World Politics

International Relations and Globalisation in the 21st Century

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CHAPTER 1
International Relations and Globalisation

In this chapter you will gain understanding of the following:

- What is meant by International Relations (IR), international relations and globalisation

- How globalisation affects our understanding of IR over time

- What has occurred over the last quarter century to affect how we understand IR

- Rival theoretical approaches to understanding globalisation

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🌍 ***Introductory box   Migrants, refugees and crisis***

In this introductory box, Jeanne Park of the US-based, Council on Foreign Relations, emphasises a headline international crisis in 2016: millions of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe from many parts of the world as a result of multifaceted and interlinked crises (including: international wars, domestic conflicts and economic catastrophe). These intertwined events underline the highly interdependent nature of international relations, while drawing our attention to the

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fact that borders between countries are no bar to determined people desperate to escape crises. Europe's refugee and migrant crisis is a key example of the way globalisation has made the world increasingly interdependent, so that no one part of the world can remain unaffected by the knock-on effects of a crisis somewhere else.

Migrants and refugees streaming into Europe from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have presented European leaders and policymakers with their greatest challenge since the debt crisis. The International Organization for Migration calls Europe the most dangerous destination for irregular migration in the world and the Mediterranean the world's most dangerous border crossing. Yet despite the escalating human toll, the European Union's collective response to its current migrant influx has been ad hoc and, critics charge, more focused on securing the bloc's borders than on protecting the rights of migrants and refugees. However, with nationalist parties ascendant in many member states and concerns about Islamic terrorism looming large across the continent, it remains unclear if the bloc or its member states are capable of implementing lasting asylum and immigration reforms. (Park, 2015)

Globalisation is a term that was first used in *international relations* in the 1980s. At first, it was only used by economists who wanted to describe what they characterised as the recent emergence of a *global* economy. Today, the phenomenon of globalisation is wider than economic globalisation: now it refers to a greatly increased interdependency beyond the realm of economics, extending to technology, culture, politics and how states and non-state institutions relate to one another. The result is that now we cannot think seriously about international relations without factoring in how globalisation moulds power and its use. The fact of globalisation focuses our attention on international relations during a period of profound change when even the hitherto most powerful countries, such as the United States, have lost ability definitively to influence international outcomes.

This introductory chapter examines current international relations and how globalisation affects it. More generally, our book has two key aims. First, we want to introduce readers to the overall subject matter of international relations. Second, we aim to equip our readers with basic conceptual knowledge and the awareness necessary to undertake more advanced study in International Relations. The overall objective is to encourage readers to understand recent developments in international relations and to prepare them intellectually to evaluate future changes.

The first section of this chapter surveys how globalisation has transformed our understanding of international relations. The second section focuses on globalisation controversies and explains how they affect our understanding of international relations. Following your reading of this chapter, you should understand the nature of important recent changes in international relations, including the impact of globalisation.

International Relations and globalisation

The first thing to do is to introduce and explain the book's key term: *international relations*. It is important to note that 'international relations' has two distinct, yet interrelated, meanings. First, when spelt with a capital 'I' and capital 'R' (*International Relations*), it refers to an academic

discipline which evolved in recent decades from the subject area called 'Politics'. Because it has its roots in the study of politics, the discipline of International Relations (or *IR*) is sometimes referred to as 'International Politics' or 'World Politics'. Whatever term we use, we are referring to essentially the same discipline, the aim of which is to explain and predict the behaviour of important entities whose actions have a bearing on the lives of people all around the world. These entities might be individual states and governments, whose actions undoubtedly have a direct effect on their citizens and neighbouring states – but they may just as easily be groups of states, international organisations, businesses that operate worldwide or even a multinational terrorist entity, such as Daesh/Islamic State. The aim of International Relations is to examine how these various types of bodies interact with one another, for what purposes and to what ends. In sum, as an academic discipline, International Relations studies: (1) how and why states engage with each other; and (2) the international activities of various important 'non-state actors'.

Box 1.1   Emergence and development of International Relations as an academic discipline

The purpose of this box is to explain and account for the emergence and development of International Relations as an academic discipline after the First World War.

The academic discipline of International Relations (IR) has existed for a century, emerging in 1918, directly after the First World War. Since then, the world has changed greatly, as have the ways in which we theorise and understand world politics. Globalisation represents one of the most profound changes over the past century, with significant effects on how we understand power, identity, economics and security, among other things.

