



Instructional Narrative NS01



Introduction and Objectives

Introduction

From the fall of the Berlin Wall through the fall of the World Trade Center twin towers to conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, the international system has felt the dramatic effects of major forces and new actors. This is a time of dramatic and rapid change that forces decision makers to constantly reevaluate the United States' security interests and potential strategies.

Understanding these forces and actors will enable the military to more effectively contribute to reaching national objectives. This lesson introduces students to major trends in the international system which shape the potential for conflict and cooperation.

Reading the daily news or watching news broadcasts on television make us aware of international events far away from our everyday lives. These seemingly remote events — bombings in Israel, insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, ethnic unrest in Africa — may seem to most of us to be remote and unrelated to our own lives. Yet these events quickly can become both highly related and personally salient to some or all of us.

As military professionals we may be called upon to plan for operations in or deploy to any number of “hot spots” across the globe. This lesson is designed to ensure future planners, staffers, and operational commanders have a working understanding of the global context in which the US military operates. It also provides an analytical foundation that can be used to examine key trends in the international system that influences the potential for both conflict and cooperation.

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Lesson Objectives

- Comprehend how the nature and character of states, the concept of sovereignty, and the proliferation of non-state actors shape the modern international environment.
- Analyze forces shaping political action within the international environment.



Icebreaker

This Learning Module item should open in a new window. If not, then click the link below.

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In the threaded discussion section, introduce yourself and answer a course "kickoff" question by clicking "Icebreaker" above.



The International Environment



Military action and practice are bounded by political context. All political action takes place, at various levels and by various actors, within the international environment. Given that every actor, be it a state, individual, political party, or international organization, introduces a set of variables which shapes its action, the international environment is infinitely complex. To even begin to analyze action within the international environment, we need to understand its nature, and learn a basic

vocabulary and some analytical tools so we can meaningfully study and engage one another on the most important influences in any given situation.

Required Lesson Materials

<u>Stolberg, A.G., "Chapter 11: The International System in the 21st Century" (2010)</u> - Read pages 153-166 of the <i>US Army War College Guide to National Security Issues: Volume II</i> .	The article by Stolberg provides a succinct introduction to the main actors, functions, and behaviors within the current international system. This introduction will help military professionals understand some of the complex threats, challenges, and opportunities that are emerging from the volatile international system.
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Theories on the International Environment

The field of IR is a highly complex and yet sometimes ambiguous subject. In order to make the topic less indefinite and more manageable certain core theories or paradigms have emerged from the study of IR. As a consequence, this course will examine three major schools of IR theory: Realism, liberalism and a newer theory, constructivism, which has recently gained wide interest and application.

The longstanding disagreement between realists and liberals over the nature of politics is perhaps the most fundamental division in all of political discourse. The two schools of thought even disagree over the very nature of *homo politicus*(political man). Importantly, the addition of constructivism to the discourse provides a critical analytical tool that fills some of the theoretical gaps within and between realism and liberalism.

Required Lesson Materials

<p><u>Ackerman J.T., B.J. Carlson, and Y.I. Han, “ International Relations Paradigms” (2010)</u></p> <p>– Read entire article.</p>	<p>This baseline reading for the NS course looks at three of the prominent theories of international relations: Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. The article also provides a solid introduction to the basic characteristics of these three IR paradigms. This is the starting point for a multi-faceted examination of a complex subject, international relations.</p>
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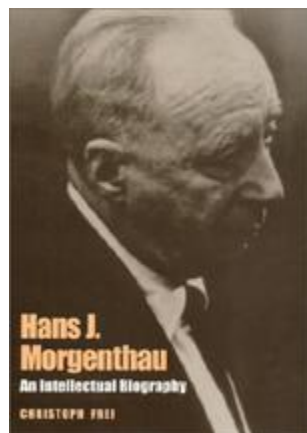


Realism

A simplistic understanding of the differences between realism and liberalism would be that realists are pessimistic and liberals are optimistic about human nature. Realists believe that political struggle among humans is inevitable because all people have a capacity for evil. Many realists would trace their intellectual heritage to political philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who believed that humans possess an inherent urge to dominate. In his book *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes argued that “if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies and... endeavor to destroy or subdue one another.”

