Peace movements emerge out of civil society to discourage state leaders from taking steps that may lead to violent conflict.

- The legacy of peace movements is contested by those who see them as irrelevant – Realists and Marxists – and those who see them as responsible for changing perceptions and making peace more likely – Liberals and Constructivists.

- Peace processes are complex negotiations that require significant political will on both sides of a conflict, third-party actors who can build and maintain trust between the opposing sides, and a general willingness to compromise.

- Many peace processes require an international peacekeeping force to insert itself between combatants to monitor, disarm and demobilise combatants.

- Whether or not you think the world is becoming more peaceful depends on how you define and measure it, with many statistical indicators showing that the world is less warlike today than in decades past.

- The 21st century has seen a dramatic drop in the number of wars between states, but an increase in the number of civil and new wars.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain why some peace treaties succeed and others fail

- assess the impact of peace movements in the Cold War

- evaluate the significance of peace processes since the end of the Cold War

- assess the evidence supporting the thesis that the world is becoming more peaceful

- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- structural violence
- balance of power
- national security
- concert of powers
- Versailles Peace Treaty
- compliance

- security community
- civil society
- disarmament
- détente
- peacekeeping
- war on terror

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Should peace be defined as the absence of war?
2. Is there any single theory of peace that you find convincing?
3. Can nuclear weapons be seen as weapons of peace?

Chapter 15: Power

> We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out. That assumption allows us to retrace and anticipate, as it were, the steps a statesman – past, present, or future – has taken or will take on the political scene. We look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches; we listen in on his conversation with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts. Thinking in terms of interest defined as power, we think as he does, and as disinterested observers we understand his thoughts and actions perhaps better than he, the actor on the political scene, does himself.
>
> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*.

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- look at different meanings of power
- assess the relationship between power and geopolitics
- explain how the notion of power can be used to explain EU and US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain how power relates to the study of world politics
- distinguish between hard and soft power, and between power and authority
- explain the different kinds of power that drive EU and US foreign policy
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

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Debate I

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Williams, M. 'The empire writes back (to Michael Cox)', *International Affairs* 83(5) 2007, pp.945–50.

Debate II

Buzan, B. 'A leader without followers? The United States in world politics after Bush', *International Politics* 45 2008, pp.554–70.

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Chapter synopsis

- Power has several meanings in the social sciences, including the ability to prevail over another actor, the quantitative capacity to force another actor to submit to your will and the ability to benefit from another actor's losses.

- Material definitions of power underestimate the importance of ideational and social forms of power, including the ability to create and sustain preferential norms, rules and practices in international society.

- Geopolitics studies the links between political power and geographic space, including a state's location and resources.

- After many decades on the sidelines of IR, geopolitics has recently made a comeback – shorn of the racially disturbing undertones that defined earlier incarnations.

- Power is a relational quality that describes the relative influence of two or more actors, meaning that any decrease in the power of one actor will generally signal an increase in the relative power of other actors in the relationship.

- Authority refers to an actor's legal right to act in a certain way instead of its simple ability to do so.

- Soft power refers to an actor's ability to attract other international actors, potentially giving it influence beyond the material threats offered by hard power.

- Smart power refers to a combination of hard and soft power, in which an actor affects the behaviour of others through a combination of soft power incentives and hard power disincentives.

- Different emphases on hard and soft power have led to different foreign policy choices in the capitals of the USA and the European Union.

- US unipolarity after 1991 was due in large part to the relative decline of all other international actors, leaving the USA as the only superpower.

- By 2001, its power advantage meant that the USA could operate independently of its allies and did not have to worry about international sanctions if it chose to violate the institutions of international society.

- The war on terror has had complex effects on US power: boosting aspects of its hard power while costing it much of its soft power advantage.

Introduction

If sovereignty defines what states are in the international system, power determines what they are capable of doing. There are many definitions of power – economic resources, military strength, moral influence and so on. In IR, it is not always power itself, but its distribution among actors in international society that proves to be most interesting. The simple fact is this: power has never been distributed equally. Its uneven distribution has important effects on international society. Thus, as far back as the fifth century BC, the Greek historian Thucydides focused on the use and distribution of power among Aegean city-states and empires in his epic *History of the Peloponnesian war*.

As in earlier chapters, this one begins by looking at some definitions. You will then move on to discuss connections between geography and power in the international system. Next comes an examination of relative and absolute power, soft power and smart power. We will then turn to two case studies, focusing on the very different kinds of power used by the European Union and the USA, with special focus on how the latter has

exercised its influence since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implications of a US-dominated unipolar system.

Defining power

There are many ways to think about power. According to British sociologist Paul Hirst, **power** in the social sciences has three common meanings. First, it describes a relationship between actors that 'enables one of the actors to prevail over another'. Second, power describes a 'quantitative capacity', suggesting that one actor prevails because it has more power and can therefore force others to submit. Finally, power is often used to describe a zero-sum game in which gains by one actor are offset by the losses of another. You will recall from Chapter 7 that this definition assumes that actors pursue relative gains rather than absolute gains.

Activity

Which theoretical approach is best described by Hirst's three aspects of power? Which keywords and concepts give it away?

Theoretical approach:

Keywords:

Hirst points out that this approach to power has several weaknesses. First, it suggests that a more powerful actor will always prevail over weaker opponents. History shows that this is not the case. The defeat of the USA in Vietnam and of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan are two examples of superpowers being vanquished by technologically and materially weaker opponents. The same happened in the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, in which the smaller and less populous state of Israel used superior training and tactics to overcome the more powerful Arab armies pitted against it.

Hirst also argues that we should not think of power as something tangible and measureable, much less as the sole preserve of international actors. There are forms of power that we cannot see, such as the power of an idea like nationalism or religious faith. Although neither nationalism nor faith is an object that can be measured, each can influence what actors do. The same is true of the norms, rules and practices of international society. These constitute another form of power in world politics, as Peter van Ham shows in his book *Social power in international politics*.[1] By using these forms of social power, van Ham argues that actors can be persuaded to act against their immediate interests. Ian Clark of the English School comes to the same conclusion. The world is more than an anomic war of all against all. It is a society in which some behaviours have **legitimacy** while other do not. The power to shape these 'rules of the game' is therefore an important form of power in international society.

[1] Van Ham (2010).

Finally, there is power in the 'social facts' that define our human environment. Unlike material facts, these are aspects of reality that

are created through human interaction, like states and wealth. Were humans to disappear from the face of the planet, social facts would cease to exist. Their influence on human behaviour is nevertheless real. As Constructivism argues, social facts create incentives and disincentives that shape actors' behaviours. Consider the economic 'market'. It isn't something that you can visit. It is not a material fact. Nevertheless, it exercises enormous power over the behaviour of firms and states alike, punishing actors who violate its rules. The same is true of international society. You cannot take photographs of it, yet it provides incentives for specific types of state behaviour. Structural Realists believe that the **anarchic system** forces states into self-help and the security dilemma. Marxists believe that capitalist class conflict reinforces relationships of dependence and exploitation in domestic and international societies. Despite their different world views, both theories agree that social facts have power in IR.

Summary

- Power has several meanings in the social sciences, including the ability to prevail over another actor, the quantitative capacity to force another actor to submit to your will and the ability to benefit from another actor's losses.

- Material definitions of power underestimate the importance of ideational and social forms of power, including the ability to create and sustain preferential norms, rules and practices in international society.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'Power' in GCR.

Geography as power

Although power can be wielded by ideas and social facts, it is often a product of concrete material factors. The starting point for our present discussion will be very concrete indeed: geography. The importance of geography to IR is commonly associated with a branch of the discipline known as **geopolitics**. Geopolitics studies the 'links and the causal relationships between political power and geographic space'. From Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer, Rudolf Kjellen through to Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, its advocates were influential figures in academic and policy circles. Some laced their analytical insights with bigoted asides about the survival of the fittest, racial hierarchy and the requirement of 'healthy organic states' to take over the less healthy. Friedrich Ratzel is particularly infamous for inventing the idea of *Lebensraum*, which dictated Nazi Germany's foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe. The Swedish writer Rudolf Kjellen argued that states should not be defined by their legally constituted boundaries. His 1916 study, *The state as a living form*, argues that it was in Germany's economic and political interest to acquire as much territory in Europe as possible. He claims that dependence on international trade made Germany economically vulnerable. The quest for true security made it essential for Germany to build its own autarchic economic empire stretching from the Reich's borders in the west to the borders of Russia in the east, and even perhaps beyond. Like Ratzel, Kjellen became a darling of Nazi policy makers.

Mackinder and Spykman were of a rather different intellectual and political persuasion. Mackinder more or less invented the study of geopolitics in Britain following the publication of his 1904 paper 'The

geographical pivot of history'. Spykman gave geopolitics an enormous boost in the USA around the time of the Second World War. Both men claim that 'geography' was the 'fundamental factor in foreign policy' because it was the only factor that was 'permanent' in character. They disagree, however, about how to assess the impact of geography on IR. Mackinder argues that the geographical axis or 'pivot around which IR orbits' can be found in Eurasia, which he calls 'the Heartland'. As he notes: 'Who rules Eastern Europe rules the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island rules the World.'[2] It was therefore crucial for Britain, and later the USA and Britain together, to prevent a hostile state from controlling the whole of the European subcontinent lest they gain the power inherent in that landmass.

[2] Mackinder (1942).

Spykman agreed with Mackinder on several issues, the most important being that international politics should be viewed in terms of a permanent struggle between states in which the control of geographical assets was crucial. However, Spykman argued that control of the Eurasian heartland was not the key to world order. Rather, IR would be dominated by competition for the **Rimland**, which ran along the coastline of the Eurasian continent. This led him to a relatively optimistic conclusion about the post-war period. The capitalist West, led by a geographically invulnerable USA, bordered the main oceans and therefore had better access to trading routes than their Soviet opponent. As a result, according to his geopolitical perspective, the West would emerge triumphant.

You do not have to be a follower of Spykman or Mackinder (let alone Kjellen, Haushofer or Ratzel) to believe that geography helps to determine how power is distributed in international society. At the most basic level, a state with limited territory and few resources is likely to be weaker than one that controls expansive lands and rich natural resources. According to this line of thinking, it is no accident that Benin and Austria are relatively weak members of international society. Neither is it surprising that the two superpowers of the Cold War were continental states. As long as a state can exercise effective sovereignty over its territory, size matters.

That being said, size alone does not determine the amount of power an actor exercises in international society. Some very large states are also very poor and, therefore, relatively weak. Think of China in the 1970s or the Democratic Republic of Congo today. By the same measure, relatively small states such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have been able to exert an enormous influence on world politics despite their tiny landmasses. Other factors must therefore play critical roles in determining power. Among these we have to include population, levels of economic development, technological innovation, quality of education, the role of women in society, political stability and the 'neighbourhood' in which the actor happens to be located. In this last respect, fate seems to favour some states over others. Poland, for instance, has had the misfortune of being surrounded by powerful and hostile states for most of its existence, resulting in it being carved up on no less than five separate occasions between the late 18th and mid-20th centuries. The USA, on the other hand, could not have better geographical luck. Not only does it have extraordinary natural resources at its disposal, but its power is enhanced by its location – with weak states north and south and vast protective oceans east and west. Even without the benefits of its dynamic capitalist economy and relatively stable political order, US geography has made it 'security rich'.

Summary

- Geopolitics studies the links between political power and geographic space, including a state's location and resources.

- After many decades on the sidelines of IR, geopolitics has recently made a comeback – shorn of the racially disturbing undertones that defined earlier incarnations.

Activity

Look at the world map at the end of your textbook and the one posted on the VLE. Which states would you consider 'security rich' in geopolitical terms? Which would you consider 'security poor'? What are the main differences between the two types? Share your answers with your peers in the VLE discussion forum.

Relative power

The limitations of geopolitics illustrate something important about power: however much we try to lay down criteria for objective measurement, power must also be understood in relative terms. Here again, the United States can be a useful illustration. As we just noted, geography clearly favours the USA. However, its rise to superpower status between 1800 and 1945 was not determined by geography alone. There were dramatic changes in the rest of the world that worked to its relative advantage. A quick look at its position at the turn of the 20th century makes the point. In 1900, the USA was a formidable economic power. However, it was still far from being the superpower it became four decades later. Its move to superpower status was based on transformations in the US economy and a huge spurt of growth in the 1920s, but also depended on the terrible impact of two world wars. This undermined Europe's **capabilities** and left the relative power of the USA greatly enhanced, allowing it to take on the mantle of global superpower in a way that would not have been permitted by other great power had they still been able to resist it. The USA's rise depended on Europe's collapse. Without the latter, it is difficult to see how the former could have occurred.

'Relative power' provides us with important insight into how wars are conducted and concluded. For example, a case can be made that the USA was able to win the Cold War because, in relative terms, it was more powerful than its Soviet adversary. This was self-evident in the area of comparative economics, where the USA's capitalist economy consistently outperformed the planned economy of the USSR. It was equally true in the military sector, however. As research since 1991 shows, the USA was a more formidable military power than the USSR thanks to the fact that its economy was larger, its research capabilities were more advanced, and its government was able to sustain higher levels of military spending. It also had another advantage in terms of relative power: its allies in Europe and the Asian Pacific were generally richer and better positioned to support their superpower ally than the relatively poor states of the Eastern bloc.

The importance of power in determining international outcomes does not explain everything in IR. As we have already mentioned, apparently weak states are sometimes able to compensate for their weakness in other ways: possibly by shrewd diplomacy and winning powerful allies to their sides. These small yet influential states are said to 'punch above their weight'. Potentially powerful states can sometimes throw away their advantages by adopting incorrect and irrational policies. The Soviet Union in the 1930s provides a very good example. Having made some impressive economic

steps forward at enormous human cost during his first two Five Year Plans (1928–32, 1933–8), Stalin began a series of savage purges in 1936, including one aimed at the leadership of the Red Army. This undermined the security of the USSR, weakening it relative to its neighbours. Stalin's purge of his officers helps to explain Hitler's initial successes against the USSR in June 1941.

The People's Republic of China before 1980 is another example of a self-defeating state. In the first few decades of its history, Chairman Mao Zedong seemed indifferent to the terrible impact that his domestic policies had on China's international position. As we now know, the Cultural Revolution that he launched in 1966 did huge damage to the Chinese economy and to the social integrity of the state. The damage was so widespread that Mao was compelled to open up relations with the USA in order to relieve some of the pressure that his own policies had placed on his government. Because his policies proved so damaging, Mao's successors have since opted for far-reaching economic reforms that have dragged China back into the international economy, putting it back on the road to becoming a great power in the international system.

Activity

Look again at the world map posted on the VLE. Which 'security rich' states are less powerful than their geopolitical position would indicate? Which 'security poor' states are more powerful than their geopolitical position would indicate? Share your responses with your peers in the VLE discussion forum.

Authority, soft power and smart power

Before moving on to our final case studies, we should take the time to make three other points. The first concerns the distinction between power and authority. Though the terms are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. As we have already discussed, power can be loosely defined as the ability to achieve goals in a system and to influence somebody to behave in a way that they would normally reject. Authority is subtly different. It refers to an actor's legal right to behave in a particular way. This is the essential difference between a murderer and an executioner. They both have the power to kill, but only the executioner has the authority to do so. Though the distinction might not matter to the person who is dying, it matters very much to the executioner, who would be at risk of prosecution without the legal authority to exercise power over life and death.

Our second point refers to the forms that power actually assumes in the international system. Writers in IR tend to talk about power in two ways. Power can be discussed according to the sectors of human relations with which it is entangled – ideological, military, economic or political. Power can also be thought of as having different degrees of 'hardness' and 'softness'. The distinction between hard power and soft power was first made a well-known Liberal thinker, Joseph Nye.[3] His aim was to combat the then-popular view that the USA was facing a long-term relative decline in its power position. Nye argues that this view – popularised by Paul Kennedy in *The rise and fall of the great powers*[4] – underestimates the USA's hard power position, which he measures in terms of its economic and military capabilities relative to other actors in the international system. Nye claims that the 'relative decline' thesis also ignores the USA's soft power: its ability to attract and be attractive to other international actors. How a state goes about making itself attractive remains open to debate,

[3] *Nye (1991).*

[4] *Kennedy (1989).*

though Nye insinuates that it is more likely to happen when a state is open and democratic, economically successful and possesses a domestic society that other actors want to copy.

The hard power/soft power distinction took on increased importance during the war on terror. As this conflict escalated, many commentators (including Nye) argued that the USA's response to the terrorist threat was diminishing its soft power advantage. The one most obvious measure of this decline was the rise of widespread anti-US feeling, even among some of the USA's closest European allies. As Nye noted at the time, if your friends drift away from you and your enemies seem to be telling a more convincing story than you are, then any plans you have of leading the international system are in trouble. It has been up to George W. Bush's successor to restore US standing and influence in the international system. Doing so means that hard and soft power have to be combined in US foreign policy. This approach – which Nye calls 'smart power' – makes the USA a more effective international actor, better able to mobilise support from allies and deter competition from rivals. From a domestic standpoint, it has been important for President Obama to stress that his use of soft power has not been too soft. President Obama has therefore tried to exercise 'smart' power, combining hard and soft power into a strategy that offers incentives and punishments in equal measure. What this strategy actually means in the Syria or China remains unclear. Nor is it certain whether the notion of smart power is anything more than a ploy to make the Bush administration's use of power look inappropriate. Nevertheless, the formulation of a smart foreign policy using all the hard and soft power resources at the USA's disposal remains at the heart of the Obama administration's international policies.

Summary

- Authority refers to an actor's legal right to act in a certain way instead of its simple ability to do so.

- Soft power refers to an actor's ability to attract other international actors, potentially giving it influence beyond the material threats offered by hard power.

- Smart power refers to a combination of hard and soft power, in which an actor affects the behaviour of others through a combination of soft power incentives and hard power disincentives.

⇥ **Stop and read**: Hirst (1998) pp.138–43.

Activity

In this article, Paul Hirst uses a sector approach to discuss different forms of power. How is each type of power used in contemporary international society? Illustrate your answers with an example from contemporary current events.

Military power	
Economic power	
Power over public opinion	

Europe: the limited superpower

The ongoing debate about how best to exercise power has had a continuing influence on the relationship between the USA and its European allies. The discussion was initiated by a supporter of the G.W. Bush administration, Robert Kagan. In his 2002 article 'Power and weakness', Kagan suggests that the US-European alliance is drifting apart not because their values are different, but because the two sides understand and use power in different ways. He argues that the USA has far more hard power than the Europeans. This means that the USA will view the world in terms of strategic threats that have to be contained and defeated. **Europe** has taken a different approach. Having abandoned war as a means of settling its differences after 1945, Europe has become a zone of peace with little to contribute to international security other than the soft power of its diplomatic, economic and cultural influence. Kagan sums up these differences by saying that – in IR at least – Americans come from Mars (named in honour of the Roman god of war) while Europeans come from Venus (named in honour of the Roman goddess of love).

Activity

What would a gender theorist say about Kagan's description of the USA and Europe? What assumptions does it make about gender roles?

The Kagan thesis has not gone uncontested. It points out important differences between European (at least EU) and US foreign policy. It also touches a raw nerve in Europe about how actors should best exercise influence in the international system. This raises deeper questions about the kinds of power Europeans actually possess. Several answers popped up in the course of the 1990s, including civilian power, economic power and institutional power. None is entirely satisfactory, but all accept the fact that – in terms of power at least – Europe is not another USA in the making. Rather, the EU is composed of different political communities with widely varying views on the role of hard and soft power. Germany, in particular, is opposed to the former. Europeans seem to prefer spending their money on welfare and pensions than buying tanks and rockets. After a bloody 20th century, the continent has quite understandably lost the taste for war.

This leaves Europe in a difficult position. If it does not have any serious collective firepower, is it entirely dependent on the USA for protection? Does Europe's relative lack of hard power leave it vulnerable in a military conflict? Finally, with only two military powers of any importance (France and the UK), is the EU's relationship with the USA under increasing stress because Europe has so little to bring to the table in terms of its military capabilities?

