

Introduction

Five hundred years ago Europeans explored the Western Hemisphere and broadened their commercial contacts with Africa and Asia, beginning a gradual process of bringing regions of the world together. European expansion began the process of globalization that has become the dominant feature of modern society. The Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century and the high-tech revolution in the twentieth century have brought many of us to the point today where a phone call is possible between someone riding a train in Peru and a climber standing atop Mount Everest. An Indian doctor can read an X-ray for a patient sitting in a physician's office in Topeka. A Russian can buy a car built in South Korea, Germany, Italy, Japan, or the United States. Although most people in the world could not locate Bangladesh on a map, the cap they wear might have been made there.

Never before has the world been so integrated. Politics, markets, culture, the media, and information are no longer local but global. The ripple effect of local events on wider regions has grown exponentially in the last century; a century ago events in one part of the world often went unnoticed in another. Today, the proliferation of information through the Internet, cell phones, print media, and television allows people on opposite sides of the globe to experience events simultaneously. What happens on Tokyo's stock exchange has an instantaneous effect on other markets as they open throughout the day. The extent of the destruction of the tsunami that hit Asia in 2004 was known to the world within hours, and faraway countries immediately flew in emergency aid. The effects of terrorist attacks are amplified because the media disseminates the chaos of the moment and engenders the fear that follows. Suicide attackers often

make videos for posting on the Internet after they have struck, which maximizes the sense that these murderers will stop at nothing to claim innocent people's lives.

The boom in world commerce since World War II is unprecedented. Global currency transactions ballooned from \$15 billion daily in 1973 to \$1.5 trillion by 2004. In the late 1990s, world exports totaled over \$6 trillion, up from \$61 billion in 1950.¹ International financial and business transactions happen instantaneously on electronic networks. Millions of foreign workers send money home using secure global banking services. Products move around the world on airplanes, ships, trains, and long-range trucks, often without anyone touching the containers. There are over ten thousand daily airplane departures in the United States alone, and almost thirty-one thousand seagoing ships worldwide.²

The ramifications of globalization on traditional political, economic, and social relationships are profound. Journalist Thomas Friedman titled one of his books *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* to capture the conflicts in the interconnected world economy. The Lexus represents the boons that a globalized economy offers individuals across the world—the potential for wealth and the products and services coming from all corners of the earth. The olive tree represents the pressures such an economy puts on traditional local societies and communities, including not only low wages and poverty experienced by too many in this modern age, but also the decline of traditional beliefs, practices, and cultures. Even those who seek to conserve old beliefs and values embrace the new technologies. Friedman shows a devout Jew in Israel holding up his cell phone to the Western Wall in Jerusalem so a friend in France can say a prayer at this holy site.³ Some no doubt feel that the friend should make the trek rather than rely on high-tech.

This book takes as its starting point the complexities of the modern age and argues that the interconnectedness of global people, events, and processes is so strong that it requires a break from traditional methods of research and inquiry. Foreign policy makers and educators are becoming increasingly aware of the deficiencies of strict disciplinary approaches to the complexities of globalization processes and international affairs today. By “disciplinary” we mean approaches connected to the traditional academic disciplines of history, political science, economics, geography, and anthropology. International studies instead offers an integrative, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary approach to issues of global importance.

This book breaks new ground in introducing the disciplines of international studies and addressing regional and global issues through an interdisciplinary approach. Four of the five disciplines of international studies are considered social sciences, while history departments are often housed in the humanities because history does not pretend to be a science. History is the study of past events based on available primary and secondary sources. Professional historians make a good-faith attempt to gather reliable evidence and render the past accurately, but they understand that history is controversial because no two accounts of the past are the same. Historians' interpretations of the past depend on their own biases, the availability of sources, their use of them, and their objectives. Since there is no definitive historical truth, the lessons of history tend to be subjective as well.

Nonetheless, a complete understanding of current international affairs is impossible without knowing the historical context. Historians play a vital role in resolving international conflicts by writing objective historical accounts free of polemic and propaganda. But the advent of the Internet and the rapid flow of information from sources of dubious reliability have created new challenges. Different memories or interpretations of past events are at the heart of many international conflicts. For example, the controversy between the United Nations and Iran over Tehran's quest for nuclear power has its roots in Iran's resentment of British imperialism and U.S. intervention in Iran's domestic affairs during the cold war. And Japanese-Chinese friction often revolves around the brutal Japanese occupation of China during World War II. At the heart of these tensions is the way historical memory is manipulated to create a national identity. Some Chinese view the Japanese as imperialists, while some Japanese remember themselves as progressives and missionaries who brought the benefits of civilization to a backward people.

