

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PERSPECTIVES, CONTROVERSIES AND READINGS



Fifth Edition

Keith L. Shimko



International Relations

Perspectives, Controversies & Readings

Keith L. Shimko
PURDUE UNIVERSITY



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

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**International Relations: Perspectives,
Controversies & Readings, Fifth Edition**

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Preface: For the Instructor

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, grows out of more than two decades of teaching the course for which it is intended—introductory international relations. I struggle to find the right balance of fact and theory, current events and historical background, as well as to provide breadth and depth of coverage in an accessible manner, without caricature or condescension. I constantly need to remind myself that even though the latest theoretical fad or methodological debate may interest me and my colleagues, it is usually of little interest or value to my students. Conversely, though many issues might be old and settled for those of us who have been immersed in the discipline for decades, they can still be new and exciting for students.

Goals

An introduction to international relations should accomplish several basic tasks: first, provide the essential information and historical background for an incredibly wide and diverse range of issues; second, instill the necessary conceptual and theoretical tools for students to analyze historical and contemporary issues from a broader perspective; and third, demonstrate the relevance of seemingly abstract academic theories and concepts for understanding the “real world.”

In providing the necessary information and historical background, the major obstacle is the sheer volume of material. Because there is so much history that seems essential and there are so many issues to cover, it is always easy to find material to add but nearly impossible to identify anything to eliminate. Every textbook author knows this problem well: reviewers inevitably offer numerous suggestions for additions, but few for deletions. Unfortunately, quantity is sometimes the enemy of quality. Presented with an endless catalog of facts, names, theories, and perspectives, students risk drowning in a sea of detail. In trying to teach everything, we run the risk that students end up learning nothing. Choices need to be made.

These choices should be guided by the fundamental objective of getting students to *think* about international relations, instilling an appreciation for ideas and argument. If students understand the arguments for and against free trade, for example, it is not essential that they know the details of every World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting or General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) round. Discussion of the WTO might be a useful entry point, but it is the ideas and arguments underlying the debate over free trade that are most critical.

Such ideas need to be presented in a manner that enables students to truly engage the arguments and grasp their implications. It is not enough that students are able to provide a paragraph summary of balance of power theory or the theory of comparative advantage: they need to understand the basic assumptions and follow arguments through their various stages, twists, and turns. This requires that ideas and theories must be developed at some length so that students can see how the elements come together. As a result, it may be better to present two or three theories and positions in some depth, rather than brief summaries of a dozen.

Since most undergraduates hope that the class will help them understand the realities of international relations, the challenge of demonstrating relevance is critical. This is often achieved by supplementing a traditional text with a reader organized in a “taking sides” format. Although readers can be useful, they are seldom designed to accompany a particular text. As a consequence, the fit between readers and texts is usually imperfect. An additional problem with the text/reader combination is that it requires the purchase of two books. This text offers a unique solution to both problems: each of the substantive chapters incorporates readings that would normally appear in a supplementary reader, creating a single volume that is *both* a traditional textbook and a reader. The benefit for the instructor and students is that the readings are chosen specifically to reflect the discussion in each chapter. The additional benefit for students is that there is no additional reader to purchase.

Approach

The format of *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings* reflects its approach to addressing these major challenges. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the basic historical and theoretical foundations for thinking about international relations. The remaining chapters are framed differently than in most other texts, in that each chapter revolves around a central question or debate embodying an important and enduring controversy in international relations:

- Does international anarchy inevitably lead to war? (Chapter 3)
- Are democracies more peaceful? (Chapter 4)
- Is war part of human nature? (Chapter 5)
- Does free trade benefit all? (Chapter 6)
- What are the obstacles to economic development? (Chapter 7)
- Is globalization erode a threat to national sovereignty? (Chapter 8)
- Does international law matter? (Chapter 9)
- Is humanitarian intervention justified? (Chapter 10)

- How dangerous is nuclear proliferation? (Chapter 11)
- How should we respond to international terrorism? (Chapter 12)
- Is the global commons in danger? (Chapter 13)