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 26, Section 4, pp.411–14.

How has the structure of the EU affected its ability to project different forms of power in the international system? What does this say about the inside-outside distinction at the heart of Classical and Structural Realism?

The policy implications of the military imbalance between Europe and the USA were apparent in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. There, it became obvious that the only serious military player in the Euro-American partnership was the USA. The problem has cropped up again in Afghanistan. Though more than capable of training Afghan policemen, building schools and establishing the sinews of a new 'civil society' – all clearly important in terms of security – European states (with the

exception of the UK) have shown themselves to be gun-shy. Of the 150,000 NATO forces on the ground in 2010, nearly two thirds of these were from the USA. Moreover, the USA and a handful of allies in the English-speaking world have done the lion's share of NATO's fighting and dying. In terms of NATO cohesion, this poses all sorts of problems. One stands out more than most: if the USA is doing the bulk of the fighting and determining military strategy on the ground, what is NATO – and the broader Euro-American alliance – for?

Activity

In the box below, consider what it will take to make Europe a superpower. What changes will be required at the level of individuals, units and the international system?

The USA and the unipolar moment

Following the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent worries over **toxic assets** and **austerity**, there is little chance of Europe seriously boosting its military capabilities. The USA, meanwhile, is engaged in a very different kind of discussion. It does not lack for hard power. In 2014, the USA spent over $600 billion on national security. The main question is how, where and why it should use its formidable military might. Despite the war on terror, the USA faces no existential security threats. What is its mission? Why does it have all those guns? These are significant questions. The Soviet Union may have posed a very real obstacle to US security, but it also proved a most useful enemy. The Cold War helped the USA define its role in the world and united its allies. It made it easier for the US foreign policy elite to mobilise international support. Finally, it forged what turned into a remarkably stable foreign policy consensus. The loss of the Soviet enemy may have shifted the balance of power to the USA's advantage, but it also caused confusion and uncertainty. As Paul Kennedy wrote in 1993, 'the relief that the Soviet Union… [was] no longer an "enemy"… [was] overshadowed by uncertainties about the United States' proper world role'.[5]

[5] *Kennedy (1993).*

The disappearance of the Soviet Union removed the structural limits on US power, reforming the international system according the rules of unipolarity. Oddly, unipolarity was not a term that IR scholars took to with any great zeal. For one thing, it has very little in common with historical distributions of international power. Historical international societies have been multipolar and bipolar, but never truly unipolar. Some celebrated unipolarty, suggesting that nothing untoward was likely to happen because the USA was a liberal hegemon. Others were much less convinced, including the neo-Realist, Kenneth Waltz. As the father of Structural Realism, Waltz is certainly not anti-American. However, he knows his international history and has warned that there is little chance of unipolarity lasting for very long. Other states, he argues, will not accept a system in which they remain inferior forever. More worrying still, he thinks that unipolarity is likely to make the USA behave much more aggressively. In an interesting and lengthy interview in 2000, Waltz claimed that the dangers inherent in such an imbalanced system had been

observed long before the 1990s. Indeed, as described by a powerful French cleric, the world has 'never known a country disposing of overwhelming power to behave with forbearance and moderation for more than a very short period of time'.[6] In good Realist fashion, Waltz contends that what has been true remains true – possibly becoming even more true given how much power the USA has in the world relative to other actors.

➤ **Stop and listen**: Kenneth Waltz's interview 'Theory and international politics: a conversation with Professor Kenneth Waltz' on the *Conversations with history* website of the University of California, Berkeley.

You can find a link to this interview on the VLE. Alternatively, you can find it here: http://conversations.berkeley.edu/content/kenneth-waltz [accessed 18 February 2016].

From 1991 to 2000, these dire warnings sounded like so much background chatter. Unipolarity was much less interesting than debates about globalisation, the spread of capitalism and liberal democracy, and the foreign policy of President Bill Clinton. The main attack on Clinton at the time was not that he was misusing or abusing US power, but that he was not using it enough. Far from taking advantage of unipolarity, Clinton – according to his right-wing critics, many of whom later went on to take up positions in the Bush administration after 2000 – appeared to ignore unipolarity, opting instead to build alliances while embedding (and thus containing) US power in a series of international organisations. If, as many think tanks and academics were saying, the USA had the opportunity to build a new Rome on the Potomac, it seemed that nobody had bothered to inform the cautious President Clinton.

Summary

- Different emphases on hard and soft power have led to different foreign policy choices in the capitals of the USA and the European Union.

- US unipolarity after 1991 was due in large part to the relative decline of all other international actors, leaving the USA as the only superpower.

Unipolar in theory, imperial in practice

Much that was said against Clinton's foreign policy in the 1990s would have been purely academic if not for two major events: the election of George W. Bush, who surrounded himself with hawkish advisers who believed that the USA should exploit its power advantage; and the 9/11 attacks, which opened a new chapter in US foreign policy. Much has been written about Bush's foreign policy, most of it critical. What most commentators fail to point out, however, is that much of what Bush did and said was conditioned by his advisers' understanding of the unipolar international system and of the USA's unique role within it.

This understanding took three things for granted. The first was that the USA had won the Cold War, and had done so, arguably, because it had not been afraid to assert its power in a forceful manner. The second was that as a result of the collapse of the USSR, the USA's relative power increased dramatically. Finally, Bush's advisers argued that Clinton had failed to employ US power effectively. The result, they argued, was drift and indecision and possibly even 9/11. President Bush deployed the past to good rhetorical effect, saying that when enemies threaten, as they had threatened European democracies in the 1930s, the worst path was one

of **appeasement**. Bush pointed out that appeasement in the late 1930s had led to the Second World War. Times had changed, but the lessons to be drawn from history were the same. Bush and his advisers argued that Clinton pursued a policy of weakness and indecision in the 1990s that left the USA's enemies feeling that they had nothing to fear. 9/11 might not have been predictable, but by failing to show the world that the USA had overwhelming power and was willing to use it – with or without the permission of the international community – Bush and his advisers argued that Clinton had only encouraged aggression.

Operating in international society without an obvious rival and with allies who were more or less dependent and enemies who were relatively weak, the Bush foreign policy of pre-emption and power projection made perfect theoretical sense. Whether or not this assertive strategy could actually have delivered to Bush what he wanted – victory over terrorism and what some of his more robust supporters were now openly calling a new US empire – is unclear. Opinion remains divided. His few defenders argue that when he was faced with an enormous range of new threats, Bush had no alternative but to deploy US power in a forceful manner. His critics have arrived at very different conclusion. By unleashing the USA's hard power without first using soft power alternatives, they argue, Bush dealt a major blow to the USA's position in the world. The USA's position at the time of writing would seem to support at least some of their criticisms.

Summary

- By 2001, the power advantage of the USA meant that it could operate independently of its allies and did not have to worry about international sanctions if it chose to violate the institutions of international society.

- The war on terror has had complex effects on US power: boosting aspects of its hard power while costing it much of its soft power advantage.

Conclusion

If the history of world politics teaches us anything, it is that power is a very complex concept and international society an even more complex place, whose problems are not going to be solved by military power alone. IR teaches us that even the greatest powers should deploy their capacities with care, caution and – whenever possible – the support of allies and partners. Otherwise, they can easily end up facing – as USA now faces – a sceptical and suspicious world, less willing to follow its example and certainly less inclined to listen to what it has to say. Hard power alone does not a hegemon make.

Chapter overview

- Power has several meanings in the social sciences, including the ability to prevail over another actor, the quantitative capacity to force another actor to submit to your will and the ability to benefit from another actor's losses.

- Material definitions of power underestimate the importance of ideational and social forms of power, including the ability to create and sustain preferential norms, rules and practices in international society.

- Geopolitics studies the links between political power and geographic space, including a state's location and resources.

- After many decades on the sidelines of IR, geopolitics has recently made a comeback – shorn of the racially disturbing undertones that defined earlier incarnations.

- Power is a relational quality that describes the relative influence of two or more actors, meaning that any decrease in the power of one actor will generally signal an increase in the relative power of other actors in the relationship.

- Authority refers to an actor's legal right to act in a certain way instead of its simple ability to do so.

- Soft power refers to an actor's ability to attract other international actors, potentially giving it influence beyond the material threats offered by hard power.

- Smart power refers to a combination of hard and soft power, in which an actor affects the behaviour of others through a combination of soft power incentives and hard power disincentives.

- Different emphases on hard and soft power have led to different foreign policy choices in the capitals of the USA and the European Union.

- US unipolarity after 1991 was due in large part to the relative decline of all other international actors, leaving the USA as the only superpower.

- By 2001, its power advantage meant that the USA could operate independently of its allies and did not have to worry about international sanctions if it chose to violate the institutions of international society.

- The war on terror has had complex effects on US power: boosting aspects of its hard power while costing it much of its soft power advantage.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- suggest why power is central to the study of world politics
- explain distinctions between hard and soft power, and between power and authority
- explain the different kinds of power that drive EU and US foreign policy
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- power
- legitimacy
- anarchic system
- geopolitics
- Rimland
- capabilities

- Europe
- toxic assets
- austerity
- appeasement

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Is there an agreed definition of power?

2. Does geopolitics tell us anything of value today?

3. Explain the difference between hard power, soft power and smart power.

4. Can President George W. Bush's foreign policy be explained in terms of power alone?

Notes

Chapter 16: Global governance and international organisations

The UN wasn't created to take mankind into paradise, but rather, to save humanity from hell.

Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- understand the role of international organisations in the international system
- explain their different goals and structures
- assess the different organisations and regimes associated with regionalism in different parts of the world.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of global governance in the contemporary international system
- assess the UN's contribution to global governance
- explain the goals of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and the International Atomic Energy Agency
- analyse the effects of regionalism on different parts of international society
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Best, E. and T. Christiansen 'Regionalism in international affairs' in BSO, Chapter 26.

Taylor, P. and D. Curtis 'The United Nations' in BSO, Chapter 20.

Willetts, P. 'Transnational actors and international organizations in global politics' in BSO, Chapter 21.

'European Union' in GCR.

'International Monetary Fund' in GCR.

'World Bank' in GCR.

'World Trade Organization' in GCR.

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Chapter synopsis

- Global governance is the process by which sovereign states coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of solutions to transnational issues, often through the good offices of international organisations.

- Contemporary international society does not constitute a world government in the sense that states are functionally sovereign and are therefore free to determine their own domestic and international policies.

- The United Nations is the successor organisation to the League of Nations, whose weaknesses it tried to avoid through the inclusion of all the post-war great powers.

- The main function of the UN is to address threats to international peace and security through the work of the UN Security Council.

- Other tasks include decolonisation, economic and social development, the maintenance of diplomatic communication and the elaboration of international law.

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the organisational embodiment of the transatlantic security regime that integrates the national security of states in North America and Europe.

- NATO's main goal is to ensure the collective security of its members, which today include several states on the borders of the Russian Federation.

- The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were first designed as part of the Bretton Woods system of global economic management.

- The main goal of these organisations today is to manage and support the global economy through economic development, credit guarantees and liberal economic policies.

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the international organisation primarily responsible for global efforts to counter nuclear proliferation and to encourage the peaceful use of atomic and nuclear technologies.

- The IAEA is the main agency responsible for monitoring compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other agreements made under the international non-proliferation regime, including the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal.

- In addition to the global international organisations discussed above, the world is also dotted with regional organisations that help efforts at global governance in specific parts of the world. These include the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States and the Association of South East Asian Nations.

- Although the EU is the most powerful of these organisations, it too is showing signs of strain as member states assert their sovereignty in the face of EU rulings on migration.

Introduction

Having reviewed a number of pressing issues facing international society today, you are faced with a simple question: does humanity have the collective means to deal with our global problems?

In our discussions so far, we have considered a variety of challenges facing international society today. Some of these concern inter-state relations – issues that IR's statist approaches are well positioned to address. Others, such as the global environmental crisis and poverty, affect actors around the world with no regard for sovereign borders. These are transnational issues, whose causes and solutions are not limited to the **society of states**. Because their causes lie outside the jurisdiction of any one state, transnational issues cannot be addressed by states alone. They require cooperation and coordination between a range of state and non-state actors. Chapters 6 and 7 of this subject guide exposed you to English School institutions and Liberal regimes. These help state and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate their activities in our anarchic international society. Institutions and regimes help actors to manage transnational issues by creating norms, rules and practices that shape actors' behaviour and build trust between them. This process – known as **global governance** – often leads to the creation of formal international organisations (IOs) where disputes can be judged and treaties can be interpreted. This chapter will consider the global governance potential of several such organisations. Criticised by some for being too powerful and by others for not being powerful enough, IOs range from **specialised agencies** – such as the Universal Postal Union and the World Meteorological Organization – to sprawling organisations that deal with issue areas as varied as security, the world economy and regional integration.

The sections that follow present a brief guide of some of the important international organisations in the world today: the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and a number of important regional organisations. These have become crucial global governance tools, carrying out tasks that states have been unwilling or unable to do. Because they regulate actors' behaviour, international organisations constitute a system of global governance – a loose framework of organisations and institutions that

constrain actors and solve specific problems within international society. Sometimes incorrectly identified as a form of **world government**, IOs are essential to the management of international society. Still, they have their limits. First, they are too many and their responsibilities too overlapping to be thought of in terms of anything so organised as a government. Second, they exist in an international society dominated by sovereign states. Sovereignty – and the legitimate authority that comes with it – remains a state asset. In some cases, however, states have voluntarily surrendered some of their power to specific international organisations, giving these non-state actors some decision-making capacity. How they chose to exercise that capacity often determines their success or failure on the international stage.

Summary

- Global governance is the process by which sovereign states coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of solutions to transnational issues, often through the good offices of international organisations.

- Contemporary international society does not constitute a world government in the sense that states are functionally sovereign and are therefore free to determine their own domestic and international policies.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 21, Section 6, pp.331–32.

Activity

The reading describes international organisations as 'systems'. Could you make a case for IOs as 'societies', bound by shared sets of norms, rules and practices?

The United Nations

Each of the two world wars led to a widespread desire to create an international organisation responsible for maintaining peace and security with minimal recourse to the use of force. The first of these new IOs was the League of Nations. Founded in 1920 and based in Geneva, the League had a short and chequered history. Though best known for its failures, it dealt with several key international issues in its 20-year existence, from the protection of minorities to the slave trade. It also passed several motions against war, though these ultimately proved fruitless. Stirring words did not change the member states' policies, and the League lacked the power to influence international events because the great powers of the day refused to grant it any autonomy. It managed to survive the 1920s, doing much good work. The 1930s proved disastrous, however, beginning with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and ending with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The League was formally dissolved in early 1947.

Its successor, the United Nations (UN) – founded in 1945 – was different to the League in several respects. Its membership included the USSR and the USA. It also formally recognised the privileged position of the five major powers – the USA, the USSR, the United Kingdom, France and China (then represented by the Nationalist government). It granted these states – called the **Permanent Five (P5)** – veto powers in the Security Council, the organ dedicated to preserving 'international peace and security'. Designed to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', the UN's early idealism soon fell prey to Cold War divisions. Still, the organisation continued to grow as new states were born through

decolonisation and the work of the Trusteeship Council. Over time, the UN has created subsidiary organisations to deal with a host of international issues. Significantly, it was through the UN that the **horizontal proliferation** of nuclear weapons was first addressed.

The UN is often ridiculed by its critics as being a mere talking shop, a den of corruption, a toothless organisation or a meeting place for dubious non-democratic states. It is frequently found guilty of failing to do things that it was never designed to do, such as enforcing human rights and ending conflicts. It is also blamed for failing to carry out tasks for which it has never been given the mandate or the money. None of these charges is fair. Rather than judging the organisation against impossible goals such as the establishment of world peace, your analysis should focus on its work 'on the ground': looking after refugees, keeping warring factions separated, feeding starving populations and delivering some hope to the world's most underdeveloped people. Though less than perfect, the UN has consistently tried to help people and states that find themselves grossly disadvantaged in international society. It remains a key driver of **human development** around the world, often doing difficult and dangerous work with little funding or support from its member states.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 20, Sections 1–2, pp.305–10.

Activity

Look at the organisational chart of the United Nations posted on the VLE. Use the table below to describe the responsibilities of the five main organs of the UN system. Post your answers in the VLE discussion forum.

General Assembly	
Security Council	
Economic and Social Council	
International Court of Justice	
Trusteeship Council	

By the end of the Cold War, the UN had acquired a degree of authority among its member states that the League of Nations never achieved. Even a government as hostile to the UN as George W. Bush's administration ran up against the authoritative power of the UN when it decided to go to war in Iraq in 2003 without the organisation's backing. The USA's failure to get UN Security Council backing for its military action stripped the war of its legitimacy in the eyes of international society – a critical problem that

undermined subsequent efforts to rebuild Iraq as a liberal democracy. It also made it far more difficult for the USA to represent the war as anything more than an opportunistic adventure driven by a president out to finish his father's business, the president's neo-conservative advisers keen to spread democracy to the Arab world on the point of a bayonet, and US TNCs. Without UN backing, US policy looked more like an exercise in imperialism than one aimed at the maintenance of international peace and stability, delegitimising the actions of the most powerful state in the world. While this did not stop the war, it had a significant impact on the way in which the war was perceived around the world and had a terrible effect on the USA's soft power capabilities.

Summary

- The United Nations is the successor organisation to the League of Nations, whose weaknesses it tried to avoid through the inclusion of all the post-war great powers.

- The main function of the UN is to address threats to international peace and security through the work of the UN Security Council.

- Other tasks include decolonisation, economic and social development, the maintenance of diplomatic communication and the elaboration of international law.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 20, Section 5, pp.315–17.

Activity

How do the UN's economic and social goals relate to the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations discussed in Chapter 14 of this subject guide? Is it possible to achieve international peace and security without promoting the economic and social advancement of the world's poorest peoples?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

While the UN is a truly global body representing the interests of 193 member states across the world, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** has a far more modest jurisdiction. NATO is at the heart of the transatlantic **security regime**, which locks together the security interests of Europe and North America. Unlike the UN, NATO does not pretend to multi-task. It is a collective security organisation that has a well-defined 'hard power' role in IR: to deter, plan, fight and win wars. One of the great ironies of NATO is that it never engaged in combat during the Cold War – the conflict it was designed to fight. Since 1991, however, it has gone to war many times: first in Kosovo and then in Afghanistan, where it was massively committed. As of September 2014, it has been engaged in anti-piracy operations off the Somali coast, air support operations on behalf of the African Union (AU), a much-reduced training and support role in Afghanistan, and sovereignty protection exercises in the Baltic states, Slovenia and Albania.

Composed of two branches – a political wing and a military wing known as SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe) – NATO grew out of four post-war fears:

- fear of a resurgent Germany

- fear of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact

- fear that US isolationism might leave Europe without a permanent US presence

- fear that Europe might revert to old habits of interstate rivalry and war.

To paraphrase Lord Ismay, its first secretary general, NATO was designed 'to keep the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down'. If these points describe NATO's historic purpose before 1989, it was completely successful. The main problem it has faced since the end of the Cold War is how to define its new role. Its first instinct was to do nothing at all on the reasonable grounds that the USA had promised Gorbachev that NATO would not push its boundaries eastwards beyond Germany's eastern borders. Once Central and Eastern European states began asking for membership, however, the organisation changed its mind and began to enlarge on the grounds that this is what Central and Eastern Europeans actually wanted. Officially launched as policy following the publication of a 1995 review, enlargement has expanded the security community to 28 states following the accession of Albania and Croatia. Expansion has led to problems, particularly in regard to the organisation's relationship with Russia. Moscow's suspicion of NATO's intentions, partly a residual fear from the Cold War and partly a result of broken promises to limit NATO's to the Oder River, contributed to the Russian war against Georgia in 2009 and the ongoing conflict in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. NATO's ongoing air operations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are a direct result of the Ukrainian crisis – proof of NATO's core commitment to collective security as enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which declares that an attack on any one member is an attack on them all.