Because of its wide focus, it should come as no surprise that the academic discipline of IR is multidisciplinary. This means it employs insights from various academic areas, including: politics, economics, history, law and sociology. The first chair – that is, a professorship – in IR was created at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK. The chair in IR was established for an explicit and understandable reason: to try to discover the causes of international conflict and thereby improve the chances for global peace, lessening the likelihood of international war. Initially then, IR was concerned primarily with international conflict and its causes. Over time, when it became clear that the causes of conflict were wide-reaching, complex and exceptionally difficult to resolve, the IR's subject matter expanded. Over time, it came to include:

- *international political economy* – often referred to as *IPE* – which studies the political effects of international economic interactions
- international organisation (that is, how and why regional and international bodies form and interact)
- foreign policymaking (that is, what governments do to try and achieve their goals beyond their domestic environments)
- *Strategic* (or *Security*) *Studies* (how governments seek to protect their citizens from external threats)
- peace research (that is, how we can maintain peace and seek peaceful solutions to conflict).

All of these areas of concern fall under the general heading, and provide the subject matter, of the discipline of International Relations.

As already noted, when we refer to the academic discipline of International Relations we use a capital 'I' and capital 'R'. When we use a small 'i' and a small 'r' (international relations) we are referring to the totality of significant international interactions involving states *and* important non-state actors. Because this is theoretically a limitless endeavour, in practice our emphasis is on states (or governments: the terms are often used interchangeably) and a range of important non-state actors, including: *multinational corporations* (*MNCs*) (such as Microsoft, Apple, Google and Shell), *international non-governmental organisations* (*INGOs*) (such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth), and *intergovernmental organisations* (*IGOs*) (such as the United Nations, European Union and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation). Many such non-state actors play important roles in international relations and we shall examine them in future chapters.

Turning to globalisation we can note that, although in common usage only fairly recently, the concept is not new. Its origins can be seen in the work of various nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectuals, including the theoretician of Communism, the German intellectual Karl Marx (1818–83). Along with another German, Fredrich Engels (1820–95), Marx is widely acknowledged as a key figure in the development of Communism, the ideology that animated the Soviet Union and its international relations for nearly a century following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. In the mid-nineteenth century, Marx and Engels had recognised that capitalism was both integrating and shaping the development of international relations, especially in the way that it was leading to a capitalist global economy. Marx and Engels turned out to be right: by the early twentieth century, there *was* a global capitalist economy.

The progress of both globalisation and a capitalist global economy was temporarily disrupted by the First World War and the subsequent decades. The 1920s and, especially, the 1930s were characterised not by advancing economic globalisation but by *economic protectionism* and *economic nationalism* – that is to say, a shrinking rather than an expansion of international economic activity. The Second World War followed in 1939, and the Cold War came fast on the heels of the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The Cold War was a forty-year conflict which dominated International Relations with the fluctuating relationship between the USA and the USSR – and its significant global effects. The USA and the USSR were known as the 'superpowers', because of their possession of large quantities of nuclear weapons and their global foreign policies. Their conflict centred on vastly different ideological interpretations of what were desirable outcomes in international relations. Because their conflict did not involve 'hot' war – that is, actual face-to-face fighting – it is known as a 'cold' war between two ideologically opposed adversaries. While the USA wished to see the international spread of *liberal democracy* and *capitalism*, the USSR wanted to see the advance of revolutionary *Communism*, with the goal of dramatically changing the international order. When the Cold War abruptly and unexpectedly ended in the late 1980s, it not only marked the end of the ideological division between the USA and the USSR, and the demise of international Communism and its ideological challenge to liberal democracy and capitalism, but also signified the return to centrality of globalisation for our understanding of IR.

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s coincided with the onset of a still-continuing, highly dynamic phase of globalisation. Our understanding of international relations is affected in various ways. First, the end of the Cold War threw the study of international relations into a state of still unresolved uncertainty and flux, as we considered how to move away from serious ideological tension to increased international cooperation, in a world suddenly and dramatically transformed.

The end of the Cold War was soon followed by much talk of a cooperative 'new international order'. This reflected post-Cold War optimism: maybe now there could be improved international collaboration, with fresh commitment to strengthening the role of key international organisations, especially the United Nations, to deal with global problems and insecurities and bring about improvements. These included: improved, more equitable development; reduction of gender inequalities; fewer armed conflicts; lessening of human rights abuses, and determined action to tackle environmental problems. To manage multiple global interdependencies it was necessary to greatly improve global governance.

This was highly problematic, as there was no international agreement on *how* to improvement things. Worse, there were serious international conflicts, often with religious, ethnic or nationalist dimensions; many began within countries but often then spilled over into neighbouring states, creating cross-border crises. Examples in the 1990s included serious conflicts in Burundi, Haiti, Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, which all led to grave humanitarian crises requiring external intervention to try to resolve them. The conflicts underlined how difficult it was definitively to move away from the problems of the old international order characterising the Cold War to a new era marked by international peace, prosperity and cooperation.

