

Solution Manual for IR 2014 Edition 1st Edition Scott 111134423X
9781111344238

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CHAPTER 2

The Playing Field and Players: Anarchy, States, and Non-State Actors

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to . . .

- 2-1: Summarize how the search for security has evolved in a changing international system.
- 2-2: List the major types of actors and relationships of the pre-Westphalian international system.
- 2-3: Differentiate the major types of actors and relationships of the Westphalian international system.
- 2-4: Recognize the major types of actors and relationships of the neo-Westphalian international system.

SUMMARY OVERVIEW

A wide array of **international actors** interacts in the **international system**, which can be thought of as the playing field for actors in world politics. International actors can largely be divided into two primary groups: **state** and **non-state actors**. While the nearly 200 states in the international

system are easy to identify, non-state actors are more complex. One set of non-state actors are **international governmental organizations (IOs)** such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), or the African Union (AU). **Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** that allow citizen participation, such as Amnesty International or the Red Cross are another type of non-state actor. **Multinational or transnational corporations (MNCs or TNCs)** participate in the international system as well. Groups comprised of several actors working together may form **transnational advocacy networks (TANs)**, and **subnational actors**, including individuals with significant influence and governmental units within a state, may also be international actors. Interactions between these actors are frequently defined by expectations, rules, and **norms** that help to define their relationships.

One of the most important characteristics of the international system is **anarchy**, the absence of a central authority governing world politics and international actors. Anarchy does not mean chaos, rather it simply means that the international system contains no governing system with the level of authoritative and powerful law-making, law-interpreting, and law-enforcing body equivalent to those in most states. Anarchy frequently allows states to pursue their interests with little regard to how their actions affect others. At times, however, states do not behave in purely self-interested manners. One feature that contributes to order between actors is **interdependence**, the mutual connections that tie states and other players together. While varying degrees of dependence exist, all states have some level of dependency on others. More powerful states such as the United States may have more options than smaller states, but no state has complete independence. Similarly, though no perfect analogue to state governance exists on the international level, IOs such as the UN and the World Bank provide forums to promote efforts to solve common

problems. Finally, the international system can be thought of as a society in some ways. States that routinely act outside accepted rules, norms, and expectations may suffer diplomatically and economically for their behavior.

One impact of the anarchical nature of the international system is the creation of **security dilemmas**. Because no supranational actor exists to protect states, states must engage in self-help to provide for their defense. This typically leads to states' increasing their military strength to provide for their own protection. The security dilemma arises because the military buildup of one state for security purposes may be seen as a threat by another state. The second state may also build up its military for its own protection from the first state. As the second state builds its military, however, its actions may be seen as a threat by the first state. Even if neither state had aggressive intentions, the act of protecting themselves may be seen as threatening by other states. Real life security dilemmas can be seen between several states, such as India and Pakistan or Israel and Iran.

The security dilemma is not new; history has repeated itself for centuries. The key turning point for the emergence of modern state relations is the **Treaties of Westphalia** that ended the Thirty Years' War. The history of the international system can be divided into three periods: the pre-Westphalian system, the Westphalian system, and the neo-Westphalian system. For much of human history, geography and a lack of technological ability combined to limit contact between people. Civilizations developed as societies began to domesticate animals and plants. A combination of factors led to developments in Europe that would allow it to dominate other civilizations for a time; the international system can be thought of as Euro-centric as a result.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, weak monarchies emerged in Europe dominated by **feudalism**. As monarchs became stronger, they increased the size and integration of their holdings. As the rivalries between these stronger monarchs increased, the modern state system began to emerge. The **Thirty Years' War** (1618–1648) was the watershed moment in the evolution of the modern state system. The war was a series of smaller but connected wars between Protestants and Catholics in the German, Czech, and Transylvanian portions of the Holy Roman Empire. Most of Europe was eventually involved in these wars about who would rule what territory. The Treaties of Westphalia ended the war, creating a new international system based on sovereign states and the principle of nonintervention in domestic affairs.