Until the recent Russo-Ukrainian crisis, there was little likelihood of an orthodox military assault across the alliance's borders. Most of the threats facing NATO were unconventional. These included terrorism, rogue states with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), global trade disruption and cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure such as power grids. Old-fashioned notions of static defence seemed increasingly irrelevant in the modern world, as did a good deal of NATO's equipment. Building on lessons learned from Afghanistan, the organisation's 2010 Strategic Concept paper called on member states to 'further develop doctrine and military capabilities for expeditionary operations, including counter-insurgency, stabilisation and reconstruction'. Events in Ukraine and the winding-down of the Afghanistan mission have begun to swing the pendulum back towards conventional military concerns, such as protecting the sovereignty of member state against aggression. Ukraine is not, of course, a NATO member. It is not covered by the organisation's collective security provisions. However, the resurgence of Russian militarism has given the organisation a new lease on life as it patrols the borders of its member states, deterring further Russian activity on the borders of Europe.

Summary

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the organisational embodiment of the transatlantic security regime, which links the national security of the North American and European continents.

- NATO's main goal is to ensure the collective security of its members, which today include several states on the borders of the Russian Federation.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization' in GCR.

Activity

Imagine yourself as an official in Russia's Foreign Ministry. Look at the map of NATO expansion posted on the VLE. Now think about the following questions. Share your ideas with your peers in the VLE discussion forum.

- How would you interpret NATO's eastward expansion?

- From Russia's point of view, does an expanded alliance make Europe more secure?

- What might NATO do to reduce Russia's suspicions?

- Which theoretical approach best represents Russia's position on NATO expansion?

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

While NATO is tasked with managing issues of war and peace – 'security' by any other name – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization and the G8/G20 have a narrower, though no less difficult, job supporting the global economy. As you saw earlier in this subject guide, the world economy emerged from the Second World War in terrible condition. This led economic policy-makers to the conclusion that without a system of international support and policy coordination, there was every chance that the world would again experience the sort of economic and financial turbulence that had led to the Great Depression and, arguably, the Second World War itself. Over time, interest in the connection between the international political and economic systems has led to the growth of international political economy (IPE), the sub-discipline of IR that was discussed in Chapter 11.

As discussed earlier, three new international organisations were created after the war as part of the Bretton Woods system, which was meant to promote a new world economic order. These included:

- the IMF, whose purpose is to ensure a stable exchange rate regime and the provision of emergency financial assistance to states

- the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) – today the World Bank – whose goal was to facilitate European post-war reconstruction, but whose longer term job was to provide development assistance around the world

- the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – today the WTO – which became a forum for negotiations on trade liberalisation.

Underwritten by the enormous power of the USA, whose anti-Communist policies were as much economic as they were political, this new multilateral system of economic governance was reinforced by the creation of new agencies. These include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), formed in 1960 to undertake multilateral policy surveillance; the World Trade Organization (WTO), which succeeded the GATT in 1995; and the Group of Eight (G8), established as the G5 in 1975 to facilitate policy coordination among the world's most developed economies.

⇝ **Stop and read**: 'International Monetary Fund', 'World Bank' and 'World Trade Organization' in GCR.

As Richard Higgott points out, each of these new organisations has undergone some form of mission creep since its creation, progressively widening their responsibilities well beyond original intentions. For the IMF, this happened in the economically turbulent 1970s when its purpose was transformed from the arbiter of global monetary stability to the leading

advocate of what Higgott calls 'country macro-economic rectitude'. Before the 1960s, the IMF encouraged growth through a combination of state-led and private-sector spending. From the 1970s onwards, their task was conceived in narrower, neo-liberal economic terms. As we discussed in Chapter 11 of this subject guide, these new terms tied financial assistance to far-reaching economic reforms that were designed to shift client economies away from state-led growth strategies towards the private sector. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) became central to IMF loans, forcing sovereign states to cut back on their spending in order to balance their books. Although SAPs often reduce government deficits, they also reduce the already limited public goods that states are able to provide to their citizens, undermining the ability of governments to exercise sovereign control over their territory. This can have dramatic implications for peace and stability by creating failed states. Further evolution took place following the collapse of Communism, as the IMF turned its attention to facilitating the **transition** of post-communist economies to the capitalist world system.

How are we to judge the impact and success of economic multilateralism? Higgott judges them to have been relatively successful in terms of helping the world economy recover after the war, and in providing a form of global governance in an era characterised by increasing levels of economic interdependence. Some thinkers are more critical. As a number of Marxist analysts point out, the proliferation of international bodies over the past few years has done nothing to counter the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth and economic power in the world. Indeed, even after recent moves to replace the G8 with the more representative G20, the governance structures behind the world economy are run by (and possibly for) rich and developed states. International economic organisations have not done much to reduce the number of people living in absolute poverty. Indeed, China almost single-handedly shrank that number between 1990 and 2010, with little help from the international **development** regime. Economic IOs have also failed to get rid of economic subsidies that work to the advantage of wealthy economies. As David Held shows, the absolute gulf between the richer and the poorer states over the past 30 years has widened. The system of economic governance embodied in the international economic regime now faces its sternest test in at least three decades as it tries to stabilise the world economy following the financial crisis of 2008, the sovereign debt crisis and **credit crunch** that followed, and the 2015 global economic slowdown emanating from China.

Summary

- The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were first designed as part of the Bretton Woods system of global economic management.

- The main goal of these organisations today is to manage and support the global economy through economic development, credit guarantees and liberal economic policies.

Activity

Given what you have learned about the international economic regime, which of IPE's three dominant theories do you find most convincing? Do you find the same theory convincing when you think about the international political system?

The International Atomic Energy Agency

If the management of an increasingly integrated and interdependent world economy has led to the creation of an ever-expanding set of global economic regimes, the same is true of atomic and nuclear energy. Since the invention of atomic weapons in 1945, there has been a powerful impulse to create a regulatory framework to control the use of atomic energy, promote **counter-proliferation** and reinforce the **nuclear taboo**. To this end, in 1946 the Truman Administration proposed the Baruch Plan. This drew heavily on the Acheson–Lilienthal Report of 1946, and proposed to dismantle and destroy the US nuclear arsenal – the only nuclear arsenal in the world at the time. Under this plan, US disarmament would be conditional on two things: the establishment of an 'international atomic development authority' that would own and control all militarily applicable nuclear materials and activities, and the creation of a system of automatic sanctions to punish states attempting to acquire the capability to make nuclear weapons or fissile material. Under the Baruch Plan, the Security Council would be unable to veto these sanctions.

The Baruch Plan failed to emerge from the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) because the USSR – which was developing its own atomic bomb – planned to veto it in the Security Council. It remained official US policy until 1953, when President Eisenhower made his 'Atoms for Peace' proposal at the UN General Assembly. This led to the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957. Its main principle was to pursue the 'safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear sciences and technology'. To achieve this, the IAEA has been tasked with two purposes: to facilitate the spread of peaceful atomic and nuclear power technology, and to oppose its weaponisation. Based in Vienna, the organisation is tasked – like the UNAEC before it – with addressing 'the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy'. It seeks to do so by a two-pronged strategy of ensuring that atomic power is used for peaceful purposes, and establishing safeguards to protect compliant states against weapon proliferators who might cheat and evade the international nuclear regime.

Efforts to conclude an international agreement to limit the spread of nuclear weapons did not begin in earnest until the early 1960s. Although initial efforts stalled, they started up again in 1964 after China detonated its first nuclear weapon. By 1968, after much debate and a lot of disagreement between nuclear states and **non-nuclear weapon states**, the text of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** was finally completed. In June 1968, the UN General Assembly endorsed the NPT in Resolution 2373 (XXII) and, in July 1968, the treaty opened for signature in Washington, London and Moscow. The NPT entered into force in March 1970. The NPT is a deeply unequal document insofar as it distinguishes between the five governments which are deemed to be legitimate weapons states – the USA, the USSR, the United Kingdom, France and China – and the rest of the world, which are not. Nevertheless, the treaty has gained wide acclamation and has been invested since with a high degree of international legitimacy. It is a very practical document, establishing a specific system of controls, confidence-building measures and safeguarding systems under the direct responsibility of the IAEA. In addition, it promotes cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear technology and equal access to this technology for all states. This two-pronged approach – encouraging states' peaceful use of nuclear technology while opposing its

weaponisation – is not without its tensions, particularly as many peaceful uses of nuclear power feature dual-use technologies that are easily adapted to military applications.

Only a few states refused to sign on. These included India, who criticised the treaty because it privileged the powerful and undermined Indian sovereignty; Pakistan, who feared India's nuclear ambitions; Israel, who feared its Arab neighbours and has taken a stance described as **nuclear opacity**; and North Korea, who feared South Korea and its Western allies. Still, these were the exception rather than the rule. By the end of the 1980s, the world at large could feel reasonably satisfied with its coordinated efforts to produce a workable non-proliferation regime.

The situation has since taken a more ominous turn. First there was the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. This generated new fears that the number of weapons states would rapidly expand and that nuclear materials and scientists would leave Russia to help potential proliferators. The situation deteriorated when it was discovered that North Korea and Pakistan were actively engaged in developing their own nuclear weapons, often in close collaboration with one another. Pakistan exploded its first nuclear weapons in 1998 in response to five Indian nuclear tests earlier that year. Matters did not improve as one century gave way to another. North Korea detonated its first nuclear device in 2006. Pakistan nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan was discovered to be selling nuclear secrets. Meanwhile, according to Western intelligence, Iran began serious enrichment of its own uranium stockpile in 2007. This was taking place in the tense international environment that followed 9/11, with its growing worry that terrorists might get their hands on WMD, including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Iran has since signed a nuclear deal with the world's leading powers in which it has agreed to shut down much of its uranium **enrichment** capacity and allow international monitors from the IAEA into its facilities to verify compliance.

Whether or not international organisations like the IAEA and treaties like the NPT are able to deal with these serious problems remains an open question, though the Iran Nuclear Deal holds out some hope. Among those who doubt the utility of international regimes, there are powerful voices in the international community – especially among Realists in Israel and the USA – calling for decisive military action to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. One war has already been fought – albeit on the basis of dubious intelligence – to prevent Iraq acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It is possible that similar operations might be waged in the future. If, or when, this happens, it will not only pose a serious risk to international peace and stability in the Middle East, but also to the credibility of international organisations and norms that constitute the non-proliferation regime.

Summary

- The International Atomic Energy Agency is the international organisation primarily responsible for global efforts to counter nuclear proliferation and to encourage the peaceful use of atomic and nuclear technologies.

- The IAEA is the main agency responsible for monitoring compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other agreements made under the international non-proliferation regime, including the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal.

Regional organisations

Standing halfway between the state and **internationalisation**, regions have become a major focus for discussion in IR. How should we think about and identify them? Are regions fixed or do they change over time? How do regions differ from each other? Do actors within certain regions think of themselves in 'regional' terms? Each of these questions remains a key issue in a 30-year-old debate on **regionalisation** – one that by definition has major consequences for how we think about regional organisations.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 26, Sections 1–2, pp.402–04.

Activity

Using the table below, define the three dynamics that motivate states to combine in regional organisations and provide an example of a current regional organisation.

Management of independence	
Management of interdependence	
Management of internationalisation	

Today's regional organisations are many and varied in terms of their purposes and principles. As Shaun Breslin points out, regional organisations come in many forms: from the purely economic to the linguistic, and from the religious to the political and military. There are currently around 76 regional organisations in the world, regulating trade, determining regions' relationships with the outside world, defining the terms under which the organisation can intervene in the internal affairs of their member states and even – in at least one case – passing laws that govern what happens to member states' citizens. Breslin goes on to point out that many regions that began as economically closed systems have, under pressure from globalisation, opened up to the world economy. Still, only one regional organisation has so far created its own currency. Introduced in 1999, the Euro has become the second most traded currency on global markets.

There are many kinds of regional organisation. Geographically, these stretch from the Americas (the Organization of American States [OAS] established in 1945), through Africa (the African Union [AU] formed as a successor to the Organization of African Unity in 2002), to South East Asia (the Association of South East Asian Nations [ASEAN] created in 1967). Some, like the EU, have powerful central administrations. Others do not. Some, like the OAS, talk about the rights of individuals. Until very recently, ASEAN steered clear of such references, upholding the traditional Westphalian institutions of state sovereignty and mutual non-intervention. The African Union, meanwhile, makes it quite clear that intervention in member states is possible if deemed necessary to 'promote peace, security and stability'. Since 2004, the AU has been active in crises in Darfur, Comoros, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and other member states. It has adopted resolutions creating AU peacekeeping operations in Sudan and Somalia, while imposing sanctions against persons undermining peace and security. Through its own 'Peace

and Security Council', the AU aims to establish a 'standby force' to serve as a permanent African peacekeeping body.

⊳⊳ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 26, Section 3, pp.404–10.

Activity

International organisations in different regions tend to support different sets of norms, rules and behaviours. In the table below, use English School terminology to describe international society in each of the following regions.

The Americas	
Africa	
Asia	

At the apex of all regional organisations is the EU. It is not only the most developed IO of its kind, but it casts a very long shadow over all other organisations calling themselves 'regional'. Since the end of the Cold War, the naive belief that Europe's example would be emulated in a series of regional unions around the world has proven to be misplaced. The conditions that make the EU possible are simply not to be found outside Europe. That said, the EU has become a model of sorts, inspiring states in other parts of the world to 'do' IR differently: organising their affairs on a cooperative basis rather than simply coexisting in a Realist world of conflict and competition. To this degree, the EU exercises a form of soft power that is generally not given enough credit by critics, and is a fine example of how – as Constructivists argue – 'anarchy is what states make of it'. Whether or not this continues to be the case will depend on how the organisation deals with the issues on its doorsteps: from the war in Ukraine to the migration crisis to Greece's continuing economic dysfunction. There is reason for optimism, but also cause for concern.

Summary

- In addition to the global IOs discussed above, the world is also dotted with regional organisations that help efforts at global governance in specific parts of the world. These include the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States and the Association of South East Asian Nations.

- Although the EU is the most powerful of these organisations, it too is showing signs of strain as member states assert their sovereignty in the face of EU rulings on migration.

⊳⊳ **Stop and read**: 'European Union' in GCR.

Activity

As you work your way through the readings, keep the following questions in mind:

- Which areas of EU responsibility are 'intergovernmental' and which are 'supranational'? What's the difference?

- What role do you see regional organisations having in the architecture of the international system?

Conclusion

The world faces a number of transnational issues that are challenging the capacities of the world's sovereign states. In reaction to these challenges, international society has developed a system of global governance that encourages cooperation and builds trust between actors while defending the sovereignty of the world's political communities. International organisations are the organisational embodiment of global governance, represented at the global scale by the United Nations. This vast, if underfunded, organisation deals with a dizzying array of issues from global security to education to human rights and technical cooperation. Other IOs are more specialised, dealing with issues in a specific area such as the international economy or nuclear proliferation. Finally, the world is also dotted with a collection of regional organisations that bring together actors from similar parts of the globe to solve shared issues. The success or failure of these IOs remains uncertain. However, it is difficult to imagine our world without them.

Chapter overview

- Global governance is the process by which sovereign states coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of solutions to transnational issues, often through the good offices of international organisations.

- Contemporary international society does not constitute a world government in the sense that states are functionally sovereign and are therefore free to determine their own domestic and international policies.

- The United Nations is the successor organisation to the League of Nations, whose weaknesses it tried to avoid through the inclusion of all the post-war great powers.

- The main function of the UN is to address threats to international peace and security through the work of the UN Security Council.

- Other tasks include decolonisation, economic and social development, the maintenance of diplomatic communication and the elaboration of international law.

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the organisational embodiment of the transatlantic security regime, which links the national security of the North American and European continents.

- NATO's main goal is to ensure the collective security of its members, which today include several states on the borders of the Russian Federation.

- The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were first designed as part of the Bretton Woods system of global economic management.

- The main goal of these organisations today is to manage and support the global economy through economic development, credit guarantees and liberal economic policies.

- The International Atomic Energy Agency is the international organisation primarily responsible for global efforts to counter nuclear proliferation and to encourage the peaceful use of atomic and nuclear technologies.

- The IAEA is the main agency responsible for monitoring compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other agreements made under

the international non-proliferation regime, including the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal.

- In addition to the global IOs discussed above, the world is also dotted with regional organisations that help efforts at global governance in specific parts of the world. These include the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States and the Association of South East Asian Nations.

- Although the EU is the most powerful of these organisations, it too is showing signs of strain as member states assert their sovereignty in the face of EU rulings on migration.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of global governance in the contemporary international system

- assess the UN's contribution to global governance

- explain the goals of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and the International Atomic Energy Agency

- analyse the effects of regionalism on different parts of international society

- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- society of states
- global governance
- specialised agencies
- world government
- Permanent Five (P5)
- horizontal proliferation
- human development
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- security regime
- Warsaw Pact
- transition
- development
- credit crunch
- counter-proliferation
- nuclear taboo
- non-nuclear weapon states
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)
- nuclear opacity
- enrichment
- internationalisation
- regionalisation

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. What problems have been encountered in developing an effective international regime for tackling nuclear proliferation?

2. Is an international society based on the concept of sovereignty equipped to provide the global governance needed to manage transnational issues?

3. 'International organisations are the world's best hope to shrink the uneven distribution of wealth and encourage human development.' Respond.

Chapter 17: New security

Hunger, disease and poverty can lead to global instability
and leave a vacuum for extremism to fill. So instead of just
managing poverty, we must offer nations and people a pathway
out of poverty.

President Barack Obama

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- define 'human security'
- explain some of the non-traditional security threats facing international society
- consider the securitisation of climate change, human health, resource scarcity, energy supplies and demographics
- assess the potential impact of these non-traditional security threats on international society.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- distinguish between traditional concepts of national security that focus on the state, and the new challenges of human security
- identify new transnational threats that are non-military in nature
- explain the significance of these new security challenges
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Essential reading

Acharya, A. 'Human security' in BSO, Chapter 29.
Evan, T. and C. Thomas 'Poverty, development and hunger' in BSO, Chapter 28.
Vogler, J. 'Environmental issues' in BSO, Chapter 22.
'Refugees' in GCR.

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Chapter synopsis

- Since the end of the Cold War, many issues in IR have been repackaged as 'security issues' through the use of securitisation – a process first described by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever.

- This shift is an acknowledgement of the serious risks facing international society today from transnational issues such as climate change, human health, resource scarcity, energy security and demographics.

- Climate change is one of the most challenging transnational issues on the security agenda today, threatening livelihoods around the world and the physical existence of several small island and coastal states.

- Action on climate change has been blocked by a number of states whose national interest conflicts with the global interest in mitigation and adaptation.

- Recent actions by the USA and China are particularly hopeful insofar as these great powers can help to set the agenda for the other states of the planet and can help to convince climate laggards to cooperate with governance efforts.

- Many of the non-traditional issues on the security agenda can be grouped together under the heading of human security, which takes the well-being of individual humans as its point of departure.

- Human health and the control of epidemic diseases is the best-known aspect of human security, although issues such as poverty play a closely connected role.

- Resource scarcity is another non-traditional source of potential insecurity, as is the resource curse that often undermines the governance capacity of states with significant deposits of easily accessed natural resources such as oil and gas.

- Energy security describes states' need for access to affordable sources of electrical and mechanical power with which to run their societies and economies.

- A state without energy security may be exposed to pressure from its suppliers, by threatening to cut supplies.

- Demographics present some of the most pressing issues on the security agenda today, including questions of overpopulation and human migration.

- The desire to slow or stop migration is putting pressure on international organisations as states assert sovereign control over their borders, even if it means violating agreed rules about refugees.

- Demographics are also putting pressure on developing states, where young populations are entering adulthood with little hope of permanent employment. This threatens both the stability of the states involved and the sustainability of the existing migration regime.

Introduction

In this chapter, we look at a range of topics that have been repackaged as 'security' issues over the past two decades. Many of these have been securitised over the years, using the process described by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver using the language of social constructivism.

⇥ **Stop and read**: the concept of securitisation in Chapter 10 of this subject guide.