Taking a similar point of view, leading realist scholar Hans Morgenthau wrote a “ubiquity of evil in human actions” inevitably turns “churches into political organizations ... revolutions into dictatorships ... and love of country into imperialism.” A relatively recent variant of realism, neorealism places less attention on the nature of man and more focus on the nature of the international system. In particular, Neorealists concentrate on an anarchic international system and the ongoing competition among sovereign states.

Required Lesson Materials



Hans Morgenthau

Forsyth, J. “Realist Thought and National Security Policy” (2010) – Read entire article.	The article provides additional in-depth information on the basic premises of realist theory as it relates to the concept of security. Realists contend that security of the state is a state’s preeminent interest and this usually involves preservation of the state’s territory and protection of the state’s citizen’s from harm. The article also provides insights into how realist theory explains and contends with sovereign interventions, globalization, human rights, and terrorism.
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To Learn More

Forsyth, J., "Realism" (2008) (0:44:28) - View entire video. Flash Download Video Download Slides This presentation presents an easily digestible summary of the major themes in realism.
Carr, E. H., <i>The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1938: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations</i> (1939). A classic in International Relations theory, E. H. Carr’s <i>The Twenty Years’ Crisis</i> is often seen as one of the first modern realist texts. This excerpt includes chapters four and five of this seminal text.
Morgenthau, H., “Six Principles of Political Realism.” (1978) - Entire article. Taken from Hans Morgenthau's <i>Politics Among Nations</i> , one of the first systematic explanations of the principles of international relations, this article gets to the heart of realist thought. The principles examine issues like morality and realism, interests defined in terms of power, and the centrality of power in international politics.
Waltz, K., <i>Theory of International Politics</i> (1979). Kenneth Waltz’s classic tome on international relations theory introduced a new systems approach to IR studies. Waltz theorized that the behavior of states operating in an anarchical international system could be studied analytically and empirically.



Liberalism

Liberal thought begins with the premise that individuals are the prime actors or agents in history. Liberalism regards the state as the creation and instrument of individuals coming together for common purposes. For liberals, the logic by which states arrange their relations with each other—i nternational relations—is the same as the logic by which states arrange their internal affairs: states exist to serve the needs of their people and interact with other states for common international goals.

With the individual serving as the primary actor in international relations, liberals believe that the legitimacy of the state is dependent upon upholding the rule of law and respecting the individual/human rights of its citizens. States that guarantee the rights of their own citizens and have open political processes are less likely to behave aggressively in the international arena. States that act brutally towards their populace eventually affect neighboring states with refugee flows and other negative consequences that can lead to greater regional instability.

Liberals rely on the collective desire for freedom, free markets, and cooperative agreements to attract friends and allies. The resultant power arrangements emerge from cooperation instead of coercion. Cooperating nations seek to prevent the outbreak of violence by removing sources of conflict that can lead to international violence.

Through international institutions, agreements among many states on how to conduct international affairs have been established and become routine features of global behavior. Liberals point to international organizations like the World Trade Organization and the War Crimes Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda as successful examples of how cooperation has led to laws that transcend national boundaries and protect the interests and rights of individuals.