The Westphalian system brought with it the idea of borders establishing barriers to interference. States became the primary actors in the system. A **state** is a political-legal unit that meets three conditions: (1) an identifiable population; (2) is a defined territory recognized by others; and (3) a government that possesses sovereignty (self-governance). States will typically have a **head of government** who is in charge of the state government as well as someone who is the **head of state** who represents the state and its people. Many different governing arrangements exist to select these positions. **Parliamentary systems** frequently have prime ministers as the head of government, but may have symbolic monarchs as heads of state. A president may be both head of government and state in a **presidential system**, while **semi-presidential systems** may split power between a president and a prime minister. **Authoritarian systems** have a variety of ways of selecting the person who often serves as head of state and head of government, whether it is a monarchy, a dictatorship, or the head of the ruling party. States will also have capital cities where foreign **embassies** with the benefit of **extraterritoriality** are located. Foreign diplomats who work in embassies or **consulates** have **diplomatic immunity**, or exemption from most laws of the state where they work.

Some territories that appear to have political autonomy may not be recognized as states. Examples include Hong Kong and Puerto Rico that have considerable autonomy, though they are officially governed by other states (China and the United States, respectively). Other territories,

such as Taiwan, may exhibit considerable sovereignty, but lack diplomatic recognition by other states.

Terminology can be important as well. The words “state” and “country” are largely synonymous, though state is more appropriate from an international legal standpoint. **Nation**, however, refers not to the idea of a state, but rather to a group of people who possess a collective identity along a number of dimensions. While many “nations” are wholly contained within the borders of one state, some nations may overlap several national boundaries. Regions such as Africa where borders were frequently drawn along colonial boundaries may have many states with little correspondence between national groupings and states. States vary along a number of other dimensions as well, including territorial size, resource allocation, and relative freedom of their citizenry. States also have widely divergent military capabilities. Regardless of strength, wealth, or size, however, states are sovereign within their borders; these borders are the key to **Westphalian sovereignty**: the idea that within a state’s borders, there is no higher authority than the state government.

The Westphalia system evolved significantly over time. Though originally concentrated in Europe, the growth of **imperialism** spread the European system to North America, Asia, and Africa. The American and French Revolutions also ushered in the development of **democracy** as a norm. Though not all states are democratic, even those who are not frequently invoke the language of democracy. **Nationalism**, the emotional connection of the mass public with the state, also developed in Europe and spread through the system. Nationalism, which had its origins in the French Revolution, helped fuel rivalries that contributed to World War I, and continued even after its end with the **Treaty of Versailles** in 1919. After World War I, **communism** also emerged as an alternative government form. In the Soviet Union, nationalism and communism melded. Opposition to communism in Europe led to the rise of **fascism**—an extreme application of nationalism—in both Italy and Germany. In the 1930s, Italy, Germany, and Japan, each sought to expand their territorial holdings, leading to World War II. While many states allied with these expansionist powers, a powerful coalition formed against them including the Soviet Union after it was invaded by Germany (in violation of a 1939 non-aggression pact) and the United States in 1943 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan.

After the end of World War II, the **Cold War** emerged, pitting an anticommunist U.S.-led bloc against the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. In Europe, the two sides had competing alliances. The United States led the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, binding Western Europe with the United States and Canada, while the Soviet Union led the **Warsaw Pact** of Eastern European allies. The United States and Soviet Union never directly fought, but both were involved in significant conflicts between their client states around the world. Both states developed significant nuclear arsenals, coming to rely on the principal of **Mutual Assured Destruction** to prevent direct conflict between them. The Cold War began to draw to an end as the Soviet economy could no longer bear the cost of maintaining its military or controlling its allies. In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, and Eastern Europe emerged from communist rule. The Soviet Union would cease to exist within two years.