The conflicts, which all attracted extensive external intervention, emphasise how interconnected the world is. In the past, international relations was often interpreted as primarily involving the interaction of autonomous states. Their involvement with each other was primarily at the international level. It did not routinely involve domestic issues. Now, however, globalisation emphasises that both domestic and international issues are intimately connected, with significant effects on our understanding of international relations.

Why is globalisation important for understanding International Relations?

Globalisation has become particularly important over the last quarter century, a period which saw the emergence of a global economy and a communications revolution. It was also a time that saw the end of a fundamental ideological division centrally affecting International Relations, which involved both the USA and a multinational entity known as the Soviet Union or USSR, whose core state was Russia. As already noted, the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s coincided with increased globalisation. The post-Cold War period – roughly the last twenty-five years – was a time of rapidly expanding globalisation, involving increased technological, political, economic and cultural interactions. The result was fundamentally to question orthodox thinking about International Relations. This is because study of IR had long presumed strict separation between internal and external affairs, the domestic and international arenas, the national and the global. Now, in this newly interdependent post-Cold War world, events abroad often affect what happens at home, while developments within a country may well have knock-on effects internationally.

How best to understand the impact of globalisation on today's international relations? To answer this question, we need first to ascertain what globalisation *is*. The late Ulrich Beck (d.2015), an influential sociologist who wrote a lot about globalisation, supplies a useful definition. For Beck (2000: 10), globalisation is a term for collective 'processes through which sovereign national

states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks'. Conceptualised like this, globalisation has the potential to undermine a key idea in International Relations. That is, that states are all-important (a belief particularly central to the ideas of *Realists* and *neo-Realists*, discussed in Chapters 6 and 9). This view is undermined because, as Beck's definition indicates, globalisation involves various kinds of cross-border or, as he terms them, 'transnational' non-state 'actors'. For Beck (2000), the process of globalisation is characterised by:

- the geographical expansion and ever greater density of international trade, as well as the global networking of finance markets and the growing power of transnational corporations
- the ongoing evolution of information and communications technology
- the universal demands for human rights – the (lip service paid to the) principle of democracy
- the stream of images from global culture industries
- the emergence of a post-national, polycentric world politics, in which transnational actors (corporations, non-governmental organisations, United Nations) are growing in power and number alongside governments
- the question of world poverty
- the issue of global environmental destruction
- trans-cultural conflicts in one and the same place.

Thus, globalisation is characterised by intensification of global interconnectedness between both states and non-state actors. It is a multidimensional process involving technological, political, economic and cultural issues. It implies lessening of the significance of territorial boundaries and, theoretically, of government-directed political and economic structures and processes. In sum, globalisation is characterised by

1. rapid integration of the world economy to produce a 'borderless' economic environment,
2. speedy and significant innovations and growth in international electronic communications, and
3. increasing political and cultural awareness of humanity's global interdependence.

It would not be correct to imply that the first time the international community was concerned about the outcome of increasing interdependence was after the Cold War. Half a century earlier, in 1945 when the Second World War ended, the United Nations was created, an explicit attempt to increase and improve collective security. Until that time, the international system had largely developed in an an hoc, unplanned way, with little in the way of global institutions until the League of Nations was founded in 1919. Following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which marked the end of Europe's long-running and deeply destabilising religious wars, the Peace laid foundations of an irreligious international system dominated by secular states, with three secular cornerstones: the balance of power, international law and international diplomacy. The nature of the international system was ideologically informed by the decidedly secular values of the American (1776) and French Revolutions (1789), and subsequent turn to nationalism, colonialism and imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, after the First World War, a turn to economic nationalism and extremist ideologies of both left and right. Following the slide into global conflagration in 1939, the UN was primarily animated by a collective desire to rebuild collective security, so such a conflict would never happen again.

From the nineteenth century, many issues were identified as global, not exclusively national, in character. As a result, states sought to develop collective, consensual outlooks and strategies. Examples include the successful fight against slavery in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth, increasing focus on justice and human rights, including gender equality and religious freedom, as well as the fight against nuclear weapons proliferation and environmental degradation and destruction. Following the Second World War, the UN took a global lead in relation to such issues, establishing itself in the process as a key forum for the development of global public policy.

For Stone and Ladi (2015: 839), 'global public policy networks' are best understood as 'a proliferation of administrative practices and processes of policymaking and policy delivery beyond but often overlapping with traditional nation-state policy processes. New formal and informal institutions and actors are behind these policy processes, often in cooperation with national public administrations but sometimes quite independently from them'. Such actors include: government agencies, international organisations, multinational business corporations and various civil society actors, including: nongovernmental organisations, professional associations and religious groups. What they all have in common is that they join together to achieve what none on its own can accomplish. In other words, global public policy networks can bring together both state and non-state actors in pursuit of shared objectives. The UN is a major meeting point of such networks, concerned with a variety of objectives. While the UN was established by governments and in many respects is still primarily characterised by their interaction, it is also the case that the UN is *the* global meeting place of many important non-state actors, who share a concern with global public policy.

