

INTERNATIONAL

POLITICS:



Theory and Practice

Howard H. Lentner



# *International Politics*

THEORY AND PRACTICE

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# *International Politics*

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■ ..... To Samantha and Christopher

# Preface

As the author of an introductory textbook in international politics, I faced two challenges. First, the end of the Cold War introduced more than the usual ferment in academic debates over theories and interpretations of international politics. This circumstance presented the challenge to consider and think through all of the ideas and approaches to the subject that I learned and had been teaching for many years. Such a challenge made writing a particularly engaging but also vexing task. I hope that readers will find the results helpful to their own consideration of the issues and problems involved in analyzing international politics.

The two main schools of thought which contribute to academic discourse in this field, realism and liberalism, form the primary skeleton upon which I have constructed the body of analysis, but at appropriate places I have also brought into the discussion more radical approaches and critical theories. I have presented the views of these theoretical convictions on the main problems and issues of international politics, posing the differences between them. Furthermore, I have indicated my own positions and offered reasons for my interpretations.

A textbook also affords the opportunity to devise analyses to fill gaps in the literature. Thus, the reader familiar with the field will find in this book certain features that depart from conventional analysis. First, a comprehensive problematic—the subject matter, fundamental questions, and methods of study—organizes the argument of the book and provides a tool for locating the contemporary discipline of international politics in the context of its origins and evolution as well as its relation to other disciplines. Furthermore, the problematic, which is centered on the fundamental political questions of power and justice, offers criteria for assessing continuity and change in international politics. International political economy suffuses the entire text even as a separate chapter remains devoted to systematic treatment of IPE, including Marxist analysis and dependency theory. A chapter that gives extended consideration to the many values in contention in international politics provides an unusual feature. Moreover, this is the only text that includes a chapter on the state, which develops a thorough comparative analysis of states and gives insight into contemporary world problems. The concept of state

formation provides a means of treating the relations of states and markets, competition among states, and the interventions of states and international organizations, all within a unified framework. In recent years, attention in the field has tended to shift emphasis more and more to the international system to the neglect of foreign policy and state interactions, but this book devotes three chapters to these topics, at the same time relating them to the context of the international system. New problems such as peacekeeping, environmental protection, and human rights are incorporated in an early chapter on international system management and appear at various points in the text.

The second challenge that I faced had to do with writing style and the level of presentation. To write comprehensively and thoughtfully was not enough. I also wanted to write in a way that was interesting and comprehensible to college sophomores who would be taking the course for which this book is intended. Students will find that the book is written at a demanding level that helps to build vocabulary with both general and specialized terms. I also intend that the material will engage students, prompting thinking about their own values and preferences as well as about analytical matters. To assist readers in mastering the theoretical concepts, I have studded the book with illustrations and short case studies drawn from many countries and regions throughout the world. Each example illustrates a conceptual or theoretical point. In addition, I have provided a number of tools to assist in mastering the material. Among the most important, and one that I hope students will refer to regularly, is an extensive historical glossary. Important terms are emphasized in the text and listed at the end of each chapter. Case studies have sub-headings, and briefer anecdotal examples are noted with references in small capital letters in the text itself. Study questions appear at the end of each chapter. Answers to many of these questions may be found in the chapter, but many are designed to be thought provoking, requiring independent thinking to respond. Maps germane to many of the cases appear throughout. I have summarized main points from the text, and these appear in boxes. Short introductions signal what is to come in each chapter. I appeal to students to use all of these devices as well as the detailed table of contents and

the index. International politics is a complicated field with a variety of interesting ideas and theoretical approaches for analysis and understanding, so learning requires dedication and hard work. The tools are there to assist, so, by all means, take advantage of them.

In bringing this work to fruition, a number of people have generously given me help. Patrice M. Donohue read many chapters and offered useful criticisms and encouragement. Weizhi Xie read several chapters with a professional's eye and helped me to see matters from the point of view of a country other than the United States. W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe read the introductory chapter, giving me the benefit of his teaching experience by criticizing in a way that saved me from some errors. Lida Ahmady, Sonja Chapman, and Alan M. Davis each read one chapter, providing me with the valuable perspective that can only come from undergraduates. Effie MacLachlan served as my research assistant in helping to prepare the historical glossary, but she also read several chapters with a critical and helpful eye. Richard Oliver Collin and many anonymous reviewers read a prospectus, preliminary chapter drafts, or revised drafts and made many helpful suggestions that have led to improvements in the organization, presentation, and writing.

Thanks to Joyce Gelb for information regarding prices in Japan appearing in Chapter 8.

I am very grateful for the assistance of several competent production people at West Publishing. Holly Henjum, the production editor, has overseen the process with efficiency and has, at the same time, remained a friendly correspondent and interlocutor on the telephone. Marilynn Taylor did the copyediting, improving my prose and the clarity of presentation. Linda Poirier, assistant to the editor, handled a variety of tasks in a seamless way. Ellen Stanton, promotion editor, has the responsibility of bringing the book to the attention of potential readers, something that she does effectively.

