
 Norbert Merkóvity	 <u>15-20 minutes</u>	Thing to remember: International Relations as a discipline is NOT a ‘current events’ catalogue.
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Theories in International Relations (IR)

How We Explain What is Happening?

International Relations as a discipline is NOT a ‘current events’ catalogue.

- We do not simply construct some form of timeline of events, claim they are important, and then suggest that this is ‘objectively’ what is correct.
- We, at least, have paradigms that help us understand what has happened.
- We have theories that act as comprehensive explanations for all sorts of things: human nature, the nature of capitalism, ideas about politics, ideas about political interactions among nation-states.
- ‘Facts’ do not exist in a vacuum, nor is some form of objectivity exist without critique.
- There are at least ‘subject positions’, epistemological positions, and all sorts of claims about knowledge.

Theories do all kinds of things – construct the truth, act as paradigms for explanation, emphasise different facts – indeed see the world totally differently based on the kinds of things we focus on.

Should we be looking at companies, nation-states, the legal structure, the global political economy, gender, or class relations as the primary analytical

starting point for Global politics/International Relations?

A short overview of the development of IR (until the 1800s)

The purpose of this overview is to trace important trends over time.

The emergence of the state and the notion of sovereignty, the development of the international state system, changes in the distribution of power among states.

The Pre-Westphalian World

Many international relations theorists date the contemporary system from 1648, the year of the Treaty of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War. This treaty marks the end of rule by religious authority in Europe.

The Greek city-state system, the Roman Empire, and the Middle Ages are each key developments leading to the Westphalian order.

Greece and the City-State System of Interactions

The Greeks were at the height of power in 400 B.C. and engaged in classic power politics as cataloged by Thucydides in History of the Peloponnesian War.

City-states — each an independent unit — conducted peaceful relations with each other as they vied for power — a precursor of the modern state system.

Rome: The Governing of an Empire

The Roman Empire served as the precursor for larger political systems. Its leaders imposed order and unity by force on a large geographic expanse. Roman leaders were preoccupied with keeping tribes, kingdoms, and states within their sphere of influence. They imposed various forms of government, disseminating the Latin language to the far reaches of the empire.

Marcus Tullius Cicero offered a mechanism for the uniting of the various parts of the empire.

He proposed that men ought to be united by a law among nations applicable to humanity as a whole. He emphasized the necessity of maintaining state security by expanding resources and boundaries.

The Middle Ages: Centralization and Decentralization

When the Roman Empire disintegrated in the fifth century A.D., power and authority became decentralized in Europe.

By 1000 A.D. three civilizations had emerged from the rubble of Rome:

1. Arabic civilization: under the religious and political domination of the Islamic caliphate, advanced mathematical and technical accomplishments made it a potent force.
2. Byzantine Empire: located near the core of the old Roman Empire in Constantinople and united by Christianity.
3. The rest of Europe, where languages and cultures proliferated, and the networks of communication developed by the Romans were beginning to disintegrate.

Much of Western Europe reverted to feudal principalities, controlled by lords and tied to fiefdoms that had the authority to raise taxes and exert legal authority. Feudalism was the response to the prevailing disorder. The preeminent institution in the medieval period was the church; virtually all other institutions were local in origin and practice.

Carolus Magnus, or Charlemagne, the leader of the Franks (in what is today France), challenged the church's monopoly on power in the late eighth century. Similar trends of centralization and decentralization, political integration and disintegration, were also occurring in Ghana, Mali, Latin America, and Japan.

The Late Middle Ages: Developing Transnational Networks in Europe and Beyond

After 1000 A.D. secular trends began to undermine both the decentralization of feudalism and the universalization of Christianity in Europe. Commercial activity expanded into larger geographic areas. All forms of communication improved and new technologies made

daily life easier. Economic and technological changes led to fundamental changes in social relations. A transnational business community emerged, whose interests and livelihoods extended beyond its immediate locale

Writers and other individuals rediscovered classical literature and history, finding intellectual sustenance in Greek and Roman thought. Niccolo Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, elucidated the qualities that a leader needs to maintain the strength and security of the state. Realizing that the dream of unity in Christianity was unattainable, Machiavelli called on leaders to articulate their own political interests. Leaders must act in the state's interest, answerable to no moral rules. In the 1500s and 1600s, as European explorers and even settlers moved into the new world, the old Europe remained in flux. Feudalism was being replaced by an increasingly centralized monarchy. The masses, angered by taxes imposed by the newly emerging states, rebelled and rioted.