The first thing to note, as shown in Table 1.1, is that there is a large number of significant state and non-state actors active at the UN. The huge numbers of actors represented in the table both create and reflect dense cross-border connections and are instrumental in creating more complex patterns of governance within countries.

Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs)

Only internationally recognised states can be members of IGOs. Most were founded after 1945 although some functional bodies were established earlier, for example, the International Telecommunications Union was established nearly a century earlier in 1865. Several IGOs inaugurated after the Second World War – for example, the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), EU and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – have multiple tasks, including security, welfare and human rights goals.

There are said to be 137 IGOs (Intergovernmental.org). Conceptually, members of an IGO will aim to preserve their formal autonomy while being bound in certain policymaking options as a consequence of their IGO commitments. Precisely how IGO membership can impact upon countries' domestic politics depends on: (1) the extent to which countries are enmeshed in IGO networks; and (2) their domestic political arrangements.

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs)

The number of active INGOs has increased greatly in the last few decades – from around two thousand in the early 1970s to around forty thousand now (Willetts 2008: 357; Anheier and

Table 1.1   Types and numbers of international actors

Actor	Number	Examples
States	193 (members of the UN)	Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Sudan, United Kingdom
Intergovernmental organisations	137	European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, United Nations
Multinational business corporations	c. 60,000	Coca-Cola, Ford, Microsoft, Nestlé, Shell
Single country non-governmental organisations	c. 10,000	Freedom House, Médecins sans Frontières
International non-governmental organisations	c. 40,000	Amnesty International, Greenpeace International, Oxfam, Red Crescent

Sources: Adapted from Willetts (2008: 357), Anheier and Themudo [2002: 195] and data at www.ngo.in

Themudo 2002: 195; www.ngo.in). INGOs are cross-border bodies, such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace International and the Roman Catholic Church, whose members are individuals or private groups drawn from more than one country. The chief theoretical assumptions concerning INGOs are that: (1) states are not the only important cross-border actors in international relations; and (2) INGOs can be politically significant. This can be noted in the case of 'failed' or 'collapsed' states. As noted above, these are countries where state authority no longer exists. Such countries tend to be highly reliant on aid provided by INGOs 'for basic supplies and services' (Hague and Harrop 2013: 47). INGOs can also be executors of policy stemming from various international organisations, including the UN and the EU.

Some INGOs also seek to change state policy more proactively in a variety of political, social or economic areas. The influence of such actors is not assured but depends on two main factors: (1) how skilful they are in infiltrating national policymaking processes; and (2) the extent to which a targeted government is receptive to them. Their effectiveness may be augmented when groups of transnational actors link up – for example, in pursuit of political, religious, gender-orientated or developmental goals – to encourage popular pressure for domestic change.

Important post-Cold War changes affecting International Relations

One of the consequences of globalisation is that *all* countries, rich and poor, large and small, are now significantly affected by global economic and information systems. In addition, many states, especially in the developing world, are also experiencing various political and/or cultural challenges, including those stemming from ethnic, religious or national forces. As a result, governments around the world face key – economic, technological, ecological and cultural – challenges which many find difficult to deal with.

Three key developments noted above – the end of the Cold War, increased desire for improved global cooperation and emergence of new conflicts, including the spread of international terrorism – are all explicitly connected to the recent increased salience of globalisation. Later chapters will reflect this development in both theoretical and empirical ways. For now, however, we need to identify and briefly examine specific examples in order to emphasise the increased importance of globalisation for

understanding international relations. We can identify seven interlinked post-Cold War changes in international relations, all of which are linked to globalisation and which require us to rethink how we understand international relations:

1. increased numbers of states
2. growing numbers of 'failed' states and increasing international terrorism
3. new forms of international conflict
4. third wave of democracy
5. global importance of capitalism
6. transnational civil society
7. many examples of regional integration.

There are now more states than ever before and, second, there are growing numbers of 'failing' or 'failed' states. The term, 'state', is used in International Relations in two, more or less, discrete ways. The state is a community of people who interact in the same domestic political system and who have some common values. The state is also an entity enjoying exclusive recognition under *international law*.

The number of states has been growing for some time. In 1945 there were just over fifty states recognised by the UN; today there are around two hundred, four times as many. After the Second World War, most new states emerged as a result of *decolonisation*, although more recently the collapse of existing states – including the USSR, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and Somalia – also led to novel ones. Sometimes, in addition, countries saw their system of government collapse. These are what are called 'failed' states. Failed states – including, since the early 2000s, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria and Yemen – effectively 'implode', with governmental disintegration, and become key sources of domestic failure and regional and international instability. Note however that 'failed' states can 'recover' their 'stateness' by reasserting: effective, centralised government, rule of law, and increased security. The instability of stated failure is often linked to a third important change of the post-Cold War period: new sources of international conflict, often involving religious, ethnic and national fights, which usually begin *within* countries but then often spread across international borders to affect neighbouring countries and regions.