Geography's role in international studies is to analyze space, regions, and environments. The physical geographer studies the processes of the natural environment, while the human geographer is concerned with human interaction with the physical world. Geographers' evidence includes demographic statistics, climate studies, health records, and communication networks. The map is a special tool that geographers use in their analysis of the earth and people's interaction with it.

Geographic study goes to the heart of such international problems as population density, the spread of disease, water shortages, environmental

degradation, border conflicts, population flows, use of space, and transportation networks. Hundreds of millions of migrants annually move from one region to another, millions even making leaps from one continent to another, bringing new customs, expectations, and political agendas. Diseases, blights, and bugs travel on the thousands of ships, airplanes, trains, and automobiles moving around the globe daily. Delicate regional ecologies are subject to alien invaders that hitch rides on long-distance transports. The world waits on edge for invisible strains of flu, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and other deadly diseases transferred on the global highways. Global warming, water and air pollution, soil erosion, and desertification know no political boundaries and are best understood through geography's contribution to an interdisciplinary analysis.

Political science analyzes the power relationships between peoples and the institutions used to mediate their competing interests. Political scientists often employ case studies to identify the variables that explain political behavior, trying to determine if past models are applicable to present cases. Questions of international import are ultimately tied to those who have the power to solve them. Democratic development, international institutions, international relations, and international conflict and conflict resolution are within the purview of political science as it relates to international studies.

Some political scientists have moved from paradigms that seemed to explain international power relationships in the past, such as hegemony and dependence theory, to complex interdependence, which the interdisciplinary approach of international studies seeks to explain. Political relationships are more complicated today because globalization has created greater "power for the powerless."⁴ For example, international human rights organizations and the media can disseminate information on a government's political practices that are difficult to control. The Chinese regime is desperately trying to regulate Internet sites that criticize its undemocratic practices. Political scientists are keenly interested in whether China can maintain political repression while participating in a globalized economy.

The global information network can also undermine the power of liberal democratic governments, which can be criticized for the influence of money in politics, the disparity between rich and poor, and racial discrimination. Easy access to information also foments identity politics, which can divide societies into cultural or political groups that oppose each other and make democratic compromise and cooperation nearly

impossible. Internet commerce also undermines national legal systems. For example, it is illegal in Germany to sell Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, but it became one of Amazon.com's top-ten sellers in Germany in 1999.⁵

Anthropology examines global culture: the similarities and differences of human environments, economic systems, ideologies, political systems, and languages. People understand and explain the world in different ways, which helps to explain why people in one society behave differently from those in another. This elusive concept of culture is a learned system of meanings through which people orient themselves in the world.

Global cultural transfers put pressure on local customs and traditions, but these transfers, which were once dominated by the richer countries, now go both ways. The world's consumption of McDonald's burgers and Hollywood films is often cited as an example of the effect of globalization on local eating habits and artistic expression, but Indian Bollywood movies, South Korean cars, the low prices on goods from China, and workers moving from one country to another are also causing profound challenges to local cultures. Indians may be eating barbecue, but Texans also are eating curry. Anthropology urges us to look also at the flip side of globalization—localization—through which people localize the commodities, services, and ideas that enter their communities from outside, transforming them and making them their own.

Although some scholars highlight a “clash of civilizations”⁶ that globalization engenders, others argue that the world is actually experiencing an integration of civilizations that brings peoples closer together. Understanding the cultural elements of behavior is an essential component of a broad international studies education. In this increasingly mobile world, cultural clashes, cultural sharing, and cultural changes are happening faster now than ever before.

Economists study the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. International economics concerns financial relations, trade regimes, and economic development. Economists deal with the most basic yet most complex problems facing any society. For example, what strategies promote economic growth and provide for basic human needs and economic opportunities? Are there any fundamental economic rights, such as medical care, housing, and food?

One of the hot economic debates in the world today pits globalists against economic nationalists. The globalists, or liberal economists, advocate free and unfettered economic relations between states as a means

to increase the wealth and prosperity of all people in all nations. Some even argue that war is less likely between open-market economies because the economic costs to an aggressor are too high. Economic nationalists argue that the world's free-trade regime lowers wages and causes unemployment for workers in developed economies. They also point to the increasing economic disparity between the rich and the poor, both within and between countries. Small businesses in every country struggle to compete against the world's giant corporations, which can often provide cheaper goods and services and consistently meet demand at lower cost to the consumer. But in some industries small businesses may be more nimble at utilizing or inventing productive technologies than bigger corporations.