In the years after the Cold War, states have remained the central actors in the international system, but they are now challenged internally and externally by other actors and problems that cross national borders. Wars between states (interstate wars) have been in decline, while wars within states (intrastate wars) have been on the rise. In this neo-Westphalian system factors such as the rise of non-state actors and globalization have challenged states. The international system has always seen powerful non-state actors, including entities as diverse as the Catholic Church and the Dutch and British East India Companies. In the twentieth century, improvements in transportation and communication have empowered both multinational corporations and issue-specific NGOs. Many MNCs have greater annual sales revenues than several states’ **gross**

domestic products. The improvement in linkages between states also led to the rise of IOs to coordinate specific areas of cooperation (such as the Universal Postal Union, founded in 1874). Since 1945, the most prominent IO had been the **United Nations (UN)**, composed of six principle organs (the **General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Secretariat, and International Court of Justice (or World Court)**). The UN has several other subsidiary and associated bodies, such as the International Criminal Court, the World Health Organization, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, which operate in a wide variety of settings. Working both together with and apart from IOs, NGOs serve a variety of functions, including advocating on behalf of issues, providing expert knowledge, and providing direct services to areas in need. Many NGOs accomplish tasks that states cannot do well or cannot do at all.

Globalization, the increasing integration of global society through economic, technological, political, and cultural means, is another feature of the neo-Westphalian system. Among the examples of the increased connections between states are the efforts of MNCs to establish subsidiaries around the world and service companies, such as restaurants and hotels, which have franchises around the world. Several factors contribute to globalization including less expensive and faster international travel and the reduced cost of shipping freight internationally. Information and communication technologies have also made it far easier to communicate; not only are mobile technologies increasingly widespread, but television and entertainment media such as movies also play to a global audience. Finally, the Internet has made distance virtually meaningless in some respects. The instant communication offered by the Internet has allowed for the organization of activities as diverse as protest movements in Egypt and the managing of businesses and academic collaborations. In short, globalization has greatly simplified international interaction.

In the neo-Westphalian system, states also face a number of stresses. The first type of stress is the challenge from groups using violence to pursue political objectives, including pressing for autonomy from their states. Many economic issues also challenge states. Corporations often act in ways contrary to the national interests or undertake risky practices that can damage national economies. Financial and economic crises may also cause states to rely on external sources of funding to stave off monetary and fiscal crises. Finally, political pressure by both international and external actors such as **civil society organizations** can bring unwanted attention to states' human rights practices or other political actions.

The very meaning of sovereignty is evolving in the neo-Westphalian system. Whereas the traditional notion of sovereignty gave states freedom from interference in their domestic affairs, the abuses in World War II opened the door to the idea that states could be held accountable for domestic actions. After the end of the Cold War, the UN has been more active in intervening to protect citizens from their state. For example, **UN Security Council Resolution 668** was passed in 1991 to protect Iraq's citizens from the Iraqi government after Iraq was expelled from Kuwait. The UN also authorized **humanitarian interventions** to address **ethnic cleansing** and **genocide** in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In 1995, Francis Deng, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Internally-Displaced Persons, coined the idea of **responsible sovereignty**, the idea that sovereignty is the responsibility of a state to protect its citizens, not just to protect its territory.

Collectively, international security, economic security, and human security matters often transcend national boundaries and are significantly changing the neo-Westphalian system. States may no longer employ force as a matter of course; they may only do so if used in self-defense or as a last resort. **Supranational regimes** with authority to challenge state decisions are becoming more commonplace. Some regimes, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime or the World Bank deal with a limited number of issues, while organizations like the **European Union (EU)** deals with a wide array of issues. While states are still the primary actors in world politics,

numerous other actors are gaining importance, and states continue to face new challenges to their positions.

□ CHAPTER OUTLINE

A LOOK AT THE PLAYERS: THE SYRIAN UPRISING OF 2011–2012

2-1 THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

World politics is populated by a wide array of actors. The most prominent are states, but many non-state actors, including international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and multinational corporations are increasing in importance.

2-1a Anarchy and Interdependence

The international system is anarchic, meaning that no international government similar to that which governs states exists above states. Anarchy does not mean chaos, but simply the absence of government. While the international system is anarchic, states are also increasingly dependent on one another (interdependence), though the level of dependence varies.

