

# Introducing Global Politics

Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*,  
Chapter 1

# Globalization

- Globalization: The emergence of a complex web of interconnectedness that means that our lives are increasingly shaped by events that occur, and decisions that are made, at a great distance from us.
- What is global politics? What does it mean to suggest that politics has gone global? Two meanings:
- Firstly, global means worldwide, having planetary (not merely regional or national) significance. Global politics, refers to politics that is conducted at a global rather than national or regional level. Examples: UN almost has universal membership, environment acquired a global character, economy became global because fewer and

# Global Politics

- However, the author does not believe that this state of interconnectedness absorbs all of its units into a global whole. For example, he does not support the claim that we live in a 'borderless world', or the assertion that the state is dead and sovereignty is irrelevant.
- The notion of global politics, as used in this book draws on the second meaning of 'global'. In this view, global means comprehensive, it refers to all elements within a system, not just to the system as a whole.
- Global politics thus takes place not just at a global level but at and across all

# States and globalization

- The state: A political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders.
- According to the author, it is absurd to dismiss states and national governments as irrelevant as it is to deny that, over a range of significant issues, states now operate in a context of global interdependence.
- This means an increased proportion of politics no longer takes place in and through the state and what goes on within states and what goes on between states impact on one another to a greater degree

# From international politics to global politics

- In what ways has 'international' politics been transformed into 'global' politics, and how far has this process progressed?
- The most significant changes are:
- New actors on the world stage
- Increased interdependence and interconnectedness
- The trend towards global governance.

# The state and new global actors

- International politics should be described as 'inter-state' politics. A state must possess four qualities: a defined territory, a permanent population, an effective government and the capacity to enter into relations with other states.
- States are taken to be the key actors on world stage since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) which established sovereignty as a distinguishing feature of the state.
- Yet states are not the only significant actors on the world stage any more. Transnational corporations (TNC), non-governmental (NGO) organizations, and other non-state bodies influence politics.
- However although states are not the only actors in the world stage any more, no TNC or NGO can rival the state's coercive power

## Increased interdependence and connectedness

- To study international politics traditionally meant to study the implications of the international system being divided into a collection of states.
- State-centric approach illustrated through 'billiard ball model', which dominated thinking about international relations in the 1950s and later, and was associated with realist theory.
- States, like billiard balls are impermeable and self-contained units, which influence each other through external pressure. So this model perceives states as billiard balls moving over the table and colliding with each other mostly due to military and

## Increased interdependence and connectedness

- Two implications of the billiard ball model of politics:
- It suggests a clear distinction between domestic and international politics. Sovereignty is the hard shell of the billiard ball that divides the 'outside' from the 'inside'. Borders matter.
- Second, it implies that patterns of conflict and cooperation within the international system are largely determined by the distribution of power among states. (Not all billiard balls are the same size).
- Billiard ball model has been criticized on two grounds: -state borders have increasingly become 'porous', as a result, the conventional 'inside/outside', domestic/international is difficult to sustain.

● Relations among states have become to be



# From international anarchy to global governance?

- A key assumption of the traditional approach is that there is no higher authority than the state, meaning that the state system operates in a context of anarchy.
- In the absence of any other force attending to their interests, states are forced to rely on self-help. Since the power-seeking inclinations of one state are only tempered by competing tendencies in other states, conflict and war are inevitable features of the international system.
- In this view, conflict is only constrained by **balance of power** (a condition in which no one state predominates over others

# From international anarchy to global governance?

- However, the idea of international anarchy have become more difficult to sustain because of emergence since 1945, of a framework of global governance and sometimes regional governance. This is reflected in the growing importance of organizations such as the UN, the IMF, WTO and the EU.
- States are increasingly confronted by collective dilemmas. Yet the role of the international organizations shall not be exaggerated. They are the creatures of their members: they can do no more than their

# Explaining Globalization

- Explaining globalization: Held and McGrew: globalization as the widening, intensifying, speeding up, and growing impact of world-wide interconnectedness. Globalization has been interpreted in 3 main ways:
- Economic globalization: process where national economies have been absorbed into a single global economy.
- Cultural globalization: is the process whereby information, commodities and images that have been passed from one part of the world enter into global flow that tends to 'flatten out' cultural differences between nations, regions and individuals.