As we have suggested throughout this course, the end of the Cold War and the apparent end of a military threat to the West led to new ways of thinking about international issues and threats. Though states remain key players in the international system and the great powers maintain their lofty positions of relative power, **security** has become less and less concerned with classic, Clauswitzian interstate conflict. A new security agenda has evolved, driven in part by IOs, NGOs and TNCs. This agenda has emphasised transnational threats to international peace and security that have traditionally been ignored or dealt with as secondary issues. This shift was formally recognised with the publication of the UN *Human Development Report* in 1994. This made policy-makers aware of the fact that some of the most serious risks facing states in the modern world arise from transnational problems such as poverty, famine, disease and environmental degradation. Not everybody agrees that these issues constitute a security threat in the traditional sense. Still, the new security agenda has undoubtedly influenced the way that states and non-state actors behave around the world.

In what follows, you will explore the new security agenda by looking at some of the non-traditional threats that have been securitised. Not all of these can be dealt with here. You will therefore focus on some of the best known and most discussed: climate change, human health, resource scarcity, energy security and problems arising from changing demographics.

Summary

- Since the end of the Cold War, many issues in IR have been repackaged as 'security issues' through the use of securitisation – a process first described by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever.

- This shift is an acknowledgement of the serious risks facing international society today from transnational issues such as climate change, human health, resource scarcity, energy security and demographics.

Climate change

The ecological consequences of human-induced climate change may represent the most worrying item on the new security agenda. Humans have affected the environments in which we live for millennia. For the past 500 years, human impact has ranged from the expansion of agricultural land use, to a reduction in forests and wetlands, to a rapid rise in the

amount of fossilised carbon released back into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels. Until recently, only a few scientists were willing to commit to the theory that human resource use – particularly the burning of coal, oil and gas – is having an appreciable effect on the Earth's natural systems. Though a few writers, sometimes funded by oil and gas companies, continue to reject the idea, anthropogenic climate change is an accepted fact among the overwhelming majority of scientists and experts in the field. Increasing levels of carbon in the atmosphere are leading to rising global temperatures and increased climate variability. This brings with it a host of potential threats to states, non-state actors and individuals. Rising sea levels caused by the melting of land-based polar ice caps threaten coastal areas from the small atolls and islands of the Pacific Ocean – where climate change is a very real matter of **national interest** – to coastal Asia, Europe, Africa and America. Rising sea temperatures are affecting weather patterns and fish populations, increasing the likelihood and intensity of storms, shifting rainfall patterns and promoting droughts and flash floods. These threats are already having an impact in several parts of the world. While their final impact is unknown, there is no reason to doubt that they will lead to large-scale human migrations as once-fertile regions are left parched, flooded or even submerged by our changing planet.

For IR, the key question in this debate is not whether climate change is anthropogenic or the result of some unobserved natural cycle. That is a matter for ecologists. IR needs to deal with international consequences of climate change's immediate effects. So far, the international community has focused on two parts of the climate change puzzle: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation efforts focus on reducing the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere in the hope of minimising the severity of climate change. Adaptation efforts focus on protecting ourselves from its worst effects by protecting coastlines, building more resilient communities and ensuring a sustainable source of food and power. There is a very extensive literature on the efforts that culminated with the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. This tends to focus on the important parts played by the UN and the EU; the forms of political resistance, led by the USA, Canada and Australia; and why we seem little nearer to finding any answers than we were in 1992, when states gathered at the Rio Earth Summit to address the same issues. A global agreement reached in Paris in 2015 is an indication that this may be changing, but it is still far too early to begin any celebrations.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 22, Section 4, pp.349–52.

Activity

Why have several states obstructed international efforts to deal with anthropogenic climate change? What can Realist and Marxist theory tell us about what drives their decision-making?

IR has contributed to the climate change debate by identifying international constraints on actors' ability to deal with environmental issues. One of these constraints relates to the great divide that still separates the economic 'haves' from the 'have-nots'. In theory, everyone can agree about the facts of climate change. More practically, many developing states fear that limits on carbon emissions will impair their ability to 'catch up' with the developed world. Until recently, China has maintained that targets should not be imposed on it while it remains so far behind the West in terms of its per capita income. In a competitive

and growth-oriented world economy, it is hardly surprising that many sovereign states are suspicious of efforts to regulate what they can and cannot do. This is less of a concern for the EU and Japan, given their already-high levels of economic development. It has proved a more difficult issue in the USA, however, where TNCs have privileged access to the lobbies of Congress, allowing them to mobilise political opposition to environmental regulation, and where suspicion of international agreements that limit the country's freedom of action remains a potent national urge. Even so, both China and the USA have stated their intentions to actively lobby for global mitigation and adaptation targets, to be negotiated through the institutions of the United Nations. This great power partnership played a central role in the successful negotiation of a global climate framework in Paris in late 2015.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 22, Section 5, pp.353–54.

Activity

Use the table below to consider how each of the following theoretical approaches might solve the climate change crisis. Think about the causes identified by each approach, and formulate a solution using concepts familiar to that theory.

Liberal	Causes:
	Solutions:
Marxist	Causes:
	Solutions:
Realist	Causes:
	Solutions:

In spite of many obstacles, climate change is fast becoming a key **national security** issue for states around the world. Ever-louder warnings from the international scientific community, obvious signs of instability in the planet's natural systems and growing calls from non-state actors and individuals have pushed China and the USA – the world's two biggest polluters – to jump on the climate change bandwagon. The USA changed its policy following the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, stating that climate change has 'risen up to the top of the US

national security set of priorities'. More recently, the Obama administration has teamed up with the government of President Xi Jinping to push for concerted international action, and an international agreement was hammered out at the Paris Climate Conference. At last, it looks like the global environment may have arrived on the international agenda.

Summary

- Climate change is one of the most challenging transnational issues on the security agenda today, threatening livelihoods around the world and the physical existence of several small island and coastal states.

- Action on climate change has been blocked by a number of states whose national interest conflicts with the global interest in mitigation and adaptation.

- Recent actions by the USA and China are particularly hopeful insofar as these great powers can help to set the agenda for the other states of the planet and can help to convince climate laggards to cooperate with governance efforts.

Health

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 29, Sections 1–2, pp.449–51.

Activity

Watch the video 'Human security explained' posted on the VLE.

Note the definitions and descriptions of human security listed in the video and in your readings. In the table below, note important differences between ideas of traditional security and the more novel concept of human security that is gaining popularity in IR.

Traditional security	Human security

Human health has long been an issue of international concern, and has now joined climate change as a new form of **human security** threat. People's lives have been blighted by disease for millennia. In fact, trade and early forms of globalisation have played a major role in spreading contagions around the world. From bubonic plague to smallpox to avian flu, globalisation has carried pathogens and parasites to new parts of the world. Thanks to shifts in rainfall and temperature, regions once free of mosquitoes, ticks and other parasites are now their feeding grounds, threatening human life and challenging states' capacity to respond to health crises. With disease comes increased strain on states' health-care and emergency response systems. This can stretch state resources to their breaking point, as in the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. In extreme cases, the state itself can begin to lose its grip

on its territory and population. A number of studies now show a close correlation between the incidence of disease and state failure. Given the additional connection between climate change and disease migration, such correlations certainly bolster the case for a new security agenda that takes both health and climate into account.

One disease has been the subject of an enormous amount of intense research is HIV/AIDS. Driven by the inability of poor states to provide their citizens with information and medical care, this pandemic has made itself felt across the less developed world. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has achieved terrible proportions. This area holds just over 11 per cent of the world's population, but almost 70 per cent of all HIV infections – 25 million cases. A 2010 UNAIDS report records highly troubling statistics for the region. In 2009, it saw around 1.8 million people die of HIV-related illnesses, 72 per cent of the global total. Southern Africa is at the epicentre of the ongoing epidemic. The 10 countries of the region, which have around 2 per cent of the world's population, are home to around 32 per cent of people with HIV and over 40 per cent of women with HIV. Not surprisingly, analysts have tended to stress different causes for the pandemic. These range from individual-level explanations, stressing sexual promiscuity and a lack of contraceptive use among African men, through unit- and system-level explanations linked to **poverty**, colonialism and the failure/ refusal of Western companies to supply needed drugs at affordable prices. On one point, however, there seems to be general agreement: states are more likely to be unstable and less likely to function so long as this disease continues to ravage their populations and undermine their political and economic stability.

The past decade has witnessed a spike in the number of global health scares, with nearly annual warnings of potential pandemics caused by one of the many strains of influenza. Here, the world has at least one important historical example from which it can draw some lessons: the Spanish influenza outbreak in 1918. Not only did this pandemic kill more than five times as many people as the war itself – accounting for just over 50 million lives – there was very little that the international community could do about it. Admittedly, no pandemic of the same scale has been experienced since. This is thanks in part to the additional resources that have been directed towards pandemic prevention. However, even these are no guarantee against a reoccurrence in the future. People are generally healthier than they were in the first half of the 20th century, medicines are more powerful and more plentiful, and international regimes are more robust. Moreover, the world is not coming out of a terrible four-year conflict that drained it of manpower and money. What worries many in the field of public health is that with more people and goods travelling around the world every year – a consequence of modern globalisation – the possibility of another pandemic is growing ever greater.

Summary

- Many of the non-traditional issues on the security agenda can be grouped together under the heading of human security, which takes the well-being of individual humans as its point of departure.

- Human health and the control of epidemic diseases is the best-known aspect of human security, although issues such as poverty play a closely connected role.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 29, Section 4, pp.453–8.

Activity

How does human security link health and environmental threats to the likelihood of armed conflict? What does gender theory tell us about the relationship between human security and gender in the international system?

Resources

The notion that demand for natural resources will lead to scarcity was advanced in the late 18th century by the English political economist, Thomas Malthus. In *An essay on the principle of population*, first published in 1798, he hypothesises that human numbers tend to increase at a geometric rate, while our ability to feed ourselves only increases arithmetically. If correct, this is bound to lead to profound human and economic crises when our numbers outpace our supplies. Malthus's ideas have been challenged in the centuries since. Advances in technology, improvements in productivity and the opening of new agricultural lands have increased the resources available to us and allowed us to make better use of what we have. However, his thoughts about population and resources remain troubling. Over the past 20 years, he has enjoyed something of a comeback among writers concerned with the direction of human development and what they see as an approaching resources crisis.

Malthusian theory expresses itself in IR through studies of resource scarcity. Some of these revolve around dangers posed by the world's rising population and the dangers posed to **subsistence** agriculture by climate change and soil exhaustion. Others look at the unequal distributions of power and wealth, which can lead to hunger by failing to get food supplies to poorer parts of the planet. This creates a socially constructed type of hunger, described by Amartya Sen; a type driven by inefficient distribution instead of natural shortages. A third type of study focuses on water scarcity, including fears that shortages will give rise to new conflicts between and within states. Some researchers even believe that oil will also become increasingly scarce over the next few decades. According to this theory, known as 'peak oil', the discovery and exploitation of fossil fuels will reach their maximum by the middle of the 21st century. If and when this occurs, it may lead to intense competition between states seeking to access the most important energy resource in the world economy.

⏩ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 28, Section 4, pp.442–45.

Activity

Use the table below to consider the differences between nature-based explanations of hunger and society-focused explanations. What does each theory blame for causing hunger? What solutions does each theory prescribe?

Nature-based explanations	Society-focused explanations
Causes:	Causes:
Solution:	Solution:

Resource scarcity is a problem with which states, empires and even pre-historic hunter-gatherers have had to cope. The 'resource curse' is a more novel problem. Indeed, it may be unique to modern international society. The 'resource curse' describes a situation in which high-value resources – oil and diamonds, for example – have a detrimental effect on the societies in which they are found. Under normal circumstances, states are assumed to benefit from high-value natural resources. They add to a state's store of wealth, can be used to promote balanced economic growth and provide revenue that can be used to improve people's living standards. The 'resource curse' stands these assumptions on their head. In many states, particularly those with weak institutions and corrupt elites, high-value resources will actually distort economic development by redirecting investment away from community-level projects in favour of increased, large-scale resource extraction. This undermines a population's socio-economic development, corrupts the political process and causes domestic conflicts over the distribution of resource wealth. This does not just impact on countries like Nigeria, where the benefits of the country's immense oil wealth is often nowhere to be found in the communities where oil is located. It also has consequences for oil-rich states in the Middle East and for resource-rich sub-state actors like the province of Alberta in Canada. In these places, an abundance of oil might fill state coffers in the short term, but it also creates uneven economic development and potentially undermines democratic practices in the long term.

Summary

- Resource scarcity is another non-traditional source of potential insecurity, as is the 'resource curse' that often undermines the governance capacity of states with significant deposits of easily accessed natural resources such as oil and gas.

Energy security

Resource scarcity and the resource curse raise a much wider question about energy security. As any decent historian will tell you, energy has posed a problem for IR since the West became dependent on imported oil around the beginning of the 20th century. As US writer David Painter shows, two decades of access to cheap oil in the 1950s and 1960s were followed by the production embargo imposed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the 1970s. This led to major price rises that played a crucial – and often unexplored – role in the conduct of the Cold War. One as-yet-unmentioned theory of the end of the Cold War focuses on the impact of falling oil prices in the 1980s. These put a major squeeze on the troubled Soviet economy, which received most of its foreign currency from exports of oil and gas, eventually pushing it into bankruptcy and political collapse.

Activity

Think about the role of economic decline in the new wars discussed in Chapter 13 of this subject guide. Do you agree that a state's dependence on energy exports makes it vulnerable to the form of collapse described by Mary Kaldor, or do the benefits of resource revenues outweigh the potential risks?

Why does this long-standing security issue seem so important today? There are several reasons. One has to do with Russia, which remains dependent on energy sales for its foreign currency reserves. Under President, then Prime Minster, Vladimir Putin, the state has effectively manipulated its control over the Russian oil and gas industry as a foreign policy tool in its relations with Ukraine and Europe, an approach called energy diplomacy.

This has raised the profile of energy security, particularly in the wake of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian crisis. A second factor to explain the securitisation of energy is the rise of China and the impact of its ascent on oil prices. For the past decade, China's seemingly endless appetite for oil has pushed global prices higher and higher. More recently, a slowdown in the Chinese economy has seen global oil prices slump, creating severe fiscal issues for oil-exporting states. Finally, energy security cannot be separated from socio-economic development. Here, critics make the point that development depends on access to a steady supply of oil to run cars, heat houses and power computers. Energy scarcity will disadvantage the poor long before it affects the wealthy, obstructing less economically developed countries' (LEDCs) attempts to improve their socio-economic conditions and reinforcing the gap between the haves and have-nots.

One factor above all has pushed energy to the top of a very long list of non-military security issues: the terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001. These events changed the way that US citizens thought about the world. Overnight, it seemed that the country had become too dependent on Middle Eastern oil. It was at this crucial juncture, when fear ran headlong into the USA's long-standing relationship with Saudi Arabia – which possesses over 25 per cent of the world's known oil reserves – that the US debate about energy security began in earnest. Even President G.W. Bush, an experienced operator in the oil industry, began to muse that it was high time for the USA to find alternative sources and forms of energy. Given the depth of their commercial links and the size of Saudi reserves, there was never much chance that the USA was going to abandon Saudi Arabia completely. Nevertheless, the question had been asked and a code of silence had been broken. We will have to wait to see how the USA – and the West more generally – will try to achieve energy security without becoming ever more deeply embroiled in the unstable regional politics of the Middle East. One surprising change has been the rapid rise in US oil and gas production thanks to hydraulic fracturing – a controversial technique for accessing hard-to-reach supplies underground. This has seen the USA go from the largest net importer of oil to a potential exporter, radically redrawing the world's energy map.

Summary

- Energy security describes states' need for access to affordable sources of electrical and mechanical power with which to run their societies and economies.

- A state without energy security may be exposed to pressure from its suppliers, who can apply pressure by threatening to cut supplies.

Activity

What could US energy independence mean for US involvement in the international affairs of the Middle East? Would a withdrawal of US power from the region make it more or less secure?

Demographics

The relationship between demography and international politics is one of the most underresearched topics in IR. Analysts assume that there must be a connection between population and international affairs, but remain divided on a range of issues. These include the relationship between population and power, the link between migration and stability, and the connection between the age structure of a society and the stability of its socio-economic system.

The first of these issues deals in the most general terms with the presumed connection between state power and trends in population. Those who advocate a correlation between population and power argue that the decline of Russia from great power status in the 1990s coincided with a rapid decline in its population growth rate. The same commentators might argue that the USA is in more robust international shape because its population is on the rise, driven by a combination of domestic growth and immigration. Europe stands somewhere in between. Its domestic population growth is on the decline, but the shortfall is being made up by large-scale immigration. This is a new dynamic for Europe, which has historically been a source rather than a destination for immigrants. There have been political consequences to this demographic shift, including growing nationalist movements in nearly all European states, and a dramatic rise in vocal political opposition to even the most desperate refugees. This has been encouraged by many politicians and media outlets, who portray refugees from the Middle East as potential security threats, thereby securitising what used to be a humanitarian issue.

Migration raises all sorts of international issues. The world has never seen so many people on the move, with global migration accelerating over the past two decades. This poses no special difficulty when the migrants in question are relatively affluent and come from similar cultures and backgrounds to their new host countries. Historical experiences in the Americas and contemporary Europe indicate that issues arise when migrants are poor and have little understanding of their destination's culture and language. Until recently, IR has dealt with such concerns as domestic problems to be handled by the countries to which people are immigrating. Since 9/11, however, it has become an increasingly securitised issue, with fears rising in many host countries that at least some of their new immigrant communities might represent a threat to public safety. This resurgent nationalism is an interesting counterpoint to the **globalism** that many identify as a feature of modern international society.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: 'Refugees' in GCR.

Activity

What impact can large-scale movements of political refugees have on the integrity of a state? Has the securitisation of refugees made it easier or harder to help them?

Finally, demography poses a potentially huge problem in many developing states in the form of an enormous rise in the number of younger people as a percentage of the overall population. This has been well documented in the Middle East and North Africa. There, demographic changes have produced a 'youth bulge', with over 30 per cent of Middle Eastern populations aged between 15 and 29. This represents over 100 million people, and is the highest proportion of youth in the region's history. Many of these young people have expectations that cannot be met by the local labour market. Middle Eastern children generally receive a good education relative to other parts of the developing world. Enrolment rates throughout the region are high, with nearly universal access to education at primary level and around 70 per cent enrolment at secondary level. This widespread education generates expectations that cannot be met by national labour markets. Youth unemployment in the Middle East now stands at around 25 per cent – the highest of any region in the world. To make matters worse, the duration of unemployment for new graduates is extremely long, lasting, for example, up to three years in Morocco and Iran.

Whether or not this 'youth bulge' leads to regime change in the Middle East remains to be seen, but there is every indication that it might. Upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya during the **Arab Spring** were led by technologically astute young people, who used social media and mobile cameras to coordinate and record the events that began in Tunisia in January 2011. Of the many demands made by these protesters, the call for jobs was the most consistent. Faced with their own youth in revolt, many Middle Eastern regimes have not been able to contain instability by the usual combination of police brutality and short-term economic concessions. It will be interesting to see how their successors deal with the problem of too many young people chasing too few jobs in political systems that, over time, will not be able to rely solely on traditional repressive means to ensure state stability.

Summary

- Demographics present some of the most pressing issues on the security agenda today, including questions of overpopulation and human migration.

- Pressure to slow or stop migration is putting pressure on international organisations as states assert sovereign control over their borders, even if it means violating agreed rules about refugees.

- Demographics are also putting pressure on developing states, where young populations are entering adulthood with little hope of permanent employment. This threatens both the stability of the states involved and the sustainability of the existing migration regime.