2-1b The Security Dilemma

The Security Dilemma arises as a result of anarchy. States must rely on self-help to protect themselves, but acts taken to preserve their security may be seen as threats by other states.

2-2 THE PRE-WESTPHALIAN SYSTEM (PRE-1648)

The pre-Westphalian system in Europe was primarily marked by the emergence of increasingly powerful monarchies that relied on feudal relationships.

2-3 THE WESTPHALIAN SYSTEM (1648–1989)

The end of the Thirty Years' War ushered in the Westphalian system of states defined by borders and control of domestic affairs.

2-3a States and Their Characteristics

A state is a political-legal unit that meets three conditions: (1) an identifiable population; (2) is a defined territory recognized by others; and (3) a government that possesses sovereignty (self-governance).

□ SPOTLIGHT ON: Diplomatic Immunity Controversies

□ THE REVENGE OF GEOGRAPHY: Who are the Afghans?

□ THE ROLE OF THE U.S.: The US Military and Its Impact on Global Armaments

2-3b The Evolution of the System

The Empowerment of States. European imperialism spread the European-style state system around the world. Ideas and systems of governance including democracy, nationalism, and fascism have shaped state behavior and the international system over time.

The Cold War. The Cold War was the last major phase of the Westphalian system. It was marked by rivalry between an anticommunist bloc led by the United States and a communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. While the United

States and Soviet Union never fought directly, they and their client states fought repeated conflicts throughout the Cold War era.

2-4 THE NEO-WESTPHALIAN SYSTEM (1990–PRESENT)

The end of the Cold War has led to an evolution in states and sovereignty.

2-4a The Development of Non-State Actors

While non-state actors are not new to the international system, their diversity and influence in the neo-Westphalian system is larger than it was in the past. International governmental organizations wield more influence, as do multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations.

2-4b The Rise of Non-State Actors

Many non-state actors, especially multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations that provide relief work, policy expertise, and advocacy, have emerged as powerful actors in the international arena.

2-4c Globalization and Its Effects

The increased ease and low cost of international travel, shipping, and communication have facilitated the expansion of multinational companies. Individuals also find that it is becoming less difficult to travel and communicate across borders.

2-4d New Stresses on States

A variety of challenges, including political violence geared toward policy change and/or separatism, economic crises, and pressure from domestic and international political groups have emerged on states.

2-4e The Changing Meaning of Sovereignty

During the Westphalian system, sovereignty gave states control over issues within their borders. This notion of sovereignty is being replaced by the idea of **responsible sovereignty**; i.e., that states have a responsibility to protect their citizens, not just their territory.

- THEORY IN ACTION: **Responsible Sovereignty and Humanitarian Interventions**

CONCLUSION: SAME PLAYERS BUT A CHANGING FIELD?

□ CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Are states still the dominant actors in the international system? Of the challenges to state supremacy identified in the textbook, which do you believe presents the greatest challenge? Is the challenge you identified an alternative actor, or is it another factor that is weakening state sovereignty?
2. This chapter argues that one of the factors impacting globalization is the ease with which individuals and businesses are able to communicate, whether through the spread of mobile technology or the Internet. How do recent advances compare to past major advances in communication (some of which are mentioned in the text)?
3. Some scholars have argued that challenges to states are overstated and that some of the same advances that appear to weaken states may actually give governments the opportunity to exercise more power. For example, while sub-state actors may use violence against the state, a state may use political violence as an excuse to exert greater

control over its populace. Are there other ways some of the challenges to states may provide them with opportunities to increase their strength?