Required Lesson Materials

Fiedler, M. and J.T. LaSaine “Liberal Thought and National Security” (2005) – Read entire article.	The article provides a case study for analysis of liberal behavior in the international system. As such, the article discusses key dimensions of liberalism to include individualism, states, and the international system. Fiedler and LaSaine also examine liberal approaches to war, sovereign interventions, globalization, human rights, and terrorism.
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To Learn More

Hampton, M., "Liberal Institutionalism" (2008) (0:46:42) - View entire video. Flash Download Video Download Slides	This academic year 2008 lecture from Wood Stage at ACSC presents a concise introduction to the roots of Liberal thought, its implications and its explanation of the international environment.
Kant, I., Perceptual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch (1972).	In this seminal piece, Kant concluded the necessary conditions for ending wars and creating an enduring global peace. The three primary conditions included “republican constitutions, a commercial spirit, and a federation of interdependent republics.” These three elements have been used to form the basic

	arguments for the democratic peace theory based on the pacific inducing interactions of democratic governments, economic interdependence, and international organizations.
Keohane, R.O., <i>After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy</i> (1984).	Keohane's classic IR work investigates the power of international institutions or regimes to create cooperative engagements in an international system with no hegemon. He asserts factors besides material power, such as uncertainty, transaction costs, and expectations can positively influence international cooperation in a post-hegemonic world. As a result of his efforts, Keohane's contributions to IR theory have been acknowledged as profound and lasting.
Doyle, M., <i>Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism</i> (1997).	Doyle provides an extensive analysis of the realist, liberal, and socialist schools of international relations. He also ends his analysis by applying the basic principles of each IR paradigm to current policy challenges.



Constructivism

Constructivism is a relative newcomer in the tableau of IR theory. It is one of several alternate ways of thinking about world politics that have gained a following among IR scholars in recent decades (for discussions of other IR theories see the "To Learn More" link below).

Constructivism focuses on explaining the dynamic force in international relations between "agents" (individuals and other actors) and "structure" (treaties, laws, international organizations, and other aspects of the international system). These scholars explore the dynamic and reciprocal process whereby agents participate in the creation of the various international structures and are, in turn, affected by those structures.

Constructivism deals with human consciousness and its role in international life and rests on the capacity and will of people to take a deliberate attitude toward the world. Constructivists believe that if values and perceptions change, then so too can relations, structural realities, and other aspects of the international system.

Required Lesson Materials

[Ackerman, J.T., B.J. Carlson, and Y.I. Han, "Constructivism and Security" \(2010\) – Read entire article](#)

The article compares some of the security related precepts of constructivism with security precepts of the two other major IR theories, realism and liberalism. The article also provides three relevant and current case studies that depict constructivist behavior in the international system.

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To Learn More

Diprizio, R., "Constructivism" (2008) - (0:32:51) Watch entire video.

[FlashDownload Video](#) (182 MB) [Download Slides](#) (146 kB)/>

Wendt, A., "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (1992) - Read entire article.

While Wendt agrees with realists that the state system exists in a condition of anarchy, he challenges the central role given to the "logic of anarchy" in neorealist scholarship. Indeed, Wendt claims there is no logic of anarchy per se. That is, violent competition does not necessarily flow from the condition of anarchy. For Wendt, violent competition is only one of several possible outcomes of a state system under conditions of anarchy. Wendt reaches this conclusion by challenging realism's materialism, stressing instead the importance of ideas, norms, and culture.

Katzenstein, P., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (1996).

Katzenstein's edited collection provides core case studies applying the constructivist approach to security. The case studies include examinations of the influence of Chinese cultural and historical experience on China's foreign policy, the evolution of human rights norms, and the recent development chemical weapons taboos. The collection was a response to the inability of realism to explain the demise of the USSR and the resulting changes in international relations.

Buzan, B., O. Waever, and J. de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998).

Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde helped develop a constructivist approach to the study of security. The authors also broaden the traditional definition of security to include issues like environmental change, poverty, and human rights. Importantly, their investigation into how issues become 'securitized' through various 'speech acts' and other processes opened security studies to constructivist views of security actors, contexts, and interactions.

Hopf, T. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" (1998).

Ted Hopf "answers the mail" on popular misunderstandings of constructivist theory. He clarifies the theory's positions on anarchy, identity, interests, and power while providing a comparative analysis of realism and liberalism. Hopf outlines the differences between conventional and critical constructivism highlighting, even within this paradigm, there lie contrasting perspectives.