The last four decades saw the spread of democracy from Southern Europe to Latin America and East Asia, by way of Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This phenomenon was called 'the third wave of democracy', following two earlier periods of democratic expansion, with the initial one occurring in the nineteenth century and the second one taking place after the Second World War.

> ## Box 1.2   Three waves of democracy
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> The purpose of this box is to explain and account for the development over time of democracy, a key factor in the expansion of modern international relations. Democracy is important for international relations because it is said that the more democracies there are, the more likely international relations is to be peaceful and cooperative. Do you agree with this claim?
>
> *(Continued)*

(Continued)

What is democracy? The first thing to bear in mind is that not everyone agrees what it is. Yet most people would probably agree that for any political system to be called 'democratic' it must have two features. First, all members of society must have equal access to power. Second, everyone enjoys universally recognised freedoms and liberties.

The first wave of democracy began in the early nineteenth century when the vote was granted to the majority of white males in the USA. At its peak, the first wave saw twenty-nine democracies, mainly in Europe. The first wave continued until 1922 when the Fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, gained power in Italy. The next twenty years – until 1942 – saw a drop in the number of democracies around the world, down to twelve. The second wave began following the Allied victory in the Second World War, proceeding over the next fifteen years until 1962, with the number of democracies rising to thirty-six. Then, there was a dip – with the number of democracies decreasing to thirty – until the mid-1970s. The third wave of democracy began in 1974, with democratisation in Greece, Portugal and Spain, followed by dozens more states democratising in many parts of the world. Today, more than two thirds of the world's countries have recognisably democratic political systems.

Another significant change has been the universal spread of capitalism. This served to increase the international significance of powerful international economic non-state actors, including multinational business corporations and international financial institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The spread of capitalism and the significance of international organisations created to police and govern it were influential in encouraging the 'alter-globalisation movement' (see below) to organise. This movement was in turn a manifestation of the sixth development: transnational civil society (TCS). Many entities in TCS share concern that globalisation is primarily an expanded form of international capitalism, making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Partly a function of the global communications revolution, a chief consequence of TCS is regional or global spread and interchange of ideas and information. To understand the social dynamics of TCS it is useful to perceive the international system as an agglomeration of various issue areas – for example, environmental, human rights, political, religious, gender and development concerns – organised under the rubric of 'social transnationalism'. This is facilitated by multiple linkages between individuals and groups interested in the same goals but separated by large physical distances. Cross-border exchanges of experiences and information and shift of funds not only facilitate development of TCS but also add to national, regional and/or global campaigns.

Unlike domestic civil society, TCS is not territorially fixed. According to Clarke (2016: 82), 'The expansion of transnational civil society challenges the regulatory reach of nation-states, both individually and collectively.' Many component parts of TCS work towards normatively 'progressive' goals, including improved standards of governance, by encouraging popular, cross-border coalitions to challenge government decisions on a variety of issues. TCS effectiveness may be increased when influential organisations – such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House – play a leading role.

Finally, there is enhanced regional integration, involving dozens of states in various parts of the world. Examples include not only well-established entities like the European Union (EU), but also more recently established regional blocs, such as: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Latin America's MERCOSUR (El Mercado Común del Sur; Southern Common Market), a revitalised Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU), successor to the Organisation of African Unity. What all such regional

organisations have in common is the desire for closer relations among neighbouring states, especially closer economic relations. The EU is the best current example of the importance of cross-border actors for regional political and economic outcomes. All EU member states *must* have democratic systems, characterised by (near) universal suffrage, and regular 'free and fair' elections. But beyond this, there is a 'collective ethos' among member states characterised by vibrant relationships between processes and practices at domestic, transnational and inter-national levels. This means that in the EU, political and economic outcomes are consistently affected by cross-border interactions involving a variety of actors. As a result, the EU is the world's most regionally integrated political and economic environment. Among member states, political and economic outcomes are informed by regular inputs not only from a supranational institution – the Commission – but also from various transnational and international actors.

The importance of cross-border actors for EU member states is exemplified in the accession processes of the most recent members – including Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Poland (joined the Union in May 2004), Romania and Bulgaria (January 2007), and Croatia (January 2013). To join the EU, all these countries had to be both democracies *and* have 'market' – that is, capitalist – economies. To explain the provenance of the necessary politi-cal and economic reforms, especially in the many former communist states that now belong to the EU, analysts often refer to the necessity of conforming to the regional body's *norms* and *values* (Cini and Borragan, 2016); and in this regard, cross-border actors of various kinds are significant.