# Globalization: myth or reality?

- There are three positions on globalization:
- Hyperglobalists: portrays globalization as a profound, even revolutionary set of economic, cultural, technological and political shifts that have intensified since the 1980s.
- Hyperglobalizers make an emphasis on a “borderless world”, which suggests that national borders and states themselves have become irrelevant in a global order increasingly dominated by transnational forces.
- Hyperglobalizers have a strong positive attitude towards globalization, usually assuming that, in marking the triumph of markets over the state, it is associated with economic dynamism and growing worldwide

# Globalization: myth or reality?

- The sceptics: portrayed globalization as a fantasy and dismissed the idea of an integrated economy. They point out that overwhelming bulk of economic activity still takes place within, rather than across national boundaries and that there is nothing new about high levels of international trade and cross-capital flows.
- Transformationalist stance offers a middle road view of globalization. It accepts that profound changes have taken place in the patterns and processes of world politics but this did not completely change its established or traditional features. This has become the most widely accepted view of

# Mainstream vs Critical Perspectives on Global Politics

- Mainstream perspectives: The two mainstream perspectives on global politics are realism and liberalism. They are defined as mainstream because they have dominated conventional academic approaches to the field of international politics.
- They are both grounded in positivism (that it is possible to develop objective knowledge, through the capacity to distinguish 'facts' from 'values'.)
- The realist vision is pessimistic: international politics is marked by constant power struggles and conflict, and wide range of obstacles standing in the way of

# Mainstream vs Critical Perspectives on Global Politics

- Liberalism offers a more optimistic vision of global politics. They believe that the principle of harmony or balance operates in all forms of social interaction. A general commitment to internationalism.
- According to liberals, human beings are rational and moral creatures, trade and economic interdependence make war less likely, international law helps to promote order and fosters rule-governed behaviour among states.

# Mainstream vs Critical Perspectives on Global Politics

- Critical perspectives: Since the late 1980s, Marxism had constituted the principal alternative to mainstream realist and liberal theories.
- Marxism placed its emphasis not on patterns of conflict and cooperation between states, but on structures of economic power and the role played in world affairs by international capital.
- At the end of the Cold War, a wide range of “new voices” started to influence the study of world politics, such as social constructivism, critical theory, postcolonialism, feminism and green politics. What do these have in common



# Mainstream vs Critical Perspectives on Global Politics

- Two similarities: they have tried to go beyond the positivism of mainstream theory, emphasizing instead the role of consciousness in shaping social conduct, and therefore world affairs. These theories question the conclusions of mainstream theory but also subject these theories to critical scrutiny, exposing biases that operate within them.
- Secondly, critical theories are 'critical' in that, in the different ways, they oppose the dominant forces and interests in modern world affairs and so contest the global

# Continuity and Change in Global Politics

- Recent decades have witnessed momentous events such as the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the September 11 attack on the USA and the global financial crisis of 2007-2009. While these and other events have changed the contours of global politics, certain other features resisted change. This can be illustrated by examining the balance between continuity and change in 3 key aspects of world politics: power, security, justice.

# Power

- All forms of politics are about power. Modern global politics raises two main questions about power. **The first is about where power is located: who has it?** During the Cold War era, this appeared to be an easy question to answer. **Two 'superpowers' dominated world politics leading to a bipolar world order.**
- What happened regarding power at the end of the Cold War? In one view, the disintegration of the Soviet Union left **the USA as the world's sole superpower** meaning that it had been transformed into a global hegemon.
- Alternative views: **power may have shifted away from states generally through the growing importance of non-state actors and the increased role played by international organizations.** Furthermore, globalization increased the influence of **global markets** and drew states into a web of economic interdependence that substantially restricts their freedom of manoeuvre.
- Due to new technology and rising literacy rates, **soft power** (influencing others by persuading them to follow certain norms) is becoming as important as **hard power**

# Security

- At the heart of security is the question: how can people live a decent and worthwhile existence, free from threats, intimidation and violence?
- For realists, security is understood in terms of 'national' security. All states are under at least potential threat from all other states, each state must have the capacity for self-defence. An emphasis on military power. This focus on military security draws states into dynamic, competitive relationships with one another, based on what is called the security dilemma (actions taken by one actor to improve national security are interpreted as aggressive by

# Security

- However, the state-centric ideas of national security and an inescapable security dilemma have also been challenged. There is a long-established emphasis within liberal theory on collective security, reflecting the belief that aggression can best be resisted by united action taken by a number of states. Such a view shifts attention away from the idea of national security towards the broader notion of 'international' security.

# Justice

- Realist theorists have traditionally viewed justice as a largely irrelevant issue in international or global politics. Relations between states should be determined by judgements related to the national interest, not by ethical considerations.
- Liberals by contrast, insist that international politics and morality should go hand in hand. Traditionally they defended the idea of 'international' justice based on principles that set out how nation-states should behave towards one another. Respect for state sovereignty and the norms of non-interference in the affairs

# Justice

- The growth of interconnectedness and interdependence has extended thinking about morality in world affairs, particularly through an increasing emphasis on the notion of 'global' or 'cosmopolitan' justice. The idea of global justice is rooted in a belief in universal moral values, values that apply to all people in the world regardless of nationality and citizenship. The most influential example of universal values is the doctrine of international human rights.