The Three Theories Together

Considering that the world is infinitely complex; the theories of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism represent finite frameworks which can be used to explain and prescribe action in the international environment. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. A better use of international relations theory is a consideration of all three of these leading theories as one addresses political action. Certainly the actions of the US are influenced by all three of these schools of thought; other actors likewise have a multitude of influences.



The International Environment Today

The traditionally understood international system, that of states interacting with one another in an absence of higher ordering authority (anarchy) was inaugurated in Europe in 1648 at the Treaty of Westphalia, one of the treaties that ended the 30 Years War. European colonialism proliferated the state model throughout the world in the subsequent centuries and the model remained strong through the end of the Second World War. Three current international issues are challenging the traditional notions of state sovereignty and even the state-centric system itself. The first is the proliferation of international institutions, the second is Globalization, and the third is the impact of cultural diversity.

Required Lesson Materials

[Obama, B.H., *The National Security Strategy \(NSS\) of the United States of America* \(2010\)](#) - Read pages 1-6.

The NSS constitutes official guidance from the President. It provides a road map for achieving national security goals. The initial reading focuses on the status of the current international environment, the challenges to renewed American leadership at home and abroad, and how the US will facilitate our primary national security priorities.



International Organizations



**World
Bank**



United Nations



**Organization
of American
States**

The international reaction to the Holocaust, a crime against humanity committed by Nazi Germany, and the global devastation created by WWII, ushered in the current international regime. Statesmen, led by the US delegation, saw that the traditional system of state sovereignty both contributed to the armed conflict and allowed Nazi Germany to carry out its plan for genocide. The WWII victors, again led by the US, established the United Nations with

other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international governmental organizations (IGOs) as a forum through which conflict could be resolved and norms for state conduct could be established and enforced.

IOs such as the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the United Nations (UN) can play key roles at each level of analysis. Some liberal analysts are convinced that IOs are a valid alternative to the outmoded and even destructive traditional approach of basing global relations on self-interested states operating in anarchy. Some constructivist researchers think the spread of global norms and values concerning human rights will drive more ethical behavior by states and individuals. On the other hand, some students of realism contend that IOs are merely pawns of the major powers and balance of power efforts will continue to dominate international relations.

Required Lesson Materials

[Ki-moon, B., “Priorities as United Nations Secretary-General” \(2009\)](#) - Read entire article.

This statement from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlines his priorities for the organization. As you read, consider where these priorities sync with those of the US and where they differ.

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To Learn More

[Other International Organizations](#) - Entire web site.

This site at Northwestern University contains a comprehensive listing of international organizations' web sites.



Globalism

Globalization is the second trend that is putting pressure on the traditional understanding of state sovereignty. The state has traditionally controlled all commerce and information passing across its borders; today that is increasingly not the case. More and more, these commercial and informational exchanges occur at the global or transnational level—beyond the scope of merely the interaction of states with other states. In many ways, these are not new types of transactions, particularly in terms of economic interactions. Clearly, however, the frequency of these interactions has greatly expanded in the last century or so. The very term globalization itself is an effort to capture and explain this proliferation of interactions whose reach seems to be far beyond that of state-to-state interaction with other states. Lewis Griffith provides us with a working definition of globalization in his article “Defining Globalization:”

“Globalization is the process of generating lasting interactive

connections among individuals, groups, and institutions that are geographically located beyond the bounds of region and whose membership is more diverse than simply states as per the international system. These connections can best be understood as networks, defined here as regularized patterned interactions between independent agents, nodes of activity, or sites of power. Thus globalization is (formally) the process of establishing and developing interactive, multi-member networks that operate across transnational distances. In short globalization can be thought of as the proliferation of globally accessible multi-member networks.”

Globalization is a driving force (many would say THE driving force) in international politics. Most international relations theorists, however, believe that states are still the principle actors on the world stage. The following two readings discuss the concept of the state and its potentially uncertain future in a globalizing world.

Required Lesson Materials

[Friedman, T. and Kaplan, R., “ States of Discord” \(2002\)](#) - Read entire article.

In this reading, influential commentators Friedman and Kaplan provide their definitions of globalization and their sharply differing visions of the future of the nation-state.

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To Learn More

[Krasner, S., "Sovereignty" \(2001\)](#) - Entire article.

In this reading, Stephen Krasner examines state sovereignty — the exclusive right of the state to exercise supreme political authority. He asserts that despite recent statements to the contrary, sovereignty is alive and well.



The Growing Cultural Component in Conflict

Our values, along with issues of identity, and various subjective standards define culture. For political scientists culture refers to those elements of political behavior that are derived from our sense of self and our sense of societal, national, sub-national, or even family based standards of behavior.

Put another way, issues of cultural identity become the basis of political ideology. Cultural inputs may produce self-imposed limitations, conscious and unconscious, on political behavior and/or political choices. Culture manifests itself at the village, regional, national, and international levels as well as within ethnic and religious groups. Samuel Huntington identifies

civilizations as the “highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity.”

Required Lesson Materials

[Huntington, S., “The Clash of Civilizations” \(1993\)](#) - Read section I; Scan rest of article.

This seminal article on the “Clash of Civilizations” in Foreign Affairs set the stage for a debate that still rages about whether civilizational cleavages, rather than state boundaries, are now the main fault lines along which fault lines will occur.

[Harvey, A., Sullivan, I., and Groves, R. “A Clash of Systems: An Analytical Framework to Demystify the Radical Islamist Threat”\(2005\)](#) - Read entire article.

Harvey, Sullivan and Groves attempt to provide an alternative and more useful framework by focusing on conflict as a clash of systems and not civilizations (or cultures or ideas). In their view, "the current threat environment is based on a clash of systems between the US-led global system, in which the phenomenon of globalization has created unprecedented connectivity and prosperity in the developed world, and those who oppose this system and wish to replace it with another paradigm [extremist Islamism]."



Applying IR: China

So far in this course you have had the opportunity to study many of the theoretical aspects of the study of international relations. In this section you will examine readings dealing with a major economic/military power and potential rival of the US : China. As you read these articles, keep in mind what you have already learned about the international environment. Afterwards, you will be given the opportunity to apply those concepts in a short essay.

Required Lesson Materials

[Craig, S., “Chinese Perceptions of Traditional and Nontraditional Security Threats” \(2007\)](#) - Read summary and chapter one.

This work from the Strategic Studies Institute analyzes security threats from the Chinese perspective.

[Lawrence, S., and Lum, T., “U.S.-China Relations: Policy Issues.” \(2011\)](#) - Read entire document.

This report from the Congressional Research Service describes several salient current issues and challenges for US-China relations.

To Learn More

[**ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2011**](#) - Read pp. I, 1-26; Scan rest of document.

This DoD publication details China's current military capabilities and national security strategies.

[**Daojiong, Z. "China's Energy Security: Domestic and International Issues" \(2006\)**](#) - Read entire article.

The author of this article takes a critical look at the potential threat to China's energy as a result of dramatically increased consumption.



Conclusion

A few final words as you conclude this part of the course. You may have noticed while completing the assigned readings that you were presented with different, sometimes conflicting ideas on the same topic. This was by design. Our goal in this course is not to give you the "right" answers to questions of global politics (if such things exist), but rather to present you with the literature and ideas to stimulate your own thinking about these important topics. Now that you have studied and considered the international environment--the backdrop behind the U.S. pursuit of national security, we'll turn to address strategy as a concept and the *National Security Strategy* (NSS) in particular. The NSS is the guide for U.S. interaction with the international arena.



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Discussion Question

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Click the link above for this week's discussion question.