Activity

Look at the map of global median ages posted on the VLE. Alternatively, you can access the map directly by using the following web link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_median_age#/media/File:Median_age.png

Based on your knowledge of security, can you draw any conclusions about the link between a state's demographics and the human security of its citizens? Post your answer in the VLE discussion forum.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on some of the non-traditional security issues that have become part of the international agenda since the end of the Cold War. From climate change to demography, these differ greatly from the traditional security concerns that tend to fascinate IR such as war and state sovereignty. Non-traditional issues are the result of securitisation – a process first described by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver and discussed in Chapter 10 of this subject guide. This Constructivist phenomenon has expanded the meaning of security – shifting the focus of IR scholars away from national and international security and towards the concept of human security. In so doing, many of these topics have moved up the international agenda. At the same time, securitisation has made some more difficult for states to deal with by framing them as security threats and thereby changing the public's perception of potential solutions. This is most clearly seen with migrants – once a group in need of humanitarian aid and now increasingly seen as a potential threat to public safety.

Chapter overview

- Since the end of the Cold War, many issues in IR have been repackaged as 'security issues' through the use of securitisation – a process first described by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever.

- This shift is an acknowledgement of the serious risks facing international society today, from transnational issues such as climate change, human health, resource scarcity, energy security and demographics.

- Climate change is one of the most challenging transnational issues on the security agenda today, threatening livelihoods around the world and the physical existence of several small island and coastal states.

- Action on climate change has been blocked by a number of states whose national interest conflicts with the global interest in mitigation and adaptation.

- Recent actions by the USA and China are particularly hopeful insofar as these great powers can help to set the agenda for the other states on the planet and can help to convince climate laggards to cooperate with governance efforts.

- Many of the non-traditional issues on the security agenda can be grouped together under the heading of human security, which takes the well-being of individual humans as its point of departure.

- Human health and the control of epidemic diseases is the best-known aspect of human security, although issues such as poverty play a closely connected role.

- Resource scarcity is another non-traditional source of potential insecurity, as is the resource curse that often undermines the governance capacity of states with significant deposits of easily accessed natural resources such as oil and gas.

- Energy security describes states' need for access to affordable sources of electrical and mechanical power with which to run their societies and economies.

- A state without energy security may be exposed to pressure from its suppliers, who can threaten to cut supplies.

- Demographics present some of the most pressing issues on the security agenda today, including questions of overpopulation and human migration.

- Pressure to slow or stop migration is putting pressure on international organisations as states assert sovereign control over their borders, even if it means violating agreed rules about refugees.

- Demographics are also putting pressure on developing states, where young populations are entering adulthood with little hope of permanent employment. This threatens both the stability of the states involved and the sustainability of the existing migration regime.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- distinguish between traditional concepts of national security that focus on the state, and the new challenges of human security

- identify new transnational threats that are non-military in nature
- explain the significance of these new security challenges
- define the vocabulary terms in bold.

Chapter vocabulary

- security
- national interest
- national security
- human security
- poverty
- subsistence
- globalism
- Arab Spring

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Do mainstream understandings of security pay too much attention to states' national security?

2. How would a Realist react to the idea that human security should be the main analytical focus of IR?

3. Why have some states identified climate change as the principal threat to their national security?

Part 5: The future of international relations

Notes

Chapter 18: China rising I – analysing contemporary IR literature

> For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.
>
> Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*

Aim of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- introduce you to the language and tone of contemporary IR literature
- contextualise the ongoing transformation of polarity in contemporary international society
- provide you with your first opportunity to dissect and analyse an important trend in international relations.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by the 'rise of the East'
- assess the advantages of the West's position in international society
- describe some of the constraints facing Asia's rising powers
- analyse arguments for and against a state-centric vision of the future of international society.

Essential reading

Case study 1 in BSO, Chapter 4, p.77.
Case study 2 in BSO, Chapter 15, p.239.
Case study 2 in BSO, Chapter 16, p.255.
'Introduction' in BSO, Section 2, pp.3–6.

Chapter synopsis

- Most contemporary IR literature combines different issues and theoretical viewpoints with a historical narrative to produce a single piece of IR analysis.
- Untangling these issues and viewpoints can help you to gain a wider and deeper understanding of pressing issues in IR.
- There is a widespread belief that power in international society is shifting from the Western world (especially the United States) to Asia (especially China), potentially upsetting society's current polarity.
- Although economic power is shifting eastward, the West and the USA have several other sources of power that China and Asian powers do not.
- Professor Cox questions the reality of China's rise to superpower status and the inevitability of American decline.

- American and Western power are still rooted in their combined economic power and close transatlantic cooperation.

- China's rise has been made more problematic by several structural weaknesses within the Chinese state, particularly its poor record of social welfare, environmental protection and democratisation.

- China's economic system is still based on exports to wealthy Western markets which China must work to maintain in order for its economic growth to remain sustainable.

- America maintains an absolute hard power advantage over its closest rivals, including China.

- The USA and the West also maintain high levels of soft power insofar as their liberal political and economic systems attract admiration and imitation from actors around the world.

- International society is still defined by norms, rules and practices that have been created and maintained by Western actors.

- China has been forced to adapt to the existing global economic system and therefore has a vested interest in maintaining it.

Introduction

Over the past four parts of this subject guide, you have learned about the evolution of international society, you have been introduced to the most influential branches of IR theory and you have studied several of the most pressing issues facing international society today. Now it is time to put these lessons to work.

The chapter that follows is an adapted version of Michael Cox's article on the rise of China in international society: 'Power shift and the death of the West? Not yet!', *European Political Science* 10(3) 2011, pp.416–24. (© Reproduced with kind permission of Palgrave Macmillan.)

In it, he discusses the resulting changes to polarity and their implications for IR in the twenty-first century. Professor Cox's article is useful for several reasons. First, it provides you with an opportunity to see how you have developed a deeper and broader understanding of international relations than you had when you began. Think back to the beginning of this course – you will be amazed at how far you have come. Second, Professor Cox's article will give you the opportunity to flex your theoretical muscles. After you have finished reading the article, you will be asked to think about its contents from six theoretical viewpoints: Liberal Institutionalism, Structural Realism, Marxism, Social Constructivism, the English School and IPE (international political economy). Each of these theories tells us something different – and something important – about the rise of Chinese power in the early 21st century. These lessons will illustrate the utility of this course's pluralist approach to IR analysis (i.e. using more than one theory to understand a given international issue from a variety of angles). Finally, Professor Cox's article will provide you with some global context to help you analyse the more specific case of China's maritime disputes, which will be discussed in Chapter 19 of this subject guide. So, without further ado, let's get to it!

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, the following case studies:

1. Case Study 1 in Chapter 4, p.77

2. Case Study 2 in Chapter 15, p.239

3. Case Study 2 in Chapter 16, p.255.

Summary

- Most contemporary IR literature combines different issues and theoretical viewpoints with a historical narrative to produce a single piece of analysis.

- Untangling these issues and viewpoints can help you to gain a wider and deeper understanding of pressing issues in IR.

'Power shift and the death of the West? Not yet!'[1]

A. Power moves East

Three interrelated themes have come together to produce a new consensus about the future shape of the international system. One concerns China and the increasingly widespread belief that China will surge past the USA to head the world's economic league table over the next few decades.[2] A second has to do with the view that the USA is in decline as a unipolar superpower, a decline from which it cannot recover. The third theme argues that the axis of world politics is tilting from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. From Paul Kennedy[3] to Niall Ferguson, Chalmers Johnson to Jeffrey Sachs, the message could not be clearer. Power is shifting from the West to the East.[4] The USA and Europe will now have to pass on the baton.[5] The Western 'moment' that began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has finally come to an end.[6]

It is evident that economic power is shifting towards Asia, particularly China. However, it may be premature to write off the West. After all, it possesses several assets that have stabilised its position in international society. On the one hand, the USA still has many assets in terms of its human, capital and natural resources. It is also linked into a wider transatlantic community, whose organisational hub is centered on organisations like NATO and the G8. Membership in this security community has allowed the USA and Europe to redirect capabilities away from traditional interstate competition within the Western core of international society. Moreover, as China rises, it is unlikely to become the hub of a new, united 'East'. Asian regionalism is less prone to integration than that of Europe. In many ways, international relations in Asia are more Realistic than they are in Europe or North America. As a result, when China asserts itself, its many neighbours tend to look to external actors – particularly the USA – for support. This has led the USA to become more engaged in East Asian regional security than it has been for several decades. Indeed, as China rises, many states in the East might suddenly find it in their best interests to rediscover their relationship with the West.

Although pundits have predicted the imminent rise of Asian superpowers for some time, the issue moved to the top of the academic agenda following the publication in 2004 of an article in Foreign Affairs by editor James Hoge. Firing a warning shot across the bows of the West, he wrote of a 'global power shift in the making' that if not handled properly could very easily lead to major conflict.[7] Hoge's somewhat alarming piece is based on the work by A.F. Organski, who warns that changing distributions of power are often attended by periods of increased international instability.[8] It also reiterates points that have been made by a number of other observers – one of whom warns that when some great powers decline (referring here of course to the USA) and others rise (obviously China), financial dislocation, currency turbulence, and trade friction are bound to follow.[9] Given these potential instabilities, there is every reason to be concerned by the world into which we are heading.

[1] This article is derived from a keynote address given by Professor Michael Cox of the London School of Economics and Political Science at the Third Annual Graduate Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Dublin City University, Ireland, 30 August to 1 September 2010.

[2] In the autumn of 2010 it was announced that China had already become the second largest economy in the world, thus overtaking Japan ahead of schedule.

[3] Kennedy, P. 'Rise and fall', World Today 66(8/9) 2010.

[4] Ferguson, N. 'The decade the world tilted East', Financial Times, 28 December 2012.

[5] Sachs, J. 'America has passed on the baton', Financial Times, 30 September 2009.

[6] Morris, I. Why the West rules – for now: patterns of history and what they reveal about the future. (London: Profile Books, 2010) [ISBN 9781846681479]

[7] Hoge, J.F. 'A global power shift in the making', Foreign Affairs 83(4) 2004.

[8] Organski, A.F. World politics. (New York: Knopff, 1958).

[9] Plender, J. 'Great dangers attend the rise and fall of great powers', Financial Times, 21/22 August 2010.

In the wake of the 2008 Wall Street crash, China-watcher Martin Jacques made much the same point, though with less concern for the international consequences than Hoge. Jacques argues that because of the 2008 financial crisis, the liberal economic ship is sinking fast, leading to the biggest geopolitical shift since the dawn of the industrial era. This shift may see us learning Mandarin in order to compete in a new global order where states around the world emulate the economic system of Beijing instead of Washington. A new consensus, he argues, is in the making.[10] According to Jacques, this shift will involve more than just state power. China, he argues, is not merely another state, but rather a civilisation with a mission. Hence, as it rises, its ideas about the world – and not just its commodities and money – will begin to gain traction and, eventually, will displace those of the West.[11]

Nor do predictions of the West's difficult future end there. The financial giant Goldman Sachs has supported Jacques' thesis by producing one of the most cited statistical tables of the last few years, 'The predicted shift in the economic balance of power'. This makes a statistical case for Jacques' massive power transition. It shows that the US economy will still be significantly larger than China's in 2015. By 2050, however, it will be at least 10 per cent smaller. At a regional level, the West will lose its primary position in the global economy as China, India, Brazil, Japan and Russia out-produce and out-consume it. A new age is in the making.[12]

Summary

There is a widespread belief that power in international society is shifting from the Western world (especially the United States) to Asia (especially China), potentially upsetting society's current polarity.

Although economic power is shifting eastward, the West and the USA have several other sources of power that China and Asian powers do not.

B. Changing places?

It is never comfortable raining on somebody else's parade, especially when some of the world's most influential intellectuals happen to be in it. Nevertheless, that is what I would like to do here – though not because I want to hang on to the status quo or deny China and Asia their rightful 'place in the sun'. Rather, I think that the case for inevitable Western decline and Asian growth needs to be interrogated more thoroughly than it has been so far. As a long-time observer of the US 'empire', I have never been attracted to either US apologists – willing to forgive the state anything – or anti-Americanism – which condemns the USA as the root of all international evil. To me, the USA is a central fact of international life that I happen to find extraordinarily interesting. As I have discovered before, it is remarkably easy to underestimate its staying power – and by implication that of the West. Intellectuals in the West and elsewhere foresaw immanent US decline in the 1970s following its defeat in the Vietnam War and the recession that followed the OPEC oil crisis. We did it again just before the end of the Cold War in 1989, and again ended up eating our words. Perhaps we should be more careful about predicting the end of US power.

The danger in this debate is that false ideas can lead to bad policy. Indeed, it may already be doing so. China is now beginning to act more assertively because some of its leaders think that the tide has turned in their favour. The USA, fearing that it may be in decline, appears increasingly defensive. One manifestation of this is its increasingly tough attitude towards China, supported by a growing clamour among conservatives at home to do

[10] Halper, S. The Beijing consensus. (New York: Basic Books, 2010) [ISBN 9780465013616].

[11] Jacques, M. When China rules the world: the rise of the Middle Kingdom and the end of the Western world. (London: Penguin Allen Lane, 2009) [ISBN 9780713992540].

[12] See also Goldman Sachs, Global Economic Paper 192, 'The long term outlook for the BRICS and N-11 Post- Crisis', December 2009.

something about that supposedly 'communist state' across the Pacific. Realists will no doubt argue that this is the necessary consequence of a real and measureable shift in power. However, it might just as easily be suggested that rising tensions are social constructions built on the basis of a very premature reading of international trends.

C. West in crisis

The years between 2007 and 2010 were traumatic for the West and for the USA. *Time* magazine has called the period between 2000 and 2010 the 'decade from hell'.[13] There are several good reasons: 9/11 and its aftermath; the USA's costly imperial adventure in Iraq; the great economic crash of 2008; and the storm now battering the walls of the European project. When taken together, these troubles have done a great deal to sap Western self-confidence. The situation has been made all the more unbearable and traumatic by the extraordinarily high economic growth rates in Asia, particularly in mainland China. Frenetic economic activity in Shanghai and stories of China spreading its wings around the world tell their own story when set alongside images of rioting Greeks and unemployed Americans lamenting their fate in trailer parks. The message seems clear: the West's best days are behind it and the future belongs elsewhere. Even the [former] British Foreign Secretary William Hague implied as much in a summer 2010 keynote speech. There is, he observed, no point in the UK hanging on to a past or a world where the USA and the West are able to run the show. We are living in what Hague calls this 'increasingly multipolar world'. The sooner we get used to this new reality, the better.[14]

It is one thing to think about where international society is heading. It is quite another to lose one's bearings completely. A witty headline is no substitute for the facts, and the fact remains that Western powers retain some big structural advantages over their potential Asian competitors. This is especially true of the West's beleaguered leader: the United States of America. Is the US economic star on the wane? The impasse over deficit and debt reduction that led to its credit being downgraded from AAA to AA+ status by the ratings agency Standard and Poor's certainly seems to indicate that it is. Moreover, other economic powers, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), seem hot on its heels. However, they remain a long way behind the USA, whose gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 was still light years ahead of the rest ($15 trillion compared to China's $8.8 trillion) and whose nearest economic competitor – with a combined GDP of just less than $14 trillion – turns out to be another member of the fading West: the EU.

It is also worth recalling how important the relationship between the EU and the USA remains. Reading some accounts of modern IR, we might conclude that the game is up and those in the West should relocate to the Pacific Rim while they can. Before investing in real estate, however, it might be useful to recall a few empirical facts. First, the combined GDP of the USA and the EU is vastly larger than any competitors' – totalling around $28 trillion per year. Between them, they account for just over half of the global economy, a significant proportion for a partnership in decline. Nor is it just a question of size. In 2010, the USA invested far more in Europe than it did in Asia or China. While it has had ongoing trade problems with its Pacific partners – including its mind-boggling trade deficit with China – it has had relatively few with Europe. Americans may not see Europe as terribly exciting, and Europeans continue to worry about Washington's fixation on nearly everything except the EU. The

[13] *Serwer, A. 'The '00s: goodbye (at last) to the decade from hell',* Time, *24 November 2009.*

[14] *For further discussion about British foreign policy see 'The future of UK foreign policy', Special Report, LSE IDEAS, October 2010.*

fact remains that quantitatively and qualitatively, the US-EU relationship remains a central feature of contemporary international society.

Nor should we forget the important part played by politics and culture in assessing the presumed West-to-East power shift. The USA is changing fast, to be sure. It is looking across the Pacific with greater regularity, especially since the election of Barack Obama who has sometimes been dubbed (quite wrongly) the first US President with no interest in Europe or European affairs.[15] Still, personal biography and background do not in the end determine US interests. Neither do they change the fact that America's 'natural' political allies remain across the Atlantic rather than anywhere else.[16]

D. China: work in progress

Of course, other actors like the BRICS are beginning to catch up. Their economies are developing rapidly, changing the balance of economic power in the world. Indeed, one of these emerging economies (China) is having an enormous impact on the international economic order. In 2009, China used twice as much crude steel as the USA, the EU and Japan combined. It devours natural resources like some modern, insatiable behemoth, becoming the world's largest export market for many key countries including Brazil (accounting for 12.5% of Brazil's 2009 exports), South Africa (10.3%), Japan (18.9%) and Australia (22%). In its own region, China's economic role is even more significant. It has replaced the USA to become Japan's and Taiwan's largest economic partner. Since the Asian financial turmoil of the late 1990s – and even more so through the crisis that has unfolded since 2008 – China has become the real economic engine within East Asia, so much so that many are now referring to China (not Japan or the USA) as Asia's 'indispensable economy'.[17]

Amid all the justified hype surrounding China, we need to maintain some perspective. China's geographic and demographic size, its careful use of both state and market mechanisms to maintain economic growth, and the socio-economic policies it has adopted since the late 1970s have transformed it. Yet China remains an underdeveloped economy whose development began from a very low economic and technological level. Today, it can boast a growing middle class, several thousand millionaires, and a few billionaires to boot. At the same time, at least 500 million of its citizens are living on less than $2 a day in a country with no welfare system worth speaking of and with an appalling environmental record that will take tens of years and billions of Yuan (¥) to sort out.[18] China also faces some huge social problems, as its leaders readily concede. Getting rich quick may have produced results, but it has led to some fearsome income inequalities and regional disparities that pose a very serious threat to the kind of 'harmonious society' that the regime claims to be constructing.[19] Nor, it seems, will China be able to rely on the export-oriented economic model that has driven growth over the past two decades. As its trading partners in the West have made clear – with ever increasing sharpness since the onset of the economic crisis – they are no longer prepared to accept astronomically high trade deficits with China. In the USA, the mood is turning ugly against what many see as China's unfair economic practices.[20]

China remains a massive and, so far, a successful economic experiment that has delivered on its promises to make the state a more important player in the world. However, it is still a work in progress. Moreover, as serious Chinese analysts accept, while the USA might be in economic trouble right now, China is nowhere near catching up with it in per capita

[15] Bisley, N. 'Global power shift: the decline of the West and the rise of the rest' in Beeson, M. and N. Bisley (eds) Issues in 21st century world politics. *(New York: Palgrave, 2010) [ISBN 9780230594524] pp.66–80.*

[16] See Quinlan, J. 'The rise of the rest', E!Sharp, *July– August 2009.*

[17] 'The indispensable economy', The Economist, *30 October 2010, p.87.*

[18] Watts, J. When a billion Chinese jump: how China will save mankind – or destroy it. *(London: Faber and Faber, 2011) [ISBN 9780571239825].*

[19] Sang, L. 'The scale of China's economic impact', East Asia Forum, *23 February 2010.*

[20] Bendavid, N. 'China- bashing gains bipartisan support', The Wall Street Journal, *8 October 2010.*

terms any time soon.[21] Indeed, amid all the current speculation about US decline and its 'Roman moment' being past, we need to remember that the USA still has some pretty formidable advantages. As Carla Norrlof points out in America's global advantage, it is not the new China with its tight political controls, mass of cheap labour and undervalued currency which has the edge in structural terms. That advantage falls to the USA because of the size of its market, the per capita wealth of its people, and its control over world finance. As Norrlof points out, the fact that the USA can run such huge trade and fiscal deficits is not a sign of decline. Rather, she contends that this is an indication of US strength insofar as its friends and rivals all continue to buy up its debt without worrying much about an imminent financial collapse.[22]

E. China and the West

There are those who suggest another narrative. They point to major changes in the world economy following the 2008 financial crisis. Has the crisis led to a tipping point in the Sino-American relationship? Once more, we need to be wary. Some in China are feeling increasingly optimistic about their future. The Pew Research Centre recently claimed that the Chinese are the most optimistic people on earth. However, short-term optimism based on high levels of growth in a depressed world economy is hardly the same thing as an absolute shift in international power. As many sober voices in China point out, though it may be on the way up, their state has a vested interest in making sure that the West does not decline too far, too fast. As has been noted by cosmopolitan thinkers in Beijing and Shanghai, China's own success is bound up with continued Western (and US) prosperity. Without an economically dynamic West, they argue, China's own economic future must be in doubt.

