



International Relations Today: Concepts and Applications

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International Relations is a dynamic discipline of academic area exploring the past and present events in the relations among nations, attempting in the process evolve an understanding of current events and possible future outcomes. Every day developments and issues in the field of international relations and international politics become significant topics for academic debates and theories in social sciences. Students of IR need to understand the theories connected to it, before they could embark upon understanding and analysing the current events. They also need a clear appreciation of the events in the 20th century like World War I & II, the Cold War, etc that have led to the development of nation-states, Inter-Governmental Organizations, and Regionalism that have considerable play in international affairs today.

This book is an academic textbook printed its second edition in 2019 with new updates on “International Relations Today: Concepts and Applications”. It has twelve chapters written by Professor Aneek Chatterjee, Department of Political Science Hoogly Mohsin College, India. It is written in a simple and lucid language, fluent and easy to understand. It leads a reader step by step on the process of IR, from one subject to another smoothly. It makes a very meaningful sequence of issues to learn what the International Relations really is.

In the first chapter, it deals with discipline of international relations, history, nature, scope and its importance in everyday life. It discusses this field emerged as a discipline and how it gained prominence after the Second World War. It provides clear and concise definition and understanding of the concept of international relations to the readers.

In the second chapter of the book, thirteen prominent theories of international relations have been examined, facilitating an in-depth understand of the theoretical context. Amongst the theories, the two well-known theories of international relations – Liberalism, introduced by liberalists after the First World War who believed the idea of peace and cooperation between states, and, Realism as a dissident theory of liberalism introduced by realists in the 1930s when the League of Nations faced with failure and the situation became conducive towards the Second World War - are very well explained. Following them are theories which have been introduced after the 1950s. Some of them are autonomy theories and others that have been introduced for the purpose of evaluating the Liberalist and Realist approach.

The third chapter covers a very vast part in international relations. It differentiates between the role of state, non-state actors and role played by them in international relations. For example, Multinational corporations, Inter-governmental organizations as well as International Non-governmental organizations are common linkages between state and non-state actors. The author points out the demands and influence these actors' role has in today's international relations. Next, significant concepts of national power and its elements that play a substantial role in promoting international relations are explained. The Chapter also discusses balance of power between states during the times of colonialism and imperialism that instils in a student clear understanding of the process of historic events in world politics and their aims for confronting each other.

In the fourth chapter, he focuses on the concepts and techniques of foreign policy of a state. This is an interrelated subject that has direct and indirect effects on the concept of national power. The author also embarks on a very crucial discussion as to why states, in particular major powers, consider national power and foreign policy as complimentary to each other. Through these discussions, the author pointed to the inseparable link between the third and fourth chapters to examine the role of state from national power and foreign policy perspectives.

The fifth chapter is specifically on the United Nations – an organization established after the end of Second World War in 1945. Commencing with its origin, important internal organs of the UN viz., the General Assembly, UN Security Council, International Court of Justice, Social and Economic Council, Trusteeship Council and General Secretariat of UN have been detailed. All rules, tasks, functions, procedures and responsibilities have been described and analysed. Similarly, the objectives of the UN has also been deliberated in detail.

In the sixth chapter of the book, the author brings into discussion Inter-governmental Organizations. As UN Organization has been created by nation-states, there are other organizations created or being created by nation-states for their economic and political objectives, known as Inter-governmental Organizations. The most popular organizations include Non-Alignment Movement, Commonwealth of Nations, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The author shows briefly the whole feature of every organization, its historic roots, memberships of the states, structures and their main objectives and activities. It provides very good information of Inter-governmental Organizations.

The cold war which is a very crucial period of the international relation is the subject of the seventh chapter. The author follows the elements and causes of cold war decade by decade in the aftermath of the Second World War. This chapter provides key information for a reader to learn about Post Second World War international order.

In the eighth chapter, the issues that emerge out of cold war have been systematically discussed. Critical situations, risk to international peace and security and other issues in international affairs have been explored in this chapter during and after Cold War. Important issues between the only two superpowers, United States and Soviet Union, have been explained well. The possible nuclear war, interventionism, expansion of democracy, capitalism and communism as well as the

endeavour to impose limitations on nuclear weapons by the bipolar world are also discussed. It highlights that all agreements which could help in returning normalcy to the international order have done by the only two super powers. By and large, seventh and eighth chapters have been allocated for the whole cold war period.

Regional organizations to promote economic, trade, transit, environment and energy related activities is the subject of the ninth chapter. Five major regional organizations have been explored by the author. Key topics include historic background, policies, structures, objectives and so on. These organizations include, for instance, European Union (EU), Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), African Union (AU) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In the tenth chapter, the author brings up the subject of international political economy. This segment of the book starts with the comprehensive understanding, purpose and definition of international political economy. Later the author starts the discussion on the process of Bretton Woods leading to the creation of WTO. It contains detailed discussion on the objectives, membership, organizational structure and main functions of World Trade Organization (WTO).

Foreign policy of major nations is the main topic of eleventh chapter which is divided in six parts. These nations include India, United States, China, Russia, Japan and England. This section of the book explores foreign policies of aforementioned states before and after the cold war years. However, the main focus is on the Cold War period. It helps a reader to understand the major nation's foreign policies and compare them with the present situations.

The last and twelfth chapter of this book, deals with the recent issues in international relations that are crucial in twenty first century. Globalization, Environment, Energy, Terrorism and the nature of terrorism are the main topics by which the author has explored the present international system. Given the importance of these issues, a student of social science is understand current issues and challenges in a comprehensive manner.

The title of the book indicates the purpose - whole subject of international relations from the past to present. Different issues on international relations from the past to present are explored by simple and fluent language. The whole concept and outlay of the book, it is felt, do justice to the title.

The contents which have been arranged based on the nature of IR, and the discussions capture the essence of past and present issues in the international system. The unipolar system after disintegration of Soviet Union and emergence of the only super power (US) points out today's international relations which is the main topic of the book.

The author, in his analysis, also shows how international politics today signals the possibility of a multipolar world - the rise of china as a major military and economic power, re-emergence of Russia, India and Germany as tomorrow's big powers. Also, the success of regional organizations like European Union and ASEAN, as economic and political blocs, lead the present affairs of

world towards multipolar system. So, by delving in the past and present, the book has literally provoked the possible world order through skilful discussions.

The book brings the main subjects of international relations as clear lessons, ideas and debates for the students, scholars and researchers who are interested in international affairs. For all, it is an academic textbook aimed to provide a clear conceptual understanding.

It is particularly helpful for the first year students like me to become accustomed the issues, events and common concepts of IR. This book has been published recently and it contains adequate amount of analysis which is based on academic data and events in international politics.

In concluding remarks, I would like to admit that this book enriched my own knowledge regarding the nature of and understanding of international relations. As a student of South Asia, I would like to recommend this book to the students, teachers, emerging scholars and researchers to use it in academic works and analysis.