Together, these seven developments – numerous new states; failed states; widespread but not universal democratisation; global spread of capitalism; transnational civil society; new forms of international conflict and more regional integration – collectively challenge two long-held assumptions in international relations:

- the separateness of domestic and international realms
- the autonomous nation-state is invariably the key actor.

How to impress your examiner

When addressing the topic of 'globalisation' in international relations, don't be tempted to examine and explain it as a singular phenomenon. Globalisation is a simple word used to explain a complex phenomenon, covering political, social, economic, cultural and technological issues. You will impress your examiner if you show him or her that you are aware of this and seek to explain the impact of globalisation on international relations according to which dimensions of globalisation you are specifically addressing in your answer.

Understanding globalisation

To complete this brief survey of the impact of recent globalisation on international relations, it is useful to highlight the highly controversial nature of globalisation. Since the late 1990s, glo-balisation has become the source of intense political disputes at both domestic and international levels. Hundreds of thousands have protested on the streets against the impact of globalisation throughout the world while numerous non-governmental organisations and campaign groups

have lobbied for change. As such, the claims made for and against globalisation are numerous, complex and sometimes highly technical. To summarise fully is impossible. The arguments offered below are largely indicative but provide a good sense of the main issues. Note that we shall examine in sufficient detail in later chapters key issues merely noted below. Also bear in mind that the views noted below – 'globalist', 'alter-globalist' and 'globalisation sceptic' – may be linked more to explicit positions taken by activists than reflect an academic view embedded in the International Relations literature.

Whether we think of globalisation in terms of an academic view or an activist's judgement, both would probably concur that globalisation is a continuing means by which the world is more and more characterised by common activity, in many highly important aspects of life – such as trade, politics, conflict, culture, religion and crime. Certainly, as Ulrich Beck noted above, such factors are globally interrelated in many ways that seem significant for our understanding of international relations. In addition, globalisation is also a matter of a change in consciousness, with 'actors' from various spheres, including business, religion, sport, politics and many other activities, progressively thinking and acting in the context of what is an increasingly 'globalised' world. For example, 'territoriality' – a term signifying a close connection or limitation with reference to a particular geographic area or state – now has less significance for many analysts of international relations than it once did.

Note, however, that in the study of globalisation no single account has managed to acquire the status of orthodoxy. Various theories vie with each other for best explanatory power and there is much continuing debate. Is globalisation 'good' or 'bad'? Or, is it a myth? Seeking to cut through this complexity, we can identify three distinct sets of arguments. First, there is the claim that globalisation is a real and profoundly transformative process; and sometimes it involves allegedly beneficial outcomes – such as improved democracy or human rights more generally. This is the 'globalist' view. Second, there is the 'alter-globalist' perspective. Proponents agree with the globalist view that globalisation is an important and influential development. They differ in this regard: at least potentially, globalists see globalisation as a progressive force; alter-globalists, on the other hand, see globalisation as leading overwhelmingly to unwelcome developments, especially for the 'have-nots'. Third, the 'globalisation sceptic' view sees globalisation as essentially a myth, a misplaced focus that distracts us from confronting the real forces shaping societies and political choices today.

Also note, however, that a three-way split is rather crude and simplistic, as it refers to what are called ideal-type constructions. Ideal types are heuristic devices (that is, they help us find something out) to order a field of enquiry and clarify primary lines of argument and, thus, establish fundamental points of disagreement. Ideal types provide an accessible way into the melee of voices – but they are starting points, not end points, for making sense of the great globalisation debate.

Globalists

Globalists reject the assertion that globalisation is a synonym for Americanisation or Westernisation. While it is not denied that the discourse of globalisation may well serve the interests of powerful economic and social forces in the West, for the globalist, globalisation reflects deep structural changes in how individuals and groups organise their activities, including across state boundaries.

Such changes are evident in, among other developments, the sustained growth in numbers and influence of *multi-* or *transnational corporations* (TNCs), world financial markets and diffusion of popular culture (Willetts 2008).

Central to the globalist conception is an emphasis on the *spatial* attributes of globalisation, that is, a concern with space and territory. In seeking to differentiate global networks and systems from those operating at other spatial scales, such as the local or the national, the globalist analysis identifies globalisation primarily with activities and relations which crystallise on an interregional or intercontinental scale. This leads to more precise analytical distinctions between processes of globalisation and processes of regionalisation and localisation, that is, the nexus of relations between states that are geographically close to each other and the clustering of social relations within states, respectively. In this account, the relationship between globalisation and these other scales of social organisation is not typically conceived of in hierarchical, or mutually exclusive, terms. On the contrary, the interrelations between these different scales are considered to be both fluid and dynamic.