There is also the question of currencies. The Chinese ¥ might look pretty with Chairman Mao's revolutionary image on it. Yet the US dollar and the much-maligned Euro remain the world's reserve currencies. Given the troubles in the US economy, why have US Treasury bills shown little sign of losing their allure? More generally, why has the Anglo-American economic model remained dominant internationally despite the terrible battering it has taken since 2008? Bankers may be hated and the rich might be oh-so-terribly embarrassed to be rich, but the neo-liberal economic model looks as secure as ever. As one seasoned analyst of the Asian scene has noted, 'obituaries' for US power, especially US economic model, have been written before and might again prove to be premature.[23]

Summary

Professor Cox questions the reality of China's rise to superpower status and the inevitability of American decline.

American and Western power are still rooted in their combined economic power and close transatlantic cooperation.

China's rise has been made more problematic by several structural weaknesses within the Chinese state, particularly its poor record of social welfare, environmental protection, and democratisation.

China's economic system is still based on exports to wealthy Western markets that it must work to maintain in order for its economic growth to remain sustainable.

[21] For a cross section of Chinese views about the world see the useful survey by British writer, Leonard, M. What does China think? (London: Fourth Estate, 2008) [ISBN 9780007230686].

[22] Norloff, C. America's global advantage: US hegemony and international cooperation. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) [ISBN 9780521749381].

[23] Higgott, R. 'Multipolarity and trans-Atlantic relations: normative approaches and practical limits of EU foreign policy', GARNET Working Paper 76(10), April 2010.

F. Hard and soft power

Before concluding our thoughts on shifting power within the international system, we should return to ideas of hard and soft power. Hard power is sometimes dismissed by those who insist that a man with an improvised explosive device (IED) trumps a fighter plane and that a suicide bomber in Kabul negates America's intercontinental military reach. These sorts of arguments ignore basic military realities. These show that in 2010, the USA spent nearly $700 billion on national security. This is 10 times more than its nearest allies – the UK and France – and fourteen times more than China. Nor is this asymmetry about to change any time soon. Future projections indicate that the USA will be the only major actor in the world capable of global military power projection for several decades to come. Iraq might have cost the USA dearly, but did not stop it from escalating the war in Afghanistan and by turning it into an almost entirely American operation involving 100,000 military personnel.[24]

What about the West's soft power? Isn't the West, after Iraq and War-On-Terror excesses, losing out on this count as well? Isn't China acquiring more and more influence while the USA and Europe languish? These points are valid, but risk overstatement. Despite the soft power disaster that was the 2003 Iraq War, it has only taken three years for Barack Obama to undo much of the damage done to the USA's global reputation.[25] While China continues to spread its economic largesse, few of its clients show much of an inclination to shift their interests permanently eastward. Moreover, China's own citizens do not think of it as a place to live and work when times get tough. China may trade and aid in ever increasing amounts. It can buy oil, coal, and food from an array of potential resource providers. Yet there are still only two great magnetic points of emigration for the desperate, the needy, and the talented of the world: the USA and Europe. Their continued appeal indicates that the West's soft power may not be as diminished as was once thought.

Nor can there be much of a long-term, international future in soft power terms for a state ruled by the largest communist party in history.[26] Much has been said recently about a 'crisis of democracy', predicting the rise of an authoritarian alternative. Yet no serious states in the world today – I think it reasonable not to include Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam – are ruled by communist parties. The tide of history is not moving in that direction. China might be run in ways that make it economically dynamic over the short term. It might even be the kind of system that most ordinary Chinese prefer to have. However, it has no international imitators. There is also no guarantee that China's political systems will remain stable. Liberals are wrong to argue that capitalism requires democracy to flourish – capitalism did mighty well in the nineteenth century without elections or votes for the working classes. But one does not have to be a liberal to suggest that over time the Chinese model – with all its inherent problems – might easily become politically unsustainable as its citizens try to convert their increasing wealth into increasing social and political influence.

G. Geopolitical shift?

This leads us back to the language of geopolitics. Precisely what is it that we mean by a 'power shift' and how should we think about the West? If we take the notion of the West to mean the Transatlantic region – incorporating the USA and the EU – then it is reasonable to suggest that states and actors outside this 'golden circle' might be keen to knock on the door. However, we would do well to remember that the principles and behaviours that define membership in the international community were

[24] Woodward, B. Obama's wars: the inside story. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010) [ISBN 9781849832205].

[25] On how well Obama has done in restoring US standing in Europe, see 'Transatlantic trends: key findings 2010', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, http://trends.gmfus.org/ transatlantic-trends/ press-information/

[26] Parmar, I and M. Cox (eds) Soft power and US foreign policy: theoretical, historical and contemporary perspectives. (London: Routledge, 2010) [ISBN 9780415492041].

designed by state and non-state actors from Europe and its settler colonies – the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The door through which new entrants to international society pass has the word 'West' carved on it. When new entrants get inside, they tend to emulate the behaviour of those already sitting around the table – copying rather than replacing the Western principles and behaviours that constitute modern international society.

As for China's peaceful rise, the Chinese themselves seem to understand the realities of world politics better than most Western commentators. Like any emerging power operating in a Western-designed and dominated system, they seek more influence and more power. Thus far, however, the Chinese – as opposed to some of its own commentators – have remained cautious. China, they contend, has risen for two reasons: its abandonment of Maoism (despite keeping Mao's face on the currency); and its largely amicable relationships with its most important trading partner: the USA. Beijing and Washington both know this all too well and neither has any reason to dissolve one of the most successful economic partnerships of the past 40 years.

For China in particular, any move to balance the power of the USA or challenge the world economy that has underwritten 35 years of record economic growth would be catastrophic. It would not only damage China's prospects at home by severely constraining its export-led economy, but could unite a still-powerful West against it. Such moves could also scare a number of other powerful states in the region, including India, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Unlike the USA, which is security rich in terms of it geography, China is surrounded by potential rivals and rogues. It shares land borders with Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and North Korea. At sea, it currently has territorial disputes with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan, while the issue of Taiwanese independence continues to destabilise regional and global relationships. India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan might be thousands of miles away from the USA, but as functioning market democracies whose security needs are intimately entwined, they would soon run to Washington for cover if Beijing were to pose a serious challenge to the status quo. Indeed, if China were to break from the peaceful foreign policy it has been pursuing in order to contest US power, the world would likely be unforgiving (and none more so than the Americans). The reason for this may be as simple as the fact that while China's neighbours live in the East, they do not necessarily view themselves as 'eastern' in the same way that Americans and Europeans feel 'western'. For them, geography is not fate. Their interactions with China need not be predetermined by where they are located on a map of the world.

Summary

- America maintains an absolute hard power advantage over its closest rivals, including China.

- The USA and the West also maintain high levels of soft power insofar as their liberal political and economic systems attract admiration and imitation from actors around the world.

- International society is still defined by norms, rules and practices that have been created and maintained by Western actors.

- China has been forced to adapt to the existing global economic system and therefore has a vested interest in the maintenance of it dominant actors and behaviours.

⏩ **Stop and review the main theories of international relations:**

    Introduction, BSO, pp.3–6. You may stop reading after the subsection titled 'Social Constructivism'.

Activity

Now that you have read Professor Cox's views on the changing distribution of power in international society, consider his points from different theoretical perspectives. In the spaces below, explain how each of the following passages relates to its associated IR theory. Once you have completed each entry, highlight passages in the article that also speak to the theory in question. We recommend using different highlighters or pens to indicate each of the six theories that follow. If you choose to highlight the sections using a PDF reader, post your highlighted texts onto the VLE discussion forum so that your peers can assess your work.

1. Liberal Institutionalism

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of Liberal Institutionalism?

    Section G: 'For China in particular, any move to balance the power of the USA or challenge the world economy that has underwritten 35 years of record economic growth would be catastrophic. It would not only damage China's prospects at home by severely constraining its export-led economy, but could unite a still-powerful West against it.'

2. Structural Realism

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of Structural Realism?

    Section F: '…in 2010, the USA spent nearly $700 billion on national security. This is 10 times more than its nearest allies – the UK and France – and fourteen times more than China. Nor is this asymmetry about to change any time soon. Future projections indicate that the USA will be the only major actor in the world capable of global military power projection for several decades to come.'

3. Marxism

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of Marxism?

    Section C: '…other economic powers, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), seem hot on its heels. However, they remain a long way behind the USA, whose gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 was still light years ahead of the rest ($14 trillion compared to China's $8.8 trillion) and whose nearest economic competitor – with a combined GDP of just less than $14 trillion – turns out to be another member of the fading West: the EU.'

4. Social Constructivism

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of Social Constructivism?

> Section B: 'The USA, fearing that it may be in decline, appears increasingly defensive. One manifestation of this is its increasingly tough attitude towards China, supported by a growing clamour among conservatives at home to do something about that supposedly "communist state" across the Pacific. Realists will no doubt argue that this is the necessary consequence of a real and measureable shift in power. However, it might just as easily be suggested that rising tensions are social constructions built on the basis of a very premature reading of international trends.'

5. The English School

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of the English School?

> Section G: '…we would do well to remember that the principles and behaviours that define membership in the international community were designed by state and non-state actors from Europe and its settler colonies – the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The door through which new entrants to international society pass has the word "West" carved on it.'

6. IPE (international political economy)

How does the following passage reflect the main ideas of IPE?

> Section E: 'The Chinese ¥ might look pretty with Chairman Mao's revolutionary image on it. Yet the US dollar and the much-maligned Euro remain the world's reserve currencies.'

Conclusion

Professor Cox's article has given you a broad overview of some of the issues surrounding the rise of China through the ranks of international society. It has explained some sources of Chinese power, it has identified some of the advantages held by America and the West, and it has presented its own assessment of the likely future of international society over the coming years. How you react to Professor Cox's conclusions depends very much on the theoretical point of view from which you approach them. Do shifts in the global distribution of power necessarily

mean that conflict is on its way? Will the economic interdependence linking China to the world economy deter aggressive acts by either side? Do the parties' economic links betray collusion between the American and Chinese bourgeoisies? Is the future direction of the Sino-American relationship going to be shaped primarily by the way in which each party perceives the other? Do the norms, rules and practices of international society provide enough order to tame the potentially chaotic nature of our anarchic international society? Are political relationships a function of the economic links that bind the major players? Each of these questions provides a different view of the Sino-American relationship and its likely impact on the future of international relations. Each is instructive in its own right, but only presents one facet of our almost infinitely complex international society. It is only when we consider them together that we can hope to achieve something approaching a full understanding of the world around us.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by the 'rise of the East'
- assess the advantages of the West's position in international society
- describe some of the constraints facing Asia's rising powers
- analyse arguments for and against a state-centric vision of the future of international society.

Chapter overview

- Most contemporary IR literature combines different issues and theoretical viewpoints with a historical narrative to produce a single piece of IR analysis.
- Untangling these issues and viewpoints can help you to gain a wider and deeper understanding of pressing issues in IR.
- There is a widespread belief that power in international society is shifting from the Western world (especially the United States) to Asia (especially China), potentially upsetting society's current polarity.
- Although economic power is shifting eastward, the West and the USA have several other sources of power that China and Asian powers do not.
- Professor Cox questions the reality of China's rise to superpower status and the inevitability of American decline.
- American and Western power are still rooted in their combined economic power and close transatlantic cooperation.
- China's rise has been made more problematic by several structural weaknesses within the Chinese state, particularly its poor record of social welfare, environmental protection, and democratisation.
- China's economic system is still based on exports to wealthy Western markets that China must work to maintain in order for its economic growth to remain sustainable.
- America maintains an absolute hard power advantage over its closest rivals, including China.
- The USA and the West also maintain high levels of soft power insofar

as their liberal political and economic systems attract admiration and imitation from actors around the world.

- International society is still defined by norms, rules and practices that have been created and maintained by Western actors.

- China has been forced to adapt to the existing global economic system and therefore has a vested interest in the maintenance of it dominant actors and behaviours.

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Are the economic links between China and the United States enough to forestall any military confrontation between them?

2. How are Sino-American relations affected by the anarchic international society in which the two states coexist?

3. To what extent are Sino-American relations a product of each state's perception of the other?

Notes

Chapter 19: China rising II – analysing the East and South China seas

> A boat cannot always sail with the wind; an army cannot always win battles.
>
> *Chinese proverb*

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- use a range of IR theories to categorise the states, nations and countries of East Asia and the Pacific
- characterise the institutions of East Asia's regional international society
- apply concepts from earlier chapters to analyse the causes of and solutions to territorial disputes in the East and South China seas.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- identify the main states, nations and countries of East Asia and the Pacific
- describe some of the norms, rules and practices that define the region's international society
- use Realist, Liberal and Marxist arguments to analyse the most likely course of events in the East and South China seas.

Essential reading

Medcalfe, R. and R. Heinrichs 'Crisis and confidence: major powers and maritime security in Indo-Pacific Asia', Report, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 20 June 2011. (This report is available in pdf format on the VLE.)

Xiang, L. 'China and the "Pivot"', *Survival* 54(5) October–November 2012, pp.113–28. (This article is available in pdf format on the VLE.)

Chapter synopsis

- China's increasing hard and soft power capabilities have resulted in a more assertive tone in the territorial disputes along its maritime borders in the East and South China seas.
- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean constitute a region of 31 sovereign states and over a dozen other non-self-governing territories and de facto states.
- East Asian and Pacific international society is dominated by a few great powers: China, Japan and the USA. Other states constitute middle or small powers.
- The middle and small powers of Southeast Asia have allied with one another through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean are home to scores of nationalities that have been influenced by many of the world's major cultures: China, India, the Islamic world, Europe and the indigenous peoples of Australasia.

- East Asia and the Pacific are as geographically varied as they are multicultural and sit squarely on the tectonically active 'Ring of Fire'.

- The international society of East Asia is increasingly defined by competition between the great powers of the region, moving it away from the Liberal ideal of interdependence and towards the Realist model of statist self-help and survival.

- According to Alexander Wendt's model of international societies, those of East Asia increasingly resembles the 'Hobbesian' archetype. Other parts of East Asia and the Pacific have adopted more 'Lockean' styles of interaction.

- Despite the statist policies of several East Asian states, the wider region faces transnational threats, such as climate change, which require interstate cooperation and pose an existential threat to many island and coastal states.

Introduction

East Asia and the Pacific constitute a region of rapidly growing importance in IR. This is due in no small part due to China's growing presence in the area, which is putting pressure on the region's existing security regime. As you saw in Chapter 18 of this subject guide, China's increasing power on the world stage has many observers concerned for the stability of international society. Those who follow in the footsteps of A.F. Organski worry that a changing distribution of power may lead to conflict between the USA – whose relative power is on the wane – and China – whose relative power is increasing. Other commentators, like Professor Michael Cox himself, are less concerned. They point to the absolute power advantage of the United States Armed Forces over their Chinese counterparts, as well as the USA's global network of security alliances and its significant 'soft power' capabilities.

This chapter will ask you to turn your attention to a specific issue arising from China's increasing hard and soft power by using the lessons of the past 18 chapters of this subject guide to analyse territorial disputes between China and its neighbours in the East and South China seas. What is driving the disputes? What can different IR theories teach us about their causes and current conditions? What prescriptions might help alleviate tension and even resolve them? Before you tackle these questions, it is worth taking a moment to look at the regional context in which these disputes are playing out. This requires four steps. First, you will be introduced to the states, nations and countries of East Asia and the Pacific. This introduction will be brief and will only touch on the region in the most general terms. You will then turn your attention to the region's international society, including some of the norms, rules and practices that define it today.

States

East Asia and the Pacific Ocean constitute a region that stretches almost halfway around the globe. It covers a vast area: from the northern borders of Mongolia to the southern ocean around Antarctica, and from the western borders of China and Myanmar to its eastern boundaries around

Hawaii and Easter Island. This geographical space includes 31 fully sovereign states that range in size from China (over 9.7 million km^2 and 1.3 billion people) to Vanuatu (21 km^2 and 9,300 people). It also includes more than a dozen non-self-governing territories ruled by the USA, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Chile. The island of Taiwan is a complicated case. Its uncertain international status makes it a de facto state – a government that controls a defined territory with a permanent population, but has not achieved widespread recognition of its sovereign independence from the other states of the world. Taiwan – claimed as a province by the People's Republic of China – fulfils three of the four characteristics identified by the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, lacking only the ability to engage in regular diplomatic relations with other sovereign states. You may wish to review these characteristics, which are listed in Chapter 12 of this subject guide.

Among the region's 31 sovereign states – called *de jure* states (states in law) to differentiate them from de facto states like Taiwan – there is a wide gulf between those with significant hard and soft power capabilities and those with little of either. The most influential states in the region today are the USA, one of whose constituent territories, Hawaii, is located in the Central Pacific; and the People's Republic of China (PRC), which possesses the largest military, population and economy in the region and is widely viewed as an emerging power that will soon rival the USA on the global stage. The USA and China are two of three powers in East Asia with nuclear arms – along with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). As indicated above, China considers the island of Taiwan to be an integral part of its territory. Japan is another powerful unit in both hard and soft power terms. It has a technologically advanced economy, a powerful military called the Japanese Self-Defence Force and a vibrant culture with global influence. Japan is also a close strategic ally of the USA, which has a number of military bases on Japanese territory. Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia are major resource producers in the global commodities market, making them second-tier powers in the region. The tiny city-state of Singapore is an interesting case insofar as its advanced trading economy and strategic position make it a major player in terms of soft power but a minor one in military terms. Other states such as New Zealand and the Philippines hold lesser, but still important, positions in this regional international society. Finally, no discussion of states in East Asia and the Pacific would be complete without mentioning North and South Korea, officially the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Divided between Soviet and US occupation forces after the Second World War, the Communist North and capitalist South engaged in a bloody war between 1950 and 1953 that drew in armies from China, the USA and a number of other United Nations member states. They have never signed a formal peace treaty, and continue to actively patrol their shared border – the most heavily fortified and armed political boundary on the planet. North Korea is an ally of China, while South Korea remains a key member of the US system of alliances.

Other states in the region hold lesser positions. The states of Southeast Asia, though far from unimportant, rarely project hard or soft power beyond their borders. Perceived threats following the rise of China since the 1980s have spurred them on to increasingly cooperate in economic and social matters through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and may even lead to political and military cooperation in the

future to maintain a balance of power in the face of potential Chinese hegemony. This is particularly true in the South China Sea, where China claims sovereignty over the many tiny islands and reefs that lie directly off the shores of Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines. The tiny island states of the Pacific hold a dependent position in the region. With little hard or soft power at their disposal, they are highly susceptible to pressure from their more powerful neighbours and from the international societies to which they belong. Many Pacific islands remain non-self-governing possessions of former colonial powers. Others are signatories to security agreements with one or more Western powers – normally the United States, Australia, New Zealand or France.