□ LECTURE LAUNCHERS

1. To begin a discussion of the extent of globalization, start by asking students ways in which they interact in the international arena. They may discuss international air travel, email or other electronic communications, reading international news stories, military service, or participating in the global economy (ordering items over the Internet counts). This conversation can be used not only to discuss globalization, but also to discuss global governance; for example, the International Civil Aviation Organization (<http://www.icao.int/Pages/default.aspx>) that helps to regulate international air travel.
2. To help students think about asymmetric dependence, begin by asking them what types of countries may be more dependent on others. Typically, they will note that states with fewer resources will need to trade more. They can then begin to identify specific attributes of such states (smaller states, island states, economically strong, etc.) that may be more dependent on trade. In class, you can pull up the KOF globalization index (<http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/>) to help assist in the discussion.

□ IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Divide students into groups. Each group will be tasked with identifying what they consider to be the most important characteristics of states and state sovereignty. Each group should make a list of (1) the attributes they believe all states should possess; and (2) conditions under which states should be asked to surrender sovereignty. If students have difficulty starting the task, point them to the textbook discussion of the basic attributes of states and ask them to determine whether they believe those attributes are sufficient.

□ KEY TERMS

al-Qaeda a group created in 1988 by Osama bin Laden and others to lead a fight against non-believers in Islamic lands.

anarchy the lack of an overarching authority that can force sovereign actors to do what they prefer not to do.

authoritarian systems nondemocratic governments with leaders who rule via force, whose basis of power is the ability to coerce others or a submissive citizenry.

civil society organizations NGOs formed to create the social infrastructure of a democratic state, like political parties, trade unions, interest groups, and so on.

Cold War a period of intense rivalry and competition from 1947–1989 between two large blocs of states—an anticommunist bloc led by the United States and a procommunist bloc led by the Soviet Union.

communism a political ideology that originally called for a revolution against capitalism, rule by the working class, and the withering away of the state.

consulates offices other than embassies where diplomatic officials facilitate commerce, travel, and cultural exchanges.

democracy a form of governance in which the people have a meaningful choice in selecting their rulers.

diplomatic immunity the principle that accredited diplomats are exempt in almost all cases from prosecution under the laws of the state where they are assigned.

Economic and Social Council the component of the UN handling matters considered economic or social, broadly defined.

embassies properties that house the permanent diplomatic missions of other countries, typically located in the capital city of a state.

ethnic cleansing a form of violence in which an ethnic group purges or cleans a territory of its rival ethnic groups, by forced expulsion, violence, or death.

European Union (EU) a supranational organization with 27 member states.

extraterritoriality the principle that one is exempt from prosecution of the laws of the state; typically applied in the case of an embassy.

fascism a political ideology that glorifies the state over the individuals who comprise it and relies on nationalism and violence to bond the citizenry to the state.

feudalism a socio-economic-political system in which rulers would grant land to the local aristocracy in return for their loyalty and support, and others work the land in return for food, shelter, and protection from the local aristocracy.

General Assembly the plenary body of the UN to which all members belong.

genocide the act of killing an entire group of people because of who they are and not because of something they have done.

globalization the increasing integration of global society through economic, technological, political, and cultural means.

gross domestic product the total amount of goods and services produced in a state.

head of government the person who is in charge of a state's government on a day-by-day basis and ensures that basic state functions and services are met.

head of state the person who symbolically represents a state and its people.

humanitarian interventions military or non-military interventions into a state by outside groups for the purpose of meeting the needs of the state's residents.

imperialism a form of empire in which the dominant power controls other territories usually called colonies.

interdependence mutual connections and reliance between countries.

international actors those who act in the international system; these actors can include states or non-state actors.

International Court of Justice (or World Court) the principal judicial body of the UN. It handles cases between state actors.

international governmental organizations (IOs) international organizations whose membership is restricted to states.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) a specialized agency of the United Nations that loans money to states experiencing rapid currency devaluations.

- international system** the constellation of international actors and the relationships between them.
- League of Nations** the IO formed after World War I that sought, unsuccessfully, to prevent future wars.
- mujaheddin** those who fight to liberate Muslims or traditionally Muslim lands from control by nonbelievers.
- multinational corporations (MNC)** business entities with subsidiaries operating in multiple states.
- Mutual Assured Destruction (or MAD)** the nuclear doctrine for most of the Cold War, which held that any conflict between the two superpowers would result in a nuclear war that would devastate each side. In other words, MAD prevented nuclear war by saying there would be no winners.
- nation** an identifiable group of people who share a collective identity typically formed around bonds based on factors like shared language, culture, etc.
- nation-state** a state in which nearly all of the population are members of the same nation.
- nationalism** the emotional connection of the mass public to their state.
- neo-Westphalian sovereignty** the idea of sovereignty as a state's responsibility to protect its citizens.
- nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** organizations whose membership is not restricted solely to states.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** a military alliance structure created following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and led by the United States.
- non-state actors** international actors that are not states. They may include IOs, NGOs, multinational corporations, and individuals.
- norms** unwritten rules or expectations of behavior.
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime** rules set by the International Atomic Energy Agency regulating how states may develop, maintain, and use nuclear power and nuclear materials.
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** a treaty prohibiting those with nuclear weapons from providing them to others and those without nuclear weapons from seeking them.
- parliamentary systems** governments with a prime minister as the head of government and either a monarch or president as head of state.
- presidential systems** governments with strong presidents as both the head of state and the head of government.
- responsible sovereignty** the idea of sovereignty as a state's responsibility to protect its citizens.
- Secretariat** the international civil servants who staff the UN, led by the Secretary-General.
- Secretary-General** the leader of the UN Secretariat, someone who can speak on behalf of the entire international community.
- Security Council** the part of the UN that handles peace and security issues.
- security dilemma** how a state can improve its military security without threatening others.

semi-presidential systems governments with prime ministers who are responsible for most day-to-day governing but also have presidents who have some significant policy-making roles.

social Darwinism the idea of the “survival of the fittest” applied to international politics.

sovereign wealth funds investment funds owned by states.

state a political unit that: (1) has an identifiable population, (2) is located within defined borders recognized by others, and (3) possesses sovereignty.

subnational actors those international actors normally seen as subparts of a state—such as individuals or local governmental entities.

supranational regimes international organizations or sets of rules that can bind states even against their will.

Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) a series of wars that created many modern European states.

transnational advocacy networks (TANs) networks defined by reciprocal, voluntary actions across national borders by international and national governmental actors, domestic and international nongovernmental actors, social movements, and individuals.

Treaties of Westphalia two treaties in 1648 that ended the Thirty Years’ War and created the modern international system.

Treaty of Versailles the treaty in 1919 that ended World War I, imposed heavy penalties on Germany, and created the League of Nations.

United Nations (UN) the IO formed after World War II to prevent or limit future wars and improve the human condition.

UN Security Council Resolution 688 a 1991 resolution authorizing UN members to intervene in the domestic affairs of Iraq.

Warsaw Pact the military alliance created by the Soviet Union as a response to the 1955 addition of West Germany into NATO.

Westphalian sovereignty the idea that within a state’s borders there is no higher authority than the government of the state itself.

World Trade Organization a supranational organization that sets the rules for international trade, administers them, and authorizes penalties for states that violate them.

□ WEB LINKS

CIA’s—The World Factbook: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>). This includes basic information on all states and a number of other specific territorial units (like Hong Kong).

Investment and Income at: (http://www.investmentsandincome.com/investments/list_mnc_by_country.html). Site contains a partial list of MNCs by country.

KOF Globalization index: (<http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/>). Ranks the level of globalization of countries on a variety of indicators.

NGO Global Network: (<http://www.ngo.org/index2.htm>). Listings and links of NGOs associated with the UN.

Nobel Prize Internet Archive: (<http://nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/>). Listing of Nobel Peace Prize recipients.

Northwestern University library:

(<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/resource/internat/igo.html>). Information on IOs.

United Nation: (<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml>). The about section of the UN website contains links to all member states of the UN as well as to all the agencies, committees, and organizations that make up the UN system.

□ INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

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(<http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=2011&sort=wwgross&order=DESC&p=.htm>).