Globalist attempts to establish a systematic specification of the concept of globalisation is further complemented by the significance attached to history. This involves locating contemporary globalisation within what the French historian Fernand Braudel refers to as the perspective of the 'longue durée' – that is, very long-term patterns of historical change. As, for example, the existence of pre-modern world religions confirms (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc.), globalisation is not only a phenomenon of the modern age. Making sense of contemporary globalisation requires placing it in the context of secular trends of world historical development. That development, as the globalist account also recognises, is punctuated by distinctive phases. For example, at times it seemed to intensify: for instance, during the era of 'world discovery' from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – setting in train European colonisation of vast areas of the world – to the so-called *belle époque* (French, 'beautiful era') of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This is often considered a 'golden age', characterised by peace between Europe's major states, new technologies improving people's lives, and developments in art and culture. However, between the First World War (1914–18) and the Second World War (1939–45) – the interwar period – the pace of globalisation seemed to speed up, slow down or even to go into reverse. Thus, to understand contemporary globalisation involves drawing on knowledge of what differentiates these discrete phases, including how such systems and patterns of global interconnectedness are organised and reproduced, their different geographies, and the changing configuration of power relations. Accordingly, the globalist account stretches the concept of globalisation to embrace the idea of its distinctive historical forms. This requires an examination of how patterns of globalisation vary over time and thus what is distinctive about it now.

Alter-globalists

Alter-globalists do not deny the transformative qualities of globalisation. But they have a wholly pessimistic view of it. And, as their name suggests, they want to 'alter' its outcomes to include better justice and equality for the world's poorest people. This is because they see globalisation as primarily a malign force, leading to increased oppression, exploitation and injustice. Unwelcome consequences of globalisation are said to include: restructuring of global trade, production and

finance to disadvantage the poor; migratory and refugee movements, especially in the developing world and the former Eastern European Communist bloc; increasing international terrorism; burgeoning ethnic and/or religious clashes especially within and between many states in the *Global South*; and the recent rise or resurgence of right-wing populists in Western Europe, in, for example, Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Such politicians seek to exploit some local people's fears of an 'influx' of foreigners – as a perceived result of economic globalisation – for their own political purposes. While they might be prepared to admit that global free trade theoretically has a good side – lower taxes and cheaper goods – for them this does not outweigh a less desirable outcome. This is a free(r) labour market with associated immigration, the consequence, they claim, of massive uncontrollable population movements from the poor world – for example, North and West Africa and Central and Eastern Europe – to the rich Western European world. (Whether such a movement of labour would actually be beneficial for European economies is rarely discussed.) Notable among the ranks of the alter-globalists are many conservative politicians and their media allies who claim that such population transfers are the main cause of increased societal and political conflicts between established and immigrant communities in formerly tight-knit neighbourhoods. Such concerns frequently inform xenophobic populist propaganda, for example, during Germany's recent presidential and legislative elections. In sum, while globalists see economic globalisation as a key to greater national and international stability and security, alter-globalists see the opposite outcome.

Globalisation sceptics

For the *globalisation sceptics* the very concept of globalisation is rather unsatisfactory. What, they ask, is 'global' about globalisation? If the global cannot be interpreted literally, as a universal phenomenon, then the concept of globalisation seems to be little more than a synonym for Westernisation or Americanisation.

Examining the concept of globalisation, sceptics want to ascertain what would be a conclusive empirical test of the claims of the globalisation thesis. One way to do this is to seek to compare today's globalisation trends with those noted in the past. For example, is there 'more' globalisation today – with overall greater impact – than there was, say, during what economic historians have averred was the *belle époque* of international interdependence: the late nineteenth century to the First World War (1914–18). For the sceptics, such analyses invite the conclusion that what we are witnessing is not globalisation, but a process of 'internationalisation' – more and more significant interactions between what are fundamentally autonomous *national* economies or societies – and 'regionalisation' or 'triadisation', referring to geographically focused, cross-border, economic and social exchanges.

Other sceptics go further, highlighting the importance not of globalisation but of 'fragmentation', implying economic, political and cultural 'implosion'. For example, this view highlights that in recent years, empires – for example, that of the Soviet Union, with its former 'imperial' control over vassal states in Central and Eastern Europe – have fragmented into many nation-states, while on the other hand growing numbers of poor people in, for example, Africa seem marginalised in terms of clear benefits of economic development. Overall, the sceptic argument highlights the continued salience of what globalists say has declined in importance in the contemporary world order: continued pre-eminence of territory, borders, place and national governments in relation to distribution and

location of power, production and wealth. In short, the sceptic view highlights a major divergence between a key understanding of globalisation theory – increased interdependence and declining importance of state boundaries – and what the sceptics see as a world that, for the most part, shows most people's everyday lives dominated primarily by local and national, not global, factors.