The Emergence of the Westphalian System

The formulation of *sovereignty* was one of the most important intellectual developments leading to the Westphalian revolution. Much of the development of sovereignty is found in the writings of French philosopher Jean Bodin. To Bodin, sovereignty was the "absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth." Absolute sovereignty, according to Bodin, is not without limits. Leaders are limited by natural law, laws of God, the type of regime, and by covenants and treaties.

The Thirty Years War (1618-48) devastated Europe. But the treaty that ended the conflict, the Treaty of Westphalia, had a profound impact on the practice of international relations in three ways:

1. It embraced the notion of sovereignty—that the sovereign enjoyed exclusive rights within a given territory. It also established that states could determine their own domestic policies in their own geographic space.
2. Leaders sought to establish their own permanent national militaries. The state thus became more powerful since the state had to collect taxes to pay for

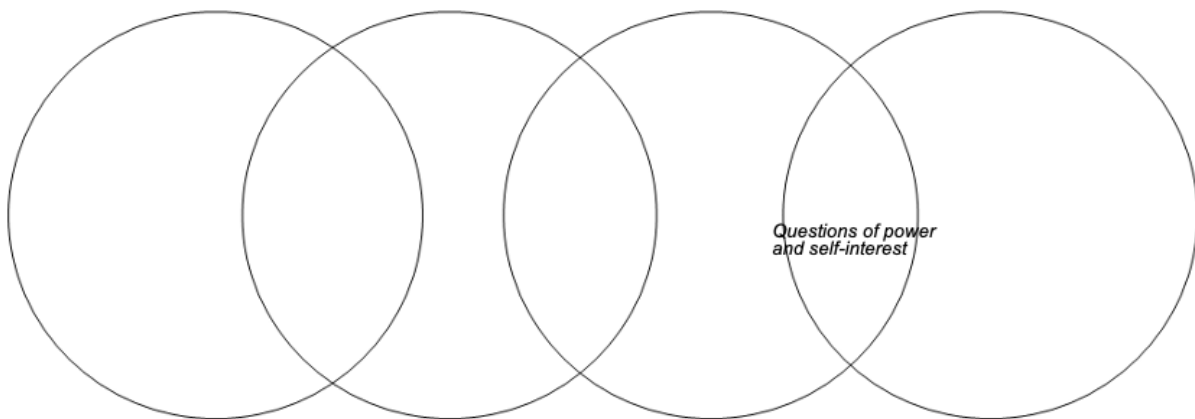
these militaries and the leaders assumed absolute control over the troops.

3. It established a core group of states that dominated the world until the beginning of the nineteenth century: Austria, Russia, England, France, and the United Provinces of the Netherlands and Belgium.

Another important theorist at the time was Scottish economist Adam Smith. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Smith argued that the notion of a market should apply to all social orders. Individuals should be permitted to pursue their own interests and will act rationally to maximize his or her own interests. With groups of individuals pursuing self-interests, economic efficiency is enhanced as well as the wealth of the state and that of the international system. This theory has had a profound effect on states' economic policies.

About sovereignty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwoA8CpdGuk>

Progress



Questions

1. What help IR scholars understand what has happened in the world politics?
2. What do we mean under the following: theories do all kinds of things?
3. What are the main characteristics of the ancient thought on state (empire) relationship with other entities?
4. What was the characteristic of Arabic civilization in the middle ages?
5. What thought Niccolo Machiavelli about the leader?
6. Around when was the modern thought of *sovereignty* formulated?
7. What means sovereignty to Jean Bodin?
8. How the Treaty of Westphalia embraced the notion of sovereignty?
9. What did the leaders established after the Treaty of Westphalia?
10. What thought Adam Smith about market?

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