

Chapter 14 → Global Politics in the Twenty-First Century

Which theoretical perspective best describes and characterizes the global political system?

- Theory provides us with a framework for looking at the world
- It has a structure for organizing and prioritizing the bewildering array of issues and events that make up global politics
- Liberalism is in ascendancy among international relations scholars, but there is no accepted theoretical wisdom on the nature and dynamics of global politics.
- Realists see a cyclical struggle for power in an anarchic world
- Liberals see increasing interdependence
- Neo-Marxists and dependency theorists see harmful hierarchies and patterns of dominance
- Feminists stress a gendered perspective of global politics processes and structures
- Environmentalists view the world in terms of ecological sustainability

What are Lessons on the past?

- We are all products of the past events, and the world in which we live is the products of the evolution of historical forces and human decisions
- We can point the existence of dynamics that took place during the Peloponnesian wars in today's politics (such as the position of weaker actors and balance of power activity)
- Although it is important to be aware of past events, it is a mistake to rely on them to the exclusion of other factors
- Many times, scholars and politicians draw on the past to justify their arguments about the present
- Many things have changed; new issues have arisen, new technologies developed, new global processes created
- We do live in a different world, although it is not so different we can afford to ignore the past

Is the international system fragmenting or integrating?

- This section suggest that we live in a world characterized by two forces: convergence and divergence
- We see convergence in the increasing interdependence between states, the growth of IGO's and NGO's awareness and action devoted to transnational issues such as the environment, and growing contact, travel, and transactions between the people of the world
- Divergence in the continued conflict between states, the disintegration of some states, ethnic conflict, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and the split between the technological haves and have-nots
- The enduring national unity debate is a reminder that we are not immune from the forced of divergence

Are states becoming obsolete?

- State borders have become increasingly porous in the face of weapons technology, trade, financial flows, international travel etc.
- Substate actors are becoming more prominent, as are transnational issues that cut across the state borders such as pollution, refugee flows, and environmental degradation
- States still exert a tremendous influence on all our lives, whether as objects of our loyalty or providers of services we value
- The sovereignty of the state has not yet eroded to the point where we can speak of the imminent demise of the state in world politics

Is military power less relevant?

- The profile of economic issues has been raised
- Governments are increasingly preoccupied with concerns about trade wealth
- Efforts have been made by both states and a global and regional basis to establish free trade principles and practices, and to expand these practices to more and more areas of economic activity
- Military preparedness is still seen as vital in many (if not most) countries of the world. Perhaps we should not dismiss the importance of military power too quickly

What are causes of war, and how can conflicts be managed or prevented?

- The problem of war is still one of the priorities of international relations
- War is one of the enduring characteristics of global politics, and yet the mechanisms we have at our disposal to prevent, control, or stop it are still limited
- Canadian's and Norwegian's emphasis on human security, stress the need to provide care for individuals affected by war
- This questions the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention complicates the issue further

How can the proliferation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) be stopped?

- The spread of weapons creates regional tensions, destabilizes local military balances, and increases the likelihood of war
- The possibility that WMD's will increasingly fall into the hands of terrorist groups adds urgency to this issue
- Canada's recent initiatives to create an international ban on the use of landmines are some of the more prominent examples of progress in conventional arms control

What is the future of the international economy?

- One suggests that states will turn to mercantilist practices based on economic nationalism
- Another suggests that we are heading into a world of increasingly liberal free trade, with barriers to goods and services falling steadily
- It seems as if the liberal model of free trade, is in ascendance, manifested in the creation of the WTO and the expansion of free trade areas

- The expanding role of women are playing in the global economy today
- The persistence of high government debt loads and continued increase in the capability and employment of advanced technology

Are international organizations getting stronger or weaker?

- International organizations are a key manifestation of cooperation in international affairs
- They serve to enhance and enforce cooperation but these organizations are ignored, poorly supported or regarded with suspicion
- International organizations, showing signs of decay, others struggle to adapt to a new international environment or reduced levels of finance
- International organizations are composed of states or individuals
- Depending on their commitment of their members of states or individuals

How will environmental issues affect global politics?

- Environmental degradation has emerged as a serious global issue, regional issues and public policy issue within states
- There are increasing international efforts to manage environmental problems through the establishment of treaties and multilateral institutions, such as the convention of biological diversity
- New political perspectives have emerged with the environment as the core concern
- We have seen clashes between environmental protection and economic concerns such as competitiveness, growth, and jobs, through these may be compatible goals in the end

What will be the impact of the information revolution on global politics?

- Technological developments have led to a massive increase in the flow of information and ideas across borders, and the increased role of information as an engine of economic activity
- We must be aware of the extent to which these technologies may come to serve as instruments of propaganda, crime, war like it has been used today
- It is true that knowledge is power, information technology could serve as liberating tool for the oppressed

How will increasing migration of people affect global politics?

- People are fleeing areas devastated by conflict, environmental degradation, economic hardship etc.
- Attracted by hoped of a better life, jobs, security, food, clothing, and shelter
- We see many examples of generosity and compassion in the form of immigration and aid from NGO's
- This may lead to efforts to change the root conditions that lead to migrations in the first place
- Maybe, it will lead to more and more people traveling the worlds religions, unwanted, with no place to go

What will be the future impact of the power differential between the developing and developed world?

- Ever-widening gap in economic and political power exists between the rich countries of industrialized world
- It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the disparities will continue to widen, as environmental degradation and pollution disproportionately affect poorer regions
- Population and migration place pressure on limited resources, as economic development in the south countries to lag behind that in the north

What are the best strategies for development and aid?

- Liberals approach development with one path, while dependency theory suggests another
- Sustainable development strategies will have succession in the future, and efforts to promote the role of women in development will increase socioeconomic stability of poor areas in the world
- New approaches favour small-scale improvements, gender analysis, and culturally and environmentally appropriate technology

CONCLUSION: HUMANITY AND WORLD POLITICS

- Origins, currents and directions – should be clear at this stage
- Without an understanding of the past and the present we cannot hope to make even fragmentary estimations concerning the future
- The paradoxically twinned themes of convergence and divergence continue to dominate the discussion on global politics
- Yet our perspective must change in spite of what appears to be the increasing parochialism of humanity
- “stranded between old conceptions of political conduct and a wholly new conception between the inadequacy of the nation-state the emerging imperative of global community” Doyle, M
- in terms of future survival, cooperation is essential without it, all else is impossible; states with extensive multilateral ties, such as Canada, have a vital role to play; more to the point, we all do.