Conclusion

We began this chapter with a key presumption: the world has significantly changed since the 1980s, characterised by the end of the Cold War twenty-five years ago, the consequential demise of the Soviet bloc, and global emphasis on economic liberalisation, human rights, and political changes. Various aspects of globalisation, driven by a technologically sophisticated communications revolution, have collectively impacted upon domestic political outcomes in states around the world. This is because *all* states – big or small, rich or poor – have been touched significantly by two key, inter-related, developments: expansion of globalisation and post-Cold War interdependence.

Resource section

Questions

1. Identify and assess what you see as *three* characteristics of globalisation important for your understanding of international relations.
2. Is it possible to be objective about globalisation? Examine and comment on globalist, alter-globalist and globalisation-sceptic views.
3. Does economic globalisation lead to greater inequality?
4. Thinking of conflict in international relations, what is different today compared to the Cold War period (late 1940s–late 1980s)?
5. Why is globalisation linked to increased regionalisation?
6. To what extent does the development of 'transnational civil society' depend on the cross-border social ties generated by globalisation?
7. Are there any 'universal human rights'? If so, how does globalisation encourage their development?
8. How has the concept and practice of security changed as a result of globalisation?

Recommended reading

Dicken, P. (2014) *Global Shift: Mapping the Changing Contours of the World Economy* (7th edn, Sage).

A standard work on globalisation, the seventh edition provides comprehensive and up-to-date coverage of economic globalisation. The book is a clear guide to how the global economy is transformed by transnational corporations, states and interest groups, and technology; a detailed literature review that explains different theories of economic globalisation in the larger context of a descriptive account of newly industrialising economies; sectoral case studies – including a case study on agro-food industries – which illustrate diverse processes of globalisation; and up-to-date material on social movements, governance, environment and alternative economic systems.

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Haynes, J. (2005) *Comparative Politics in a Globalizing World* (Polity).

This book offers an accessible and broadly conceived examination of the impact of globalisation, primarily on comparative politics and secondarily on international relations. At the centre of the book is a focus on forces and processes of globalisation and how they impact on domestic outcomes in various kinds of states. The book poses and answers two key questions: How do various aspects of globalisation affect outcomes within states? What are the implications of globalisation for our understanding of comparative politics? By focusing on three kinds of states – established democracies, transitional democracies and non-democracies – Haynes explores how domestic outcomes are affected by contemporary globalisation.

Kolodziej, E. (2016) *Governing Globalization: Challenges for Democracy and Global Society* (Rowman & Littlefield).

This book develops the idea of globalisation as the emergence of a global society; presents a theory of governance predicable of all human societies, revolving around competing order, welfare and legitimacy (OWL) imperatives; and identifies fundamental flaws in the democratic solutions to global governance. To ensure that the democratic promise survives and thrives, Kolodziej calls for important reforms of the democratic project as prerequisites to deter and defeat increasingly powerful anti-democratic adversaries: authoritarian states, religiously informed regimes opposed to open societies; nihilistic social movements; self-styled terrorists; and vast transnational criminal networks. Essential reading for those interested in globalisation as an ideological construct.

Sparke, M. (2013) *Introducing Globalization: Ties, Tensions and Uneven Integration* (Wiley-Blackwell).

The purpose of the book is to help students develop informed opinions about globalisation, inviting them to become participants rather than just passive learners. It focuses on: (1) major economic, political and social ties that comprise contemporary global interdependency; and (2) a broad sweep of topics linked to globalisation, including: rise of transnational corporations and global commodity chains, global health challenges and policies, issues of worker solidarity and global labour markets, and emerging forms of global mobility by both business elites and their critics.

Stiglitz, J. (2007) *Making Globalization Work: The Next Steps to Global Justice* (Penguin).

Why doesn't globalisation benefit as many people as it might do? Stiglitz, a former chief economist at the World Bank, argues that things can change and that a world can exist where globalisation really does work for the many or most people.

Online resources

Understanding Globalisation

www.etu.org.za/toolbox/docs/development/globalisation.html

The aim of this guide is to provide an understanding of globalisation. When people talk about 'globalisation' or 'globalization' they are usually referring to technological, political, economic

and cultural changes which they believe make the world function in a different way from the way it did twenty or thirty years ago. Different opinions exist about origins, driving forces and implications of globalisation. This useful website examines some of them.

Globalization and International Relations

www.socsci.uci.edu/globalconnect/webppts/Intro2Glob/01%20Global%20Connect%20101.pdf

Useful website from the University of California Irvine, with a series of questions, presented in colourful PowerPoint format, which will enable you to get an idea of how much you know about globalisation and international relations.

For further resources related to this chapter visit http://study.sagepub.com/worldpolitics2e

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