My editor, Clark Baxter, has proven to be not just invaluable but essential to the creation of this book. Some years ago, he invited me to submit a proposal and he has cajoled, criticized, suggested, bolstered, and encouraged the enterprise ever since. At a time when I held the most serious doubts about my ability to meet the challenges noted above, Clark dealt with me in a serious and mature manner that enabled me to confront the difficulties and address the problems. This book would not exist had it not been for his perseverance and patience, his support and encouragement. My gratitude is profound.



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**PART 1**

# The Study of International Politics: Discipline, Values, Approaches

**CHAPTER ONE**

*The Discipline of International  
Politics*

**CHAPTER TWO**

*Values in Contention in  
International Politics*

**CHAPTER THREE**

*Approaches to Analysis of  
International Politics*



## *The Discipline of International Politics*

• • • **A**t first glance, international politics may seem bewildering. Not only does it entail wars in places like Bosnia and Chechnya, but it also includes starvation in Africa and trade and loans between Mexico and the United States. Human rights in China, peace negotiations in the Middle East, and friction over trade between Japan and the United States are stories in the news. In short, activities around the world may appear as a swamp teeming with foreign events and dark swirling waters that contain strong pressures and compulsions.

To find dry land on which to stand—that is, to make sense of the jumble of activities that cross inter-

national borders every day and the deeper forces that affect our lives over the longer term—scholars have developed systematic and orderly ways of understanding the many phenomena comprising international politics. This chapter sets forth, in broad outline, how academic analysts have approached the subject, and it gives a statement of the problematic—the subject matter, the fundamental questions, and the methods of study—that guide the analysis in the remainder of the book.

### *Introduction*

The world is vast, fascinating, horrible, dangerous, and complicated. Over 5 billion people live in some 185 countries. An abundance of cultures and languages contributes to the treasure of human existence. But such horrors as mass starvation, wanton slaughter, and forced migration also form a part of our complex world. Dangers arise from violence and war as well as from lesser causes of injury such as betrayal and cheating.

Facing this complexity, the student of international politics carves out a portion for examination: those activities that cross international borders or that have implications for people living in other countries. These include instantaneous transactions such as television transmissions and money transfers. Not only the actions of governments but also those

of corporations and other private associations contribute. In addition, many intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations and the Arab League, are vehicles for international cooperation. War and military intervention and clandestine subversion comprise important international activities.

Constant **change** generated by economic growth, war, political ideas, leadership, and technology adds to this complexity. Technologies like the computer are applied within a decade after their invention to such diverse activities as writing term papers and preparing personal income tax returns, conducting stock transactions between Paris and Tokyo, and fighting wars with weapons based in space. Although the modern epoch is one in which change occurs with lightning-like rapidity, change has been a constant of human history. Deforestation, an issue of increasing contemporary interest, has

occurred throughout the ages as human settlements have spread across the globe. The human population has multiplied over the centuries, but it is now growing faster than ever. Even the modern state that we take for granted can be dated only from 1648, some 350 years ago.

In the context of complexity and change, humans struggle for wealth and power. Individual workers, labor unions, firms, and countries compete for wealth in the form of jobs, sales, and investments. On a global scale, negotiated agreements have led to increased international trade and its orderly management. Meanwhile, Europeans work toward the structuring and improvement of a larger cooperative community that is to include political as well as economic dimensions. Simultaneously in North America, Canada and the United States, building on their 1988 Trade Agreement, joined with Mexico in a broader North American Free Trade Agreement that took effect at the beginning of 1995.

As one looks at particular countries, including very wealthy ones like the United States and Germany, inequalities of economic condition stare the viewer in the face. In poorer countries, like Guatemala and India, the even greater disparities of wealth that abound can be observed firsthand and are reflected in statistical evidence compiled by such institutions as the World Bank. Economic inequality is not a condition limited to particular societies; it is a characteristic of the world as a whole. It is especially apparent when one contrasts a rich area such as Western Europe with a poor area such as sub-Saharan Africa.

In certain places in the world, grinding poverty is only one evil among many. The Iranian government, for example, suppresses its citizens who profess the Baha'i religion. From 1991 to 1994, a government of thugs in Haiti brutalized the population to the degree that thousands of people risked death as they tried to escape aboard small and overcrowded boats headed for the United States. Certain regimes—Saddam Hussein's of Iraq provides a notorious example—maintain themselves in power by arresting and killing opponents, not by gaining the uncoerced consent of their country's people. In other places, political leaders are unable to resolve their conflicts, and political order deteriorates into civil war, as happened in the early 1990s in Yugoslavia.

Great transformations occur. Between World War I and World War II, Germany passed from a liberal democracy to a dictatorship based upon the principle that the will of one man should rule. After

World War II, the country was divided into two states, one embodying a democratic polity and a market economy, the other organized according to the authoritarian political principle of one-party rule directing a centrally planned economy. More recently, with the collapse of Communism in what had been East Germany, the country has been united on the basis of liberal principles.

Understanding the many dimensions and the vast complexity of our world seems to call for encyclopedic knowledge. Geography, politics, philosophy, history, economics, sociology, geography, strategy, military science, and psychology are only the most obvious disciplines that might contribute insights into the multifarious phenomena referred to in the examples above.

Great numbers of issues seem germane to international affairs, including the diffusion of manufacturing processes, capital investments, transfers of technology, trade in illegal drugs, environmental deterioration, protection of human rights, and so on. These are but recent additions to traditional concerns about war and peace, diplomacy and trade, the power of nation states, patterns of conflict and cooperation such as balances of power and alliances, as well as foreign policy decision making and the ensuing relations of countries with one another.

As an academic field, international politics is a synthetic discipline, one that draws together contributions from many other fields of study.<sup>1</sup> Because of disagreements about what should be included and excluded, it has been called "the dividing discipline."<sup>2</sup> Despite a rich theoretical tradition, the ideas and emphases of the discipline have been greatly affected by events in the world and by intellectual currents. For example, with the end of the Cold War and the erosion of many of the assumptions underpinning it, there is an unusual ferment and openness to new ideas. Not only have the conceptions of statesmen and scholars been questioned, but some scholars have turned to such sources of analysis as literary deconstruction, the search for meaning in words, and away from traditional kinds of analysis that seek understanding in people and events. When viewed in its aggregate, the discipline appears to be confused and to lack a solid core of theoretical and practical interest.

The fascination of events tends to drive the interested observer in two opposite directions. On the one hand, she hankers to know more, to add more facts and a greater diversity of experience to her knowledge. On the other hand, she yearns to

organize those facts in an understandable, theoretical form. Although there is no best solution to this dilemma, some alternatives are quite clear.

One option is to follow the path of adding information and remaining both eclectic and open to pursuing whatever is fascinating. A flood in Bangladesh, a famine in Somalia, an agreement to preserve a Stone-Age Indian tribe in Brazil and Venezuela, a Middle East peace conference, illegal migration into the United States, unification of Germany, loss of a rain forest, comments by a Japanese prime minister concerning the absence of a work ethic among American workers, ending apartheid and making a transition to democracy in South Africa, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the building of a new luxury hotel on a Caribbean island are stories fed into the information mill. Anyone who watches the news on television or reads a daily newspaper or a weekly news magazine can observe the endless flow of information that is available about international affairs. Unless she wants to be nothing more than a dilettante in this field, however, she will want to formulate some kind of a mental screening device to rank the relative importance of events and facts and to draw out some meaning from them.

As people develop such devices, some are drawn very far in the direction of simplification. Some believe that eternal truths are available to understand today's world, while others think that our world has changed so drastically that we need to invent altogether new ways of understanding.

In the midst of disputes over information and theory, what is called for is some device for weighing and assessing alternative interpretations, for gaining understanding without oversimplification, and for finding a core to the field of knowledge we are pursuing. Several years ago, K. J. Holsti, a Canadian political scientist, addressed this problem for teachers of international politics and presented them with the idea of a **problematic**—the subject area, a basic question, and methods of study.<sup>3</sup>

This book is going to employ a similar device, a problematic, as a guide through a variety of challenging ideas that help us to explain international politics. A problematic aims to develop analytical tools that students can employ not just immediately but also many years in the future. Such tools can be applied in examining contemporary world events as well as those that we cannot now imagine. Furthermore, the analytical tools can be used to assess concepts and theories that may be offered to explain the causes and development of those events.

## *The Problematic of International Politics*

Politics concerns **power** and **justice**. Power is the capacity to preserve one's autonomy, maintain the strength of one's position in relation to others, and exercise influence over others. Justice means that which is proper, morally right, or deserved.

Through politics, people aspire to achieve their values. They want many different things: wealth, power, prestige, respect, serenity, leisure, transcendent meaning, knowledge, salvation, and so on. Sometimes, they achieve their ends simply by dominating others, exercising power and imposing their own values on other people. At other times, they find a way of either compromising or encompassing the aspirations of others. They may be able to achieve justice, which in its political nature implies an agreed set of values that embody a common or public good. However, institutionalizing and enforcing conceptions of justice requires linking them with power.

Although certain values—solitude, insight, and creative accomplishment are examples—can be acquired by individuals acting alone, most aspirations are fulfilled through cooperation with others in groups. Certainly, some goals can be reached by the efforts of groups that form on the basis of coercion. For example, the pyramids of ancient Egypt were built by slave labor. However, even groups employing such systems of domination are ruled by an elite that itself is organized on some, however limited, conception of justice that allows it to forge and achieve goals through cooperation. While one may regret the brutal exploitation of Egyptian slaves, she simultaneously might admire the creative imagination that designed the pyramids and the vast engineering and organizational skills involved in their construction. Further, she might respect the governing and managerial abilities of the elites that arranged for these monuments and brought the enterprise to completion. Whether she takes such a balanced view or emphasizes, for example, her outrage at the treatment of the workers depends to a large extent on her own values and particular circumstances. It is not always easy to separate political analysis from the values and power position of the analyst. Thus, it is important in doing political analysis to maintain an acute consciousness about one's own political situation, for it often shapes the questions that one asks and sometimes affects the answers that one finds.

Nevertheless, all political analysis, however wide-ranging or sophisticated, focuses on the fundamental