Once the question is posed and the essential historical/factual background provided, alternative answers to the question are developed. The questions and “debate” format provide focus, prompting students to follow coherent and contrasting arguments. The goal is to present sustained arguments, not snippets. Finally, to help students move beyond abstract debates, each chapter concludes with readings that bring to life the debates discussed in the chapter. For example, in Chapter 3, dealing with democracy and war, the “Points of View” documents debate whether more democracy would bring peace to the Middle East. Given the successful protests against authoritarian rule in the Arab world in 2011 (e.g., in Tunisia and Egypt) and the prospect of more democratic forms of government in the region, this should help students appreciate the real-world implications of theoretical arguments.

Features

Beginning with Chapter 3, students will notice a standard set of pedagogical features that will guide their studies of the enduring controversies in international relations:

- An **opening abstract** introducing students to the chapter and its central question.
- An **introduction** providing historical background.
- **Key terms** are boldfaced where they are first introduced in the chapter, defined in the margin, and listed at the end of the chapter.
- The **Points of View** section includes two readings related to the chapter’s issues, often presenting both sides of the debate. An introduction to the readings provides questions for students to ponder as they read the selections.
- A **chapter summary** provides a brief review of the chapter.
- **Critical questions** ask students to apply the concepts that they learned in the chapter.
- **Further readings** provide citations of additional sources related to the chapter material.
- Related **Web sites** give students the opportunity to explore the Internet for more information.

Highlights of This Fifth Edition

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, has been thoroughly updated. Key revisions include the following:

- New and updated “Point of View” sections. In Chapter 9, new readings focus on whether Syria (or Syrian leaders) should be referred to the International

Criminal Court for their actions against Syrian civilians in the country's ongoing conflict. In Chapter 11, new readings focus on the debate over the "Global Zero" initiative to abolish nuclear weapons. And although the topics remain the same, there are new "Point of View" readings included in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 10.

- Chapters are revised and updated; changes include debates about whether U.S. covert actions against democracies undermine democratic peace theory (Chapter 4), Stephen Pinker's thesis about human nature and declining global violence (Chapter 5), corruption as an obstacle to development (Chapter 7), Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons under customary international law (Chapter 9), Ukrainian denuclearization and its consequences for its crisis with Russia (Chapter 11), and updated information on issues of climate change and global resources, particularly the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report and the theory of peak oil (Chapter 13).
- Updated statistics throughout the book.
- New and updated Web links throughout to provide useful resources in exploring chapter-related issues beyond the text.
- New and updated end-of-chapter critical questions to prompt deeper student analysis and engagement with the concepts.

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, offers the following ancillary materials:

Instructor Resources

TITLE: **Instructor Companion Web site** for *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings*, Fifth Edition

ISBN: 9781285865188

DESCRIPTION:

This **Instructor Companion Web site** is an all-in-one online resource for class preparation and testing. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, it features all of the free student assets, plus an instructor's manual and a test bank in Microsoft® Word®.

TITLE: **CourseReader 0-30: International Relations**

Printed Access card ISBN: 9781111480608

Instant Access card ISBN: 9781111480592

DESCRIPTION:

CourseReader for International Relations allows you to create your reader, your way, in just minutes. This affordable, fully customizable online reader provides access to thousands of permissions-cleared readings, articles, primary sources, and audio and video selections from the regularly updated Gale research library database. This easy-to-use solution allows you to search for and select just the material that you want for your courses. Each selection opens with a descriptive

introduction to provide context, and concludes with critical-thinking and multiple-choice questions to reinforce key points.

CourseReader is loaded with convenient tools like highlighting, printing, note-taking, and downloadable PDFs and MP3 audio files for each reading. CourseReader is the perfect complement to any Political Science course. It can be bundled with your current textbook, sold alone, or integrated into your learning management system. CourseReader 0–30 allows access to up to 30 selections in the reader. Please contact your Cengage sales representative for details.

Student Resources

TITLE: **Student Companion Web site** for Shimko, *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings*, Fifth Edition

ISBN: 9781285865195

DESCRIPTION:

This free companion Web site is accessible through cengagebrain.com and allows students access to chapter-specific interactive learning tools, including flash cards, quizzes, glossaries, and more.

Acknowledgments

The process of writing an introductory international relations text has been a rewarding, yet at times frustrating, experience. I suspect that this is the case in any field. Although only my name is on the cover, this product involved the input of many people over the course of several editions. First and foremost are all those people who have read and commented on various drafts along the way. Many friends and colleagues at Purdue University, specifically Berenice Carroll, Harry Targ, Louis René Beres, and Aaron Hoffman, have made valuable suggestions for improving several chapters. Cynthia Weber of Leeds University provided useful input on my discussion of international relations theory, especially feminism. Although my debts to Stanley Michalak of Franklin and Marshall College go all the way back to my undergraduate days, for this text, he read numerous chapters that are now much better as a result of his insightful, considerate advice and friendly criticism. Stanley was also one of my main sources of encouragement at times when I wondered whether the world really needed another introductory international relations text. In addition, Randy Roberts also gave valuable advice on navigating the maze of textbook publishing.

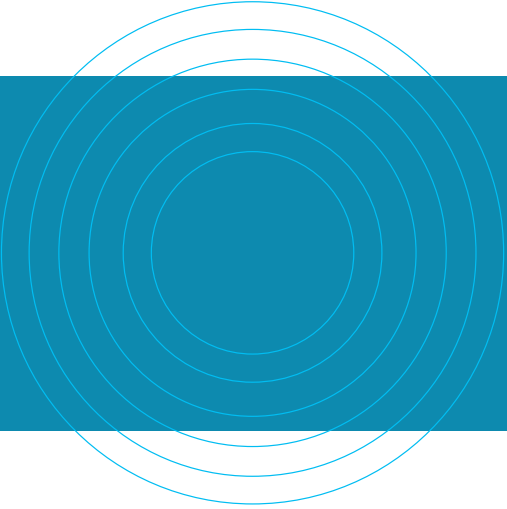
In addition to these friends, there is a list of reviewers for this edition arranged through my editors at Cengage:

Joel McMahan, Baker College Online
Aron Tannenbaum, Clemson University
Emily Copeland, Bryant University
Baris Kesgin, Susquehanna University

Although it was obviously not possible to incorporate all of the ideas and suggestions provided by these reviewers, I can honestly say that this is a much better book as a result of their input.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my mother and father, Riitta and Leonard Shimko. My mother passed away halfway through the writing of the first edition. Although she was not here to see the final product, I know she would have been happy that after many years of talking about it, I finally got off my duff and wrote it. I only regret that she was not here to see it. My father saw the first edition but passed away just before I wrote the second edition. I miss them both terribly.

Keith L. Shimko



Introduction for the Student: Why Study International Relations?

You and the World

There are times when international events dominate the daily news, displacing the more immediate domestic issues and economic concerns that usually occupy people's attention. Despite the continuing recession and persistently high unemployment, domestic issues were bumped from the headlines in the spring of 2014 as the crisis between Russia and Ukraine threatened war on the periphery of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). On television, YouTube, the blogosphere, and a host of social media outlets, the world was flooded with images of protests and troop movements. Talk shows and twenty-four-hour news channels were filled with policymakers and analysts arguing about the strategic, legal, humanitarian, and economic implications of the crisis. What some have characterized as the most significant conflict between the United States and Russia since the end of the Cold War appeared to come out of nowhere, overshadowing domestic and other international concerns.

But even in more tranquil times, when international affairs recede into the background, our lives are touched by events beyond our shores. Whether the United States is at peace or at war, almost 20 percent of your tax dollars goes to defend the nation's security. If you are a farmer or work for a company that exports its products, your livelihood may depend on continued access to international markets. As a consumer, you pay prices for food and clothes from abroad that are influenced by how much access other nations have to our markets. A crisis on the other side of the globe may require you to shell out more money for the gas that you pump into your car. And if you or a loved one is a member of the armed forces, international affairs can literally become a matter of life and death. Indeed, in the wake of September 11, 2001, Americans now know something that people in less secure parts of the world have always known—one need not be wearing a uniform to become a casualty. There may have been a time, before bombers, ballistic

missiles, and the global economy, when friendly neighbors and the isolation provided by two oceans allowed Americans to ignore much of what happened around the world. That world is long gone. Today, we are reminded at almost every turn that our lives are affected—sometimes dramatically—by what goes on thousands of miles from home.

International Relations

What is *international relations*? At first glance, this appears to be a relatively straightforward and easy question. In a narrow sense, international relations is the behavior and interaction of states. Those inclined to this somewhat restrictive definition often prefer the label *international politics* instead of *international relations*. Today, the more commonly used term *international relations* connotes a much broader focus. Although no one denies that state behavior is a focus (perhaps even the *central* focus) of international relations, few believe that this adequately defines the boundaries of the discipline. There are simply too many important actors (e.g., multinational corporations, religious movements, international organizations, and terrorist groups) and issues (e.g., climate change) that do not fall neatly into a state-centric vision of the world. But as we conceptualize international relations more broadly, it is hard to know where to stop. The line between domestic and international politics blurs as we realize that internal politics often influence a state's external conduct. The distinction between economics and politics fades once we recognize that economic power is an integral component of political power. In the end, it may be easier to specify what, if anything, does *not* fall within the realm of international relations. Indeed, according to one definition, international relations is “the whole complex of cultural, economic, legal, military, political, and social relations of all *states*, as well as their component populations and entities.”¹ That covers an awful lot of territory.

Fortunately, we need not settle on any final definition. Although it might be an interesting academic exercise, it serves no useful purpose at this point. It is enough that we have a good idea of the subjects included in any reasonable definition. It is hard, for example, to imagine a definition of international relations that would not encompass questions of war and peace, sovereignty and intervention, and economic inequality and development. As an introductory text, this book deals with perspectives and issues that almost everyone agrees fall well within the core of international relations.

Learning and Thinking About International Relations

This text is designed to help you think systematically and critically about international affairs in a way that allows you to understand today's headlines as well as yesterday's and, more important, tomorrow's. Once you are able to see familiar patterns in unfamiliar situations, identify recurring puzzles in novel problems,

and recognize old ideas expressed in new debates, international relations ceases to be a disjointed and ever-changing series of “events.” The names and faces may change, but many of the fundamental problems, issues, and debates tend to reappear, albeit in slightly different form.

The first step in thinking systematically about international politics is realizing that our present is the product of our past. What happened today was influenced by what happened yesterday, and what happens today will shape what happens tomorrow. Even unanticipated and surprising events do not occur out of the blue: there are always antecedent developments and forces that produced them. The outbreak of World War I, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, cannot be understood apart from their historical roots. Understanding contemporary problems requires an appreciation of their historical origins. History is also essential for evaluating the significance of contemporary events. Without history, we would have no way of judging whether a proclaimed “new world order” is really new, or merely a mildly updated version of the old world order.

The second step in thinking systematically about international relations is moving beyond *description* to the more difficult task of *explanation*. The transition from description to explanation is rarely easy. Anyone who has ever taken a history class knows that agreement on “the facts” does not necessarily translate into consensus on the explanation behind events. Historians might be in total agreement about exactly what happened before and during World War I—who assassinated whom, which nation declared war first, and who won what battles—yet nonetheless disagree about what “caused” the war. These debates occur because historical facts do not speak for or explain themselves. Explanation requires that events be interpreted and linked, and there is always more than one plausible explanation or interpretation.

Competing interpretations are the result of preexisting beliefs and worldviews that act as lenses or filters enabling people to *look* at the same things, yet *see* them differently. As a result, understanding debates about international relations requires knowledge of not only “the facts,” but also the lenses through which people interpret and understand them. Only then is it possible to understand, for example, why some see the United Nations as an invaluable institution for creating a more civilized world, while others dismiss it as a pompous and ineffective debating society. International relations is marