

Core IR Concepts for POLSC 115

Anarchy – Waltz on three attributes of structure of international system. Implications of decentralized international system structure for enforcement of rules, pursuit of interests, war and peace. How systemic pressures influence policy choices. Security concerns, commitment problems and competitive power politics.

Balance of Power/Threat – when do states balance, buckpass, bandwagon; for security or for spoils.

Power – hard and soft power; impact of changing power bases over time; rise and fall of great powers. Causes of hegemonic war and hegemonic stability. Power and influence. Power and interests.

Security Dilemma – conceptual foundation of insecurity and impact of offense and defensive advantages (Jervis' article and game theory); also application to conflict groups in weak and failed states.

Uses of Force – deterrence (nuclear and conventional), coercion (including terrorism), brute force

International Institutions – IGOs, NGOs, transnational organizations. Do international organizations offer a way out of anarchy; how do they affect the degree of cooperation/noncooperation in world politics; distinguish rational choice explanations for promoting cooperation and constructivist explanations about the power of norms and ideas. Comparison of institutions, their missions and relative impact (UN: collective security, peacekeeping, human rights; WTO: trade, etc.)

Continuity and Change in IR – proliferation of actors and how states have responded to challenges to sovereignty; impact of transnational forces – both old and new, predatory and progressive: from pirates and drug cartels to enlightenment thinkers, environmental and human rights NGOs); spread of new norms and how they take root in domestic and international institutions (e.g. underpinning the genocide convention, humanitarian interventions, global warming studies, etc.)

Domestic Political Sources of Foreign Policy – (A) rational choice explanations (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita); maximizing leadership interests over national interests. (B) Democratic Peace through institutions and shared values. (C) Cultural, religious and ethnic conflict.

International Political Economy – comparing approaches: Liberalism, Mercantilism, Marxism; international trade and finance; Winners and Losers from Globalization; rise of China and India; development.

Decision-making Theories – organizational and bureaucratic interests and politics and how they influence foreign policy; psychological approaches to IR: sources and impact of biases.

Social Science Approaches – explaining why IR is a social science and not in the realm of political philosophy; Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism; introduction to qualitative and quantitative methods (including use of articles employing various methods).