Nations

Whereas other regions of the world are easily characterised by their religious and linguistic divisions, the cultural complexity of East Asia and the Pacific makes this nearly impossible. In religious terms, the region has significant Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Confucian, Taoist, Shinto and Hindu populations. In terms of their culture and history, the populations of East Asia and the Pacific can be divided into four broad categories. Most of modern China, the Koreas, Mongolia and Taiwan share a common cultural history shaped by the dominant influence of Chinese civilisation. Though significant differences persist, the populations of these four states have interacted with one another for several millennia. Southeast Asia and Japan have each been heavily influenced by Chinese culture. In Japan, a distinct culture evolved around the Shinto religion and the Japanese language. In Southeast Asia, rival influences from India combined with Chinese and local traditions to create Buddhist cultures that today extend as far south as Malaysia. Malaysia and Indonesia, meanwhile, are part of the global Islamic community – the Ummah – thanks to Muslim dominance in the Indian Ocean prior to European intervention from the 16th century onwards. Australia and New Zealand are immigrant societies dominated by populations of European origin. Both states are also home to increasingly influential indigenous populations. Finally, the Pacific Islands are home to three great sea-faring cultures: Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians. In short, the region that includes East Asia and the Pacific is one of the most diverse in the world and resists attempts at simple characterisation.

Summary

- China's increasing hard and soft power capabilities have resulted in a more assertive tone in the territorial disputes along its maritime borders in the East and South China seas.

- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean constitute a region of 31 sovereign states and over a dozen other non-self-governing territories and de facto states.

- East Asian and Pacific international society is dominated by a few great powers: China, Japan and the USA. Other states constitute middle or small powers.

- The middle and small powers of Southeast Asia have allied with one another through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean are home to scores of nationalities that have been influenced by many of the world's major cultures: China, India, the Islamic world, Europe and the indigenous peoples of Australasia.

Countries

East Asia and the Pacific are as geographically varied as they are culturally diverse. The region is home to many important ecosystems, including the Gobi Desert in China and Mongolia, the Tibetan Plateau, the coral atolls and volcanic islands of the Pacific, the Great Barrier Reef off Australia's west coast, and a broad swathe of tropical rainforest that stretches from Myanmar in the east to Polynesia in the west. A number of important seas and shipping lanes dot the western shore of the Pacific Ocean. From north to south, these include the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca, Sunda Strait, and the Timor Sea. A quick look at the world map on the VLE will show you how confined the seas around China's east coast actually are – restricted by strategic choke points around Japan, Taiwan and the South China Sea. As we will discuss shortly, territorial claims to these seas and to the resources beneath their surface are strong sources of friction among the states of the region.

East Asia and the Pacific is a region of significant geological activity thanks to its position on the 'Ring of Fire' that marks the outer edges of the Pacific Ocean's tectonic plate. As this plate sinks beneath the landmasses that border it, friction and heat build up beneath the Earth's crust, leading to frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, from Japan to Indonesia and New Zealand. The 2010 and 2014 tsunamis were both caused by this geological activity, which interacted with the ocean to produce waves of tremendous size and destructive capabilities. Rivers have also played an important role in the history of East Asia. Two – the Yangtze and the Yellow – were vital to the development of Chinese civilisation in the third millennium BCE. The Mekong River is another important waterway, linking China, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Finally, the island chains of Oceania can be categorised according to the three sea-faring cultures that populated them: Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia.

East Asian and Pacific international society

Over the past 18 chapters, you have been introduced to some of the institutions that regulate actors' behaviour in the world's anarchic international society. One of these – sovereignty – has been particularly important as a principle in interstate relations in East Asia and the Pacific. As you saw in Chapter 12 of this subject guide, sovereignty is defined as a state's possession of international autonomy and domestic hegemony. Sovereignty helps us to identify who is a state in international law and how states should act towards one another. As indicated in Chapter 6, the influence of an institution over state behaviour is affected by a combination of factors. These include a state's power to resist international pressure and international society's ability to bring power to bear on states that violate its norms, rules and practices. Whether you are discussing resistance to or enforcement of an international institution, power can be defined in hard or soft terms. As noted in Part 2 of this subject guide, the institutions of international society change over time. This evolution is influenced by all international units, although those with significant hard and soft power will exercise greater influence than their weaker neighbours.

This brings us to our description of international society in East Asia and the Pacific – a region with at least three major state powers: China, Japan and the USA. Beyond its great powers, it is also home to a number of second-tier powers such as Indonesia, Australia, South Korea and Malaysia; and to many much smaller and less influential states. As you might expect, the most powerful states in this region tend to have the greatest influence

on its international society. Since 1945, the US Navy has given Washington a hegemonic position in the Pacific Ocean. The relative stability of the past three decades may support the idea that an international society is most secure when a single unit can dictate the terms by which other states and non-state units interact. This idea was introduced in Chapter 2 of this subject guide as hegemonic stability theory. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union left the USA as the only superpower in the world and the undisputed champion of East Asia and the Pacific. Superpowers are a rarity in IR. They are able to project their power – hard and soft – into every region of the globe, allowing them to dominate regions far from their domestic populations and territories. The USA's key role in Pacific defence is indicative of its superpower status, making it central in a system of security alliances that includes Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and – informally – Taiwan. It uses these alliances, as well as the hard and soft power capabilities based in Hawaii, to project its power across the Pacific Ocean, making it a key actor in both the Pacific Ocean and along the coast of East Asia. This has allowed the USA to enforce its version of sovereignty in the region. For example, this includes a definition of territoriality that permits maritime surveillance in a state's exclusive economic zone – a 200 nautical mile zone off each state's coastline over which it has significant powers of sovereign control. As you will see in the readings that follow, this definition is now being questioned by the People's Republic of China – the region's fastest growing state actor and the USA's only real competitor for hegemony in the region.

China and Japan – the two most powerful states based in East Asia itself – are not superpowers insofar as they cannot project their influence into every region of the globe. They are, however, great powers in East Asia. China also has growing influence in Africa and parts of Southwest Asia, while Japan's soft power affects culture and economics in Europe and the Americas. They are regional powers, able to affect the norms, rules and practices of international society in their home region but not possessing a superpower's global reach. China may be moving into superpower status, though analysts like Professor Michael Cox advise caution before jumping to conclusions. China's rapidly growing economy and military certainly support the idea. However, China also has many territorial disputes with neighbouring states and lacks powerful allies on the international stage. Without allies willing to support its interpretation of sovereignty, China has a difficult time exercising true global influence. It lacks the soft power to rally support, reducing its influence on the constitutive and regulative rules of international society. Some of this is due to Beijing's unwillingness to cooperate with other states over their territorial disputes in the East and South China seas. This has helped to create an atmosphere of competition in East Asia, making the region's international society less about mutual aid than 'self-help'. The growing importance of norms, rules and practices associated with nationalism reinforces this tendency in the region, creating an international society in which states are increasingly encouraged to seek their own advantage at their neighbours' expense rather than by cooperating in pursuit of shared goals. As East Asian regional powers grow in influence, nationalism is likely to become more important as an institution of East Asian and Pacific international society. Their rise may also undermine whatever remains of the hegemonic stability imposed by Washington since the end of the Second World War. If Alexander Wendt is right that 'anarchy is what states make of it', then the states of East Asia may be pushing their international society away from the Liberal ideal of cooperation and regime-building, towards a Realist model of competition and survival.

Summary

- East Asia and the Pacific are as geographically varied as they are multicultural and sit squarely on the tectonically active 'Ring of Fire'.

- The international society of East Asia and the Pacific is increasingly defined by competition between the great powers of the region, moving it away from the Liberal ideal of interdependence and towards the Realist model of statist self-help and survival.

▶▶ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 10, Box 10.1.

Activity

Note the three cultures of anarchy described by Alexander Wendt.

East Asia and the Pacific: Kant, Locke and Hobbes

This chapter returns to one of IR's central questions: what is security and how is it best achieved? For most of the past century, international security has been defined as the absence of war between states, implying a general sense of stability in the international society they inhabit. This can be contrasted with human security, discussed in Chapter 17, whose definition includes a much wider range of economic, cultural and ecological concerns. The Hobbesian constitution of East Asian international society means that the former definition takes precedence over the latter, and the security of states takes precedence over the security of persons. However, as Alexander Wendt and Constructivists hint, the region's anarchic international society need not be Hobbesian. Other possibilities exist, should the states of East Asia decide to adopt them.

International society in East Asia and the Pacific is undergoing rapid, large-scale transformations. From the rise of China to North Korea's nuclear ambitions to the many territorial boundary disputes surrounding the islands of the South and East China Sea, these changes risk upsetting the security regimes that have kept the region relatively stable since the end of the Cold War. Interestingly, this regime is not centred on one of East Asia's regional powers nor on one of the Pacific's small island states. Instead, the USA – a Pacific but not an Asian actor – continues to be central to the region's security architecture. It has accomplished this feat through alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam – alliances that help the world's last remaining superpower project its influence onto the western shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Whatever your views on the future of international security in East Asia and the Pacific, it is important to note that different trends appear to be developing in different parts of the region. The Pacific Islands – small and relatively weak – face no significant military threats but certainly face potential environmental disaster. For states whose territories rarely rise more than 100 metres above sea level, climate change and rising sea levels pose an existential threat. In the face of this, island states are cooperating to pursue carbon emission reductions both regionally and globally as part of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS). These actors have sought security in numbers by coordinating their foreign policies. In the process, they have created an almost Kantian international society, in which states assume that disputes will be settled without violence and they will work as a team in pursuit of shared goals.

In Southeast Asia – home to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – states have constructed Lockean regimes to coordinate their

economic, political and cultural activities. Though less integrated than similar regimes in Europe, ASEAN's success over the past five decades shows that Asia need not be an international society in which states compete for survival in a zero-sum game. Cooperation rather than conflict is possible if states choose to pursue absolute gains together. They may not be fast friends, but at least they are not enemies.

East Asia remains the least integrated area within the larger East Asia-Pacific region. The states that inhabit it – Mongolia, China, North and South Korea, Japan and (unofficially) Taiwan – have much more tense interactions than do their Pacific and Southeast Asian neighbours. In pursuing their own individual security, East Asian states have made their neighbourhood increasingly insecure and competitive, illustrating the potential conflict between states' own pursuit of security through unilateral action and the stability of the international society they inhabit. Through a combination of factors, they have chosen a Hobbesian form of international society, in which anarchy is interpreted as a 'war of all against all' and interstate competition is the norm.

Summary

- According to Alexander Wendt's model of international societies, that of East Asia increasingly resembles the 'Hobbesian' archetype. Other parts of East Asia and the Pacific have adopted more 'Lockean' styles of interaction.

- Despite the statist policies of several East Asian states, the wider region faces transnational threats, such as climate change, which require interstate cooperation and pose an existential threat to many island and coastal states.

Disputes in the East and South China seas

East Asia's Hobbesian international society has troubling implications for the solution of its territorial disputes. As you will see in the readings that follow, the region's competitive norms, rules and practices have created heightened tensions between its state actors. These have resulted in a series of disturbing incidents that – if left to fester – could escalate into a political or military crisis. But hope springs eternal. States can change their perceptions for the better, encouraging new forms of coordination and cooperation that build trust between them and create avenues of escape from Realism's security dilemma. How states might go about this and what obstacles stand in their way, is the topic of the Essential reading that follows.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: Medcalfe and Heinrichs (2011) Prologue, pp.6–9 and Chapter 1, pp.14–25.

Activity

Answer the questions below by using the language and concepts of Realism, Liberalism and internationl political economy (IPE) to analyse the reading.

- To what extent has East Asia fallen victim to the security dilemma described by Kenneth Waltz and Structural Realism?

- What steps might be taken to build a new security regime in East Asia that could reassure China and its neighbours that their core national interests are secure?

- Which of IPE's three main approaches best represents China's view that its sea-borne oil imports can only be protected through unilateral military action?

⏩ **Stop and read**: Xiang (2012) pp.113–20.

Activity

Answer the questions below by using the language and concepts of Constructivism and the English School to analyse the reading.

1. How did the USA's 'pivot to Asia' affect Chinese perceptions of US foreign policy in East Asia? What effect did this have on Chinese policy in the region?

2. Like European international society before the First World War, East Asia is characterised by high levels of interstate competition and conflict. Would a return to traditional Westphalian international institutions – sovereignty, non-intervention and territorial integrity – help the states involved successfully manage tensions in the East and South China Seas?

Conclusion

This chapter has given you the opportunity to apply the lessons of the past 18 chapters to analyse the territorial disputes currently disrupting peaceful political relations in the East and South China seas. As you have now seen, the theories covered in Part 3 of this subject guide have different uses when it comes to international analysis. Realism – particularly Structural Realism – is well suited to analyses of interstate arms racing and crisis escalation. It highlights states' acquisition and use of power on the international stage, particularly instances in which they protect their interests through self-help strategies that eschew multilateralism in favour of unilateral – and often military – action. Liberalism has a different analytical purpose that focuses on routes out of the security dilemma through regime building. These help to build trust between international actors, reducing the mutual suspicion that is driving the security dilemma and is contributing to the highly charged territorial disputes underway around the Spratlay, Paracel and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. International political economy (IPE) helps us to frame China's mercantilist view that its maritime trade requires unilateral military protection – even if this means alienating other regional actors like India. As constitutive theories, Constructivism and the English School can help us to understand how East Asia's Hobbesian international society came into being and whether or not a given set of norms, rules and practices – English School institutions – can help the states of the region manage their interactions to minimise conflict. The English School in particular may be able to identify similar international societies in world history and use their experiences to recommend policy options to manage territorial and political disputes in modern East Asia.

The main lesson to be drawn from this exercise in international analysis is that different IR theories perform different tasks. Some identify the immediate causes of an international conflict. Some recommend solutions. Others highlight ways in which the constitution of international society contributes to a Hobbesian form of anarchy. Still others can draw on a range of historical parallels to suggest norms, rules and practices to manage a given international situation. International relations is about more than one theory being correct at the expense of the others. Analysis is not a zero-sum game.

Chapter overview

- China's increasing hard and soft power capabilities have resulted in a more assertive tone in the territorial disputes along its maritime borders in the East and South China seas.

- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean constitute a region of 31 sovereign states and over a dozen other non-self-governing territories and de facto states.

- East Asian and Pacific international society is dominated by a few great powers: China, Japan and the USA. Other states constitute middle or small powers.

- The middle and small powers of Southeast Asia have allied with one another through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

- East Asia and the Pacific Ocean are home to scores of nationalities that have been influenced by many of the world's major cultures: China, India, the Islamic world, Europe and the indigenous peoples of Australasia.

- East Asia and the Pacific are as geographically varied as they are multicultural and sit squarely on the tectonically active 'Ring of Fire'.

- The international society of East Asia is increasingly defined by competition between the great powers of the region, moving it away from the Liberal ideal of interdependence and towards the Realist model of statist self-help and survival.

- According to Alexander Wendt's model of international societies, that of East Asia increasingly resembles the 'Hobbesian' archetype. Other parts of East Asia and the Pacific have adopted more 'Lockean' styles of interaction.

- Despite the statist policies of several East Asian states, the wider region faces transnational threats, such as climate change, which require interstate cooperation and pose an existential threat to many island and coastal states.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed the Essential readings and activities for this chapter, you should be able to:

- identify the main states, nations and countries of East Asia and the Pacific,

- describe some of the norms, rules and practices that define the region's international society,

- use Realist, Liberal, and Marxist arguments to analyse the most likely course of events in the East and South China seas.

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. 'Realism and Liberalism form a natural partnership in international analysis. One identifies a problem, and the other identifies its solution.' Respond.

2. Is East Asian international society a socially constructed Hobbesian anarchy?

Chapter 20: Analysing the international order

'History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes.'

Mark Twain

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- introduce and explain the difficulties implicit in international analysis and prediction
- consider eight different forms of order that describe international society today
- familiarise you with the general process of international analysis.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section, and having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and contrast the eight varieties of order that describe international society today
- utilise IR theories and concepts to analyse ongoing international and transnational issues, with an eye to their future impact on IR.

Essential reading

Clark, I. 'Globalization and the post-Cold War order' in BSO, Chapter 33.

Works cited

McGrew, A. 'Globalization and global politics' in Baylis, J., S. Smith and P. Owens *The globalization of world politics.* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014) 6th edition; p.16.

Chapter synopsis

- Prediction is an imprecise business in the social sciences thanks to the self-awareness of our objects of study: human beings.
- Failures of prediction provide opportunities to assess and correct faults in our theories – an opportunity that IR took advantage of after the end of the Cold War.
- Given IR's tendency to evolve new units and institutions out of existing models, a clear understanding of its present shape is the first step towards assessing the future shape of international society.
- It is possible to identify at least eight different types of international order today, each describing a different aspect of the complex world of IR.
- The first order describes the world (as we have done throughout this course) as an international society composed of collective actors whose interactions are regulated by common institutions.

- The second describes a world of interacting nations whose boundaries may or may not align with those of the states who claim jurisdiction over them – challenging citizens' loyalties and states' territorial integrity.

- The third describes a world in which states pursue their survival through self-help in an international society defined by anarchy and distrust.

- The fourth describes a world in which economic actors vie for control of markets and resources, using states as tools in their quest for economic power.

- The fifth describes a world in which interdependent units build regimes that allow them to coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of shared goals and interests.

- The sixth describes a world in which regional interactions are defining features of IR, with different regions adopting different rules of behaviour.

- The seventh describes a world in which individuals seek and defend their rights and human security against state and non-state actors that may wish to curtail them.

- The eighth describes a world that is divided into a politically and socio-economically developed 'North' and a politically and socio-economically developing 'South', with the former holding structural power over the latter.

- Each facet of contemporary IR will either be reinforced or diminished by the evolution of international society. Assessing which order will flourish and which will wither is one way to predict the future shape of any given issue in IR.

Introduction

This course has spent a lot of time studying the past and present of international relations. Now it is time to turn to the future. There are few things more amusing than a social scientist trying to make predictions. Unlike the natural sciences – chemistry, physics, biology and so on – the objects that we study are universally uncooperative. When a chemist predicts which chemicals will result from a given reaction, the chemicals rarely take any notice of the scientist's predictions. They go about their business, producing the same sets of matter and energy as they have in every other example of the reaction. We in international relations are not so fortunate. Our objects of study are humans and the collective actors that humans create. Unlike a chemical reaction, humans act in ways that are rarely predictable or repeatable. Humans and human systems can be thrown off by the smallest environmental change. Even the act of prediction can change their behaviour, causing them to change their decisions and thereby change the outcome of any given action. Such is the sorry lot of the social scientist.

That being said, prediction is fun. Sometimes it is even productive. By studying the past and present, we can make reasonable guesses about the future direction of a given international society. If the object of our study does not perform as expected, we can take the opportunity to find out which conditions made it diverge from its expected course. This can be highly instructive, teaching us important lessons about the strengths and weaknesses of the models we use to understand the world. This was certainly the case at the end of the Cold War, when the then-dominant

schools of IR – Structural Realism and Liberalism – spectacularly failed to foresee the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union. Instead of moping off sullenly into the night, international relations took advantage of this failure to learn new lessons, developing new theories to account for its earlier shortcomings. Constructivism, international political economy (IPE) and a renewed interest in the English School and Marxism were the happy result. This has enriched the study of IR, making it better suited to the issues of the post-Cold War world. Failure, it turns out, is not the end. It is just one more step on the path to knowledge.

With this caveat in mind, it is time to turn your hand to some prediction. What is the likely course of international society over the coming years and decades? What kinds of international order are likely to emerge? Answering these questions will require all the tools you have learned to use over the preceding chapters of this subject guide. It will require you to characterise the present international order, its units, its interactions, and the norms, rules and practices that govern them. It will require you to think about different forms of order and assess the likelihood of their emergence on the world stage. Finally, it will require you to be humble. After all, your conclusions will most likely be wrong. However, so long as you approach them with an open mind, you can learn from your mistakes and maybe – just maybe – manage a quick peek into our collective future.

Summary

- Prediction is an imprecise business in the social sciences thanks to the self-awareness of our objects of study: human beings.
- Failures of prediction provide opportunities to assess and correct faults in our theories – an opportunity that IR took advantage of after the end of the Cold War.

The international order today

As you will see in the Essential readings that follow, it is difficult to identify the most important characteristics of the present international order. Unlike its predecessors, we do not how the present order will 'end', which of its characteristics will endure, and what form of order will succeed it. It is much easier to characterise historical orders – whose ends and successors are known to us. However, by comparing the relationship of our present order with those that came before, we can draw some general conclusions about its key norms, rules and practices.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Sections 1–2, pp.514–15.

Before moving on to consider different varieties of order in the world – and which varieties are likely to persist into the next 'age' of international relations – take another look at BSO, Table 33.1, p.515. Note that each type of order it defines includes a different mix of units and characteristics. Two – a globalised order and a world order – present visions of IR that are radically different from what has come before. They foresee the withering of sovereign states as the primary actors in international society, undermining any remaining statist assumptions about the priorities of IR – national security, national interest and sovereignty. These types of international order are not impossible to contemplate, particularly given the pattern of globalisation identified in Chapter 5 of this subject guide. However, a note of caution is in order. Even examples of extreme discontinuity in the history of IR contain elements of continuity – with units, norms, rules and practices bridging the gap between one era and the next. This is evident in the leap from the Cold War to the post-Cold War

world illustrated in BSO, Box 33.1. It is difficult to think of a time when all of the main features of international society have been abandoned in favour of new ones. More often, existing units, norms, rules and practices evolve from earlier forms.

Eight perspectives on the international order

Much of the discussion in the past 19 chapters has revolved around a fundamental tension between the national interests of the world's sovereign states and the norms, rules and practices of international society. It has made itself felt through the process of globalisation – loosely defined in Chapter 5 of this subject guide as 'the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness'.[1] Globalisation has altered the way in which states interact on the global stage. It has opened up space for non-state actors and individuals to take part in IR – a subject that has traditionally been deeply statist. Globalisation is changing the issues of most interest to IR: from the merits of humanitarian intervention in the domestic affairs of failed states to the best strategy to fight terrorism and international criminals in our anarchic international system. Other tensions also exist, such as the deep divide that separates states and nations in the economically developed North from the much less developed states and nations of the global South. Many of these issues are caused or exacerbated by the global system of production and exchange that Marxists refer to as the world capitalist system. This system tends to concentrate economic power in a few hands, giving certain regions, states and individuals a dominant voice when it comes to designing and managing global institutions and regimes. There is no doubt that these tensions make the world a more complicated place. They also make it more comprehensible. By looking at them carefully, it is possible to identify eight elements that combine to make up our current international order – elements that you can use to understand and analyse a wide range of issues. Think of them as eight different ways of looking at the world in which we live. Each can be used to produce a slightly different image of reality, deepening your understanding of any international issue you choose to analyse.

[1] McGrew (2014) p.16.

Summary

- Given IR's tendency to evolve new units and institutions out of existing models, a clear understanding of its present shape is the first step towards assessing the future shape of international society.

- It is possible to identify at least eight different types of international order today, each describing a different aspect of the complex world of IR.

The English School order: international society

International society is the most fundamental element in any international order. It is inhabited by a range of international units and is currently dominated by sovereign states. These have been the basic building blocks of international society since they first evolved in Europe around the time of the Peace of Westphalia. Thanks to their ability to mobilise large numbers of people and large amounts of capital, states have been particularly successful in war; an advantage that they used to defeat, dissolve and absorb a variety of other international units such as empires, tribes and city-states. Interaction between states has led to the evolution of English School institutions – formal and informal sets of norms, rules and practices that guide membership and behaviour in international

society. Over time, these institutions have transformed the role of states from simple providers of physical security into complex organisations responsible for economic management, health and welfare, social planning, and political representation at home, and the enforcement of international law abroad.

The fundamental premise of international society is that, figuratively speaking, 'no state is an island'. Even the most autonomous political units are engaged in a process of socialisation with their neighbours, copying successful practices and learning from one another's mistakes. This need not result in a peaceful social system. Societies can be – and often are – competitive to the point of combat. As seen in Chapter 19 of this subject guide, international society (and with apologies to Alexander Wendt) is what states make of it. Even so, states develop patterns of behaviour that are copied by other actors when they prove to be successful. For example, France's mobilisation of its population into a citizen army to protect the First French Republic in the 1790s was soon emulated by other states that envied France's military success. Similar processes of socialisation drove the spread of parliamentary and presidential democracy, capitalism and industrialisation. Even the most isolated state in the world today – arguably North Korea – faces considerable pressure to copy international principles and practices. Whether they like it or not, states around the world are part of a larger society that they ignore at their peril.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 1 (The 'social-state' system), p.516.

Activity

Note the effect of 'social' pressure on states' willingness to conform to international institutions.

A globalised order of nations: identity, states, nations and nation-states

A second element in the contemporary international order is the growing disconnect between individuals' sense of identity and the identity of the states in which they live. As we move deeper into the 21st century, identity seems to be becoming increasingly fragmented, with ethnic separatism, global citizenship, religious orthodoxy and linguistic divisions becoming increasingly important items on the global agenda. Though nationalism is often associated with one's state of citizenship – a phenomenon known as civic nationalism – this form of identity is coming under pressure from globalisation. This process has undermined the state's ability to control its citizens' identity by allowing non-state sources of identity to cross borders and undermine citizens' sense of civic nationality. This can weaken a state's hold on its citizens' loyalty, with potentially disastrous effects on its stability. Where governments could once rely on citizens to unite behind the nation-state in pursuit of shared goals, contested nationalisms have now thrown this assumption into doubt, setting the stage for many of the new wars described by Mary Kaldor in Chapter 13 of this subject guide. Identity, it turns out, is a major driver of international behaviour.

A good example of this problematic process can be found by looking at current events in the Middle East, where several civic nationalisms have fragmented into older, transnational forms of ethnic nationalism. Syria and Iraq, for example, no longer claim to represent nation-states in which all citizens share a common identity based around their shared citizenship. In their place, ethnic, religious and linguistic identities have emerged as the unifying poles around which identity politics now rotate. In Iraq, at

least three main nations now inhabit the territory of the Iraqi state: Arab Shia Muslims in the south, Arab Sunni Muslims in the centre and west, and the Kurdish people of Iraq's north and northeast. This division of Iraq into competing nations has fractured the political unity of the state and created an opening for militant non-state actors such as the so-called Islamic State to claim that they represent a part of Iraqi society – justifying the establishment of a breakaway Caliphate in the name of ethnic and religious nationalism.

⇒ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 2 (Identity and the nation-state), p.516.

A Realist order: polarity and international security

A third element in the international order today is the traditional, statist model of international relations. This is the system described by Classical and neo-Realists, in which security is defined in terms of national interest and in which security studies are dominated by investigations into the distribution of power among the states of the world. The more power a state possesses, the greater its influence will be on international security debates. As we saw in earlier chapters of this subject guide, this approach to IR allows you to draw some conclusions about the nature of an international society on the basis of its polarity – roughly defined by the number of great powers within it.

A system in which one great power holds a position of hegemony is unipolar and tends to be characterised by high levels of bandwagoning – a type of behaviour in which actors 'follow the lead' of a hegemonic state in order to take advantage of the norms, rules and practices that it establishes at the international level. International society in the decade after the Cold War was characterised by exactly this – with states as diverse as Russia, China and India clamouring for entry into the economic and political regimes established by Washington. A system divided between two great powers – as during the Cold War – is bipolar. These systems tend to be highly polarised, with international actors forced to choose between 'blocs' centred on the two dominant powers. In the modern era of nuclear weapons, bipolarity has also become associated with nuclear deterrence – arguably the most important single factor that kept the USA and the USSR from direct confrontation over the 40 years of the Cold War. Since the 16th century, the most common type of international system has been home to three or more great powers. These multipolar systems have existed for most of human history and appear to be back on the rise with the end of the Cold War and the rise of emerging powers such as China, India and Brazil. They are characterised by a balance of power, in which any attempt at system-wide domination by one state or group of states is met with resistance by the other actors in the system.

Polarity influences international society by giving some units greater say in the development and maintenance of international institutions. This is particularly evident in matters of international security, where the presence of a great power can have a decisive effect on lesser states' decision-making. The shift in East Asian international society brought on by China's rise from medium to regional power can be interpreted through this lens. By shaking the unipolar security regime of the post-Cold War era, China's rise has encouraged balancing behaviour on the part of other East Asian states. Many of these, such as Vietnam and Japan, have abandoned historical opposition to US power and signed security agreements with the USA as a means to oppose potential Chinese hegemony.

⏵⏵ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 3 (Polarity and the collectivisation of security), p.516–17.

IPE and Marxism: the world capitalist system

Just as the traditional security system is an important element of the contemporary international order, so too is the economic system that describes the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. The importance of economics to IR has been reinforced over the past twenty years by the rise of international political economy (IPE) as a sub-discipline of international relations. This looks specifically at the relationship between the international economic and political systems, tracing ways in which each impacts on the other. This trend is nothing new to Marxists, who have long stressed the importance of economic relationships in determining international behaviour.

IPE forces us to look beyond the state for explanations of political interactions. On the one hand, we might look within states to the Marxist socio-economic classes that inhabit them: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The struggle between these groups for control over and access to the means of production helps to explain many of the economic divisions that continue to cut across developed and developing states alike. On the other hand, we might look beyond the state to the three great triads – regional trading groups based in North America, Europe and East Asia. Though integrated in a global system of production and distributions, economic relations between these regions remain problematic as each tries to protect its own interests and economic power within the world capitalist system of which it is a part. Beyond regional triads is the world capitalist system as a whole. This is defined by highly asymmetric relationships between wealthy developed states at the system's core, which control the vast majority of the world's wealth and political power; the underdeveloped states of the economic periphery, which act as resource pools for the core and often fall victim to the new wars described in Chapter 13 of this subject guide. Between these extremes are the transitional states of the semi-periphery. These actors mediate the core-periphery relationship and occasionally manage entry into the club of wealth core states.

⏵⏵ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 4 (The organisation of production and exchange), p.517.

A Liberal order: multilateral global governance

If Realists sharpen our understanding of the world by highlighting the role of polarity in IR, and IPE does so by highlighting economic relations, Liberals deepen our understanding of how the world works by identifying the regimes used to manage international and transnational affairs. Regimes have been defined in previous chapters as webs of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures that bind units together to solve shared problems. They exist alongside Realists' security systems and Marxists' economic systems, and are affected by both. As discussed earlier, regime formation has been deeply affected by the distribution of power among the states of the world. The ascendency of the USA in the post-Cold War era was particularly important in this respect, as it has coincided with a period of liberal regime expansion backed up by US military, political and economic power.

It is helpful to separate Liberals' idea of governance through regimes from the English School's idea of governance through institutions. Remember that Liberal regimes are always intended to bolster cooperation between

international actors, and do so by establishing formal sets of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures. The English School makes no such claim. For them, institutions can help or hinder cooperation, depending on the kind of behaviour they encourage. Thus, the rise of militarism as an institution in 19th-century Europe did nothing to increase cooperation between its states. Indeed, it did the exact opposite, leading to the tragedies of the First and Second World Wars. This is why international society and multilateral governance are presented here as separate elements of the contemporary international order.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 5 (Multilateral management and governance), p.516.

A geographical order: regionalism

On top of these global and local developments is one that was discussed in Chapter 15 of this subject guide: the return of geography to the study of IR. Regions, it turns out, are more than simple geographic abstractions. They have a real role in contemporary IR. Some regions are characterised by cooperative – even convergent – international societies. Europe, for example, is home to a dense web of regional regimes and institutions that encourage states to find shared solutions to their shared problems. This stands in sharp contrast to most of European history, which has been anything but cooperative. Other regions today are competitive, and even combative in nature. East Asia, discussed at length in Chapter 18, is only one example.

Europe's fairly successful integration has played an important role in bringing about similar projects in other parts of the world. The EU spawned an African counterpart – the African Union (AU). NATO's success as a collective security organisation has been copied by similar bodies in South America (the South American Defense Council [SADC]) and Asia (the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO]). Regionalism has emerged as an increasingly important institution of global society – one that encourages states to band together with their neighbours to solve regional issues surrounding international and human security. Geopolitics, once consigned to the dustbin of IR, may be making a comeback, though in a very different guise to the determinist – and often racist – theories of Halford Mackinder and Friedrich Ratzel.

▸▸ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 6 (Regionalism), p.517.

An order of individuals: human rights

Each of these varieties of international order has focused on some sort of collective actor – a group of individuals with enough centralised decision-making ability to (i) reproduce itself over time, and (ii) be treated as an individual for the purposes of analysis. But IR is not just about the interactions, rights and responsibilities of groups. Individuals also play a growing role in defining IR's main interests. This is particularly noticeable in the rise of human security as a major focus of our discipline.

Yet human security does not mean the same thing to everyone on the planet. The mainstream view is dominated by liberal human rights – which reflect the priorities of individuals living in the developed states of Europe, North America, East Asia and the Pacific. In recent decades, this human rights regime has come under increasing pressure by non-Western groups who see liberal rights as, at best, an invention of the West and, at worst, a new form of cultural imperialism. The ongoing debate about women's rights in Muslim and Hindu countries is one example of a supposedly

'universal' norm coming under attack from a traditional culture's alternative reading of human freedom. More generally, it is becoming clear that principles and practices once considered universal are under increasing pressure from local state and non-state units, who wish to enforce their own understanding of individuals' rights and responsibilities on the international stage.

This makes the already difficult issue of humanitarian intervention and states' responsibility to protect even more complicated. Should the most powerful states in the world be allowed to force their definitions of right and wrong on less powerful actors? While they certainly have the capabilities to do so, the question remains as to whether it is a good idea. After all, what will intervention lead to when non-democratic and illiberal states begin to join the ranks of the great powers? China's rise is just one example. Will China use the principle of humanitarian intervention to force its own non-Western definition of rights on actors in its neighbourhood? Is Russia's intervention in Ukraine an example of this kind of illiberal humanitarian intervention – undertaken, in Russia's case, in the name of protecting the ethnic Russian minority in Ukraine's eastern provinces?

⠕⠕ **Stop and read:** BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 7 (The liberal rights order), pp.517–18.

Two world orders: the North–South divide

The last element that needs to be incorporated into our analytical toolkit is the North–South divide that splits the highly developed states of Europe, North America and East Asia from the underdeveloped states that inhabit much of the rest of the world. The distance between these actors has been noted several times in this subject guide, including under the guise of Marxism in Chapter 9 and IPE in Chapter 11. Given our discussion so far, the North–South divide should not come as a surprise. If economic development helps to determine the amount of power that a state can wield, so too must it help to determine its priorities in international society. A state in the bottom third of the UN's Human Development Index will likely have more in common with states similarly situated in the Index. Likewise, states near the top of this list will have a very different set of priorities from those at the bottom.

Things are not so simple, however. Within highly developed states, there are always segments of the population who do not enjoy the full benefit of their citizenship. The aboriginal peoples of Canada, who have a much lower standard of living than their fellow-countrymen, are a good example. Likewise, the ruling elites of underdeveloped states will have more in common with other elites than with their own poor. The result is a highly complex division in which states in the global North and South will generally have different national interests from one another, but will also contain elites and underclasses who share a number of transnational interests.

⠕⠕ **Stop and read**: BSO, Chapter 33, Section 3, Part 8 (North–South and the two world orders), pp.518–19.

Summary

- The first order describes the world as we have done throughout this course – as an international society composed of collective actors whose interactions are regulated by common institutions.

- The second describes a world of interacting nations whose boundaries may or may not align with those of the states who claim jurisdiction over them – challenging citizens' loyalties and states' territorial integrity.

- The third describes a world in which states pursue their survival through self-help in an international society defined by anarchy and distrust.

- The fourth describes a world in which economic actors vie for control of markets and resources, using states as tools in their quest for economic power.

- The fifth describes a world in which interdependent units build regimes that allow them to coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of shared goals and interests.

- The sixth describes a world in which regional interactions are defining features of IR, with different regions adopting different rules of behaviour.

- The seventh describes a world in which individuals seek and defend their rights and human security against state and non-state actors that may which to curtail them.

- The eighth describes a world that is divided into a politically and socio-economically developed 'North' and a politically and socio-economically developing 'South', with the former holding structural power over the latter.

- Each facet of contemporary IR will either be reinforced or diminished by the evolution of international society. Assessing which order will flourish and which will wither is one way to predict the future shape of any given issue in IR.

Application and analysis

Now it is your turn to use these eight forms of order to analyse the future of the world around you. Choose an issue in IR. Look into its history and its current debates. Then, using the eight elements of world order described above, consider how each has (or has not) contributed to the topic you are studying. Given these influences, what is the likely course of events over the short-, medium- and long-term?

Like IR theories, the eight orders discussed in this chapter highlight different forms of international relations. Each is suited to the analysis of a specific type of international issue. Feel free to focus on the orders best suited to your chosen issue as you think about the future of your chosen topic. The process of international analysis is rarely straightforward. It requires you to keep thinking about and using the many theories and concepts you have covered in the past 19 chapters. Though challenging, it can be very rewarding. Every day, the news is filled with international issues needing attention. All you have to do is choose one, dust off your crystal ball and peer into the murky world that is to come.

Activity

Choose one international issue currently in the news. Drawing on at least five news reports and whatever information you can find in reputable textual and online sources, use the eight elements of international order to draw some conclusions about the following questions:

1. Who are the main actors involved? Are they states or non-state actors?

2. What norms, rules and practices govern their international behaviour?

3. What about the situation makes it well suited or poorly suited to global governance through an international regime?

4. Would different solutions present themselves if the units involved had more or less power?

5. Would state action threaten the institution of sovereignty? Does this matter?

6. What role does political economy play in the issue?

Having answered these questions, how would you characterise the future of the issue you have chosen? Is there a viable solution in the short-, medium- or long-term? What changes can you foresee on the horizon? What aspects of the issue do you expect to remain relatively stable, providing continuity as it transitions into its next form?

Once you have considered these questions, prepare a short 500–750 word policy brief on the issue you have chosen. It should include a short synopsis of the issue and a set of policy recommendations that tackle the issue's main points. Post your policy recommendations in the VLE discussion forum for feedback from your peers.

Once you have finished your brief, look at one that has been posted by a peer. Can you identify their theoretical preferences? Can you suggest any other courses of action? Be constructive in your feedback by suggesting ways to improve your peer's work.

Chapter overview

- Prediction is an imprecise business in the social sciences thanks to the self-awareness of our objects of study: human beings.

- Failures of prediction provide opportunities to assess and correct faults in our theories – an opportunity that IR took advantage of after the end of the Cold War.

- Given IR's tendency to create new units and institutions out of existing models, a clear understanding of its present shape is the first step towards assessing the future shape of international society.

- It is possible to identify at least eight different types of international order today, each describing a different aspect of the complex world of IR.

- The first order describes the world as we have done throughout this course – as an international society composed of collective actors whose interactions are regulated by common institutions.

- The second describes a world of interacting nations whose boundaries may or may not align with those of the states who claim jurisdiction over them – challenging citizens' loyalties and states' territorial integrity.

- The third describes a world in which states pursue their survival through self-help in an international society defined by anarchy and distrust.

- The fourth describes a world in which economic actors vie for control of markets and resources, using states as tools in their quest for economic power.

- The fifth describes a world in which interdependent units build regimes that allow them to coordinate and cooperate in pursuit of shared goals and interests.

- The sixth describes a world in which regional interactions are defining features of IR, with different regions adopting different rules of behaviour.

- The seventh describes a world in which individuals seek and defend their rights and human security against state and non-state actors that may wish to curtail them.

- The eighth describes a world that is divided into a politically and socio-economically developed 'North' and a politically and socio-economically developing 'South', with the former holding structural power over the latter.

- Each facet of contemporary IR will either be reinforced or diminished by the evolution of international society. Assessing which order will flourish and which will wither is one way to predict the future shape of any given issue in IR.

A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed the Essential readings and activities, you should be able to:

- define and contrast the eight varieties of order that describe international society today

- utilise IR theories and concepts to analyse ongoing international and transnational issues, with an eye to their future impact on IR.

Test your knowledge and understanding

1. Which forms of international order are best suited to analyses of the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq?

2. How does the North–South divide affect each of the following issues in IR:

   a. security

   b. development

   c. environmental regulation?

Notes

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