The second half of the book introduces five regions of the world: Europe, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Some scholars have criticized the area studies approach because Westerners arbitrarily constructed these regional labels. For example, if we think of the so-called Middle East as an area comprised mainly of Arab peoples, it also has to include northern Africa as well as southwestern Asia. Iran and Turkey are bookends of the region, but neither of these countries is Arab. Geographically, Russia is both European and Asian, although its cultural and political heritage comes primarily from the West.

The authors are fully aware of the limitations of a regional approach to international affairs. However, even in an era of globalization, thinking about the world in terms of geopolitical regions remains useful for several reasons. First, dividing the world into regions offers a way to manage enormous amounts of information about environments, people, and social relations. Trying to understand international issues in terms of all 268 nations and recognized dependent areas—each with unique histories, environments, economies, and political and cultural systems—is beyond the scope of any scholar or analytical approach. Trying to attend to every country can lead to a failure to see the forest for the trees.

Second, thinking regionally allows us to aggregate information common to groups of peoples and countries in order to see big pictures. Each region exhibits some common political, economic, linguistic, religious, or historical currents. Most Europeans have a Christian heritage, similar cultural norms, and social democratic political systems. Latin Americans are mostly Catholic, speak either Spanish or Portuguese, have similar

economic challenges, and have struggled to establish stable democracies. Although Westerners devised most of the world's continental designations and national borders, peoples in these regions have constructed their regional identities as well.

The authors have made conscious efforts to illustrate the diversity within the regions as well as their interconnectedness. There are no walls dividing them, but many bridges linking them together. Globalization along the electronic highway, sea lanes, rails, and roads has blurred old regional categories. Understanding the political, economic, historical, geographic, and cultural differences both within and among these areas is the essence of international studies inquiry.

Also, thinking about the world regionally can also serve as a useful heuristic device that helps us avoid ethnocentric and region-specific thinking. For example, Americans tend to see issues of global terrorism through the lens of Islamic terrorism, because this has become particularly important to U.S. national security. By making a point of looking at international issues in terms of every region, we discover terrorism in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Terrorism is certainly not a Muslim or Middle Eastern activity, although too much of the Western press might arrive at that conclusion. Al-Qaeda is certainly not representative of mainstream society in any Muslim region of the world. That said, terrorist organizations are at the top of the global agenda because of their responsibility for the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, as well as for the urban bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. Islamic anger has also been blamed for the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh for allegedly defaming Islam, and for widespread (and sometimes violent) demonstrations throughout the Islamic world in reaction to a Danish newspaper's printing of satirical cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Neither van Gogh's murder nor the demonstrations were terrorism, and it is important not to conflate al Qaeda's activities with those of troubled individuals or groups expressing their anger. Yet there is evidence that the thinking behind September 11 and these other activities is similar and rooted in Islamic anger at perceived Western imperialism.

Globalization creates a new context within which terrorism—a centuries-old political tool—occurs in the modern world. Indeed, globalization creates a new context within which all political activity operates. First, events themselves are publicized instantaneously, repeatedly, and

globally. Modern terrorists know that their acts will gain worldwide attention. Second, all political organizations, including terrorist ones, benefit from the Internet's global reach. Personal computers and global networks make fund-raising, recruiting, and disseminating information easier than ever before. Third, and in a different vein, globalization and technology also give terrorists and other groups access to points of view different from their own group's ideology. Finally, law enforcement uses the instruments of globalization to monitor and capture potential terrorists and other criminals.

Scholars, politicians, and ordinary people have desperately searched for answers to the terrorist threat emanating from a tiny minority of the fundamentalist Muslim community, and the larger problem of what one scholar has called the "jihad versus McWorld" conflict.⁷ A geographer might find answers in the demographic explosion of an unemployed, frustrated, and angry younger population. A historian might place terrorism in the continuum of a long history of conflicts between the Middle East and Western imperialists. A political scientist might approach the problem through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, illegitimate borders, or the authoritarian regimes and lack of democracy in the Middle East. An economist might emphasize the poverty in the Middle East or the region's frustration with the challenges of modernization and economic development. An anthropologist might ask what kinds of cultural symbols are employed by terrorist organizations to recruit people willing to kill and die for a cause—and why these ideologies attract a relatively small number of people.

International studies, unlike any singular discipline, draws on *all* of these disciplines in an integrated way for answers. Twenty-first-century challenges, such as terrorism, sustainable economic development, poverty, pollution, global warming, AIDS, nuclear proliferation, human rights, and interstate and civil conflicts do not stop at national boundaries or disciplinary categories. The notion that any global challenge can be studied or solved with the lenses and tools of one discipline is outdated. This book aims to help students begin to think in an integrated and critical way, relying on valuable perspectives from many disciplines but moving beyond disciplinary boundaries toward complex explanations and understanding.