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Political Science: Int'L Relations

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POLITICAL SCIENCE International Relations

INTRODUCTION

1. **International relations** is a major subfield of political science; political scientists refer to international relations simply as **IR**.
2. IR is also referred to as **world politics, global politics, international politics, and international studies**.
3. Usually, the "diplacy between countries" all is concerned with the relationships among the governments of the world and the relationships of state governments with other actors, such as the United Nations (UN), international corporations, and individuals.
4. The subject matter of IR includes war, peace, diplomacy, foreign policy, international political economy, international organizations, international law, the global environment, ethics conflicts, human rights, security studies, world population trends, and international development.
5. **Politics** is the struggle for power; **international politics** is the struggle for power on a global stage.
6. **Power** is the ability to make people or things do what they otherwise would not have done; **hard power** is measured by a nation-state's military capabilities, size of population, and geographic territory; **soft power** is based on the ability of a nation-state to achieve its goals through persuasion and diplomacy rather than military force.
7. IR uses both **theory and practice**; the academic study of IR is largely theoretical, whereas the real-world work of diplomats deals with practical economic and political issues.
8. Political scientists who specialize in IR attempt to describe what world politics is like, predict what will happen, and prescribe how it ought to be; they use both **qualitative and quantitative** research methods.

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

1. The **international system** is composed of nation-states, individuals, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and multinational corporations.
2. The **modern international system** comprising independent nation-states emerged after the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.
3. Over time, as the post-Westphalian system state sovereignty replaced the divine right of kings.
4. The **international system** has been shaped to a great extent by the West, primarily the great European powers and the United States.
5. The balance of power in the world periodically shifts.
6. From 1918 (the end of the "Thirty Years' War" to 1945 (the end of World War II), there was a **multipolar world**.
7. From 1945 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a **bipolar world** and an East-West axis between the United States and the Soviet Union.
8. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was left as the world's dominant superpower.
9. A **modified multipolar world** may be emerging with the balance of power spread between the United States, Russia, China, the European Union, and the UN.
10. A significant characteristic of the 21st-century international system is a disparity of wealth and power between the rich countries of the **global north** and poor countries of the **global south**.
 - A. The countries of the **global north** (e.g., in Europe and North America) are referred to as **economically developed countries** or the **First World**.
 - B. The **global south** consists primarily of Asia, Africa, and South American countries and are referred to as **economically developing countries** or the **Third World**.

Evolution of the International System

1. **16th century system (1492-1700)**
 - A. Begins with the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 and the Treaty of Westphalia, which established secular nation-states as the main actors on the world stage.
 - B. Multipolar system with power distributed between Great Britain, France, Austria, Spain, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire.
 - C. Influenced by the political ideas of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
2. **19th century system (1815-1914)**
 - A. Begins with the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 and the Treaty of Westphalia, which established secular nation-states as the main actors on the world stage.
 - B. Multipolar system with power distributed between Great Britain, France, Austria, Spain, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire.
 - C. Influenced by the political ideas of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
3. **20th century system (1914-1991)**
 - A. Begins with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires.
 - B. Bipolar distribution of power between Britain, France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and the Soviet Union.
 - C. Creation of the League of Nations.
 - D. Rise of fascism, Nazism, and communism.
 - E. Marked by the Crimean War.
 - F. Ends with the onset of World War II.
4. **Post-World War II system (1945-1991)**
 - A. Begins after World War II.
 - B. The UN is founded.
 - C. Bipolar distribution of power between the United States and the Soviet Union.
 - D. Colonial countries gain their independence.
 - E. Nuclear arms race between the two superpowers.
 - F. Ends with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany in 1990.
5. **Post-Cold War system (1990-)**
 - A. Starts with the collapse of the Soviet Union.
 - B. The United States continues to dominate military power.
 - C. Democratization in Eastern Europe.
 - D. Emergence of the European Union.
 - E. Intensification of the process of globalization.
 - F. September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks occur.
 - G. Marked by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS

1776: The Bill of Rights	1776: The American Revolution begins in Boston	1789: The French Revolution begins	1848: The Revolutions of 1848	1871: The Paris Peace Conference ends the Franco-Prussian War
1871: The League of Nations is formed	1914: World War I begins	1917: The Russian Revolution begins	1918: The League of Nations is founded	1918: The League of Nations is founded
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Synopsis

Navigating the complex world of international relations has always been, and continues to be, an important part of being an intelligent world citizen. Whether you are a student of international relations or just looking for a refresher to get up to speed with current events, you will now find it easier to follow along with BarCharts[™] Political Science: International Relations QuickStudy[®] guide. This three-panel guide includes up-to-date information on the history of international relations, fields of thought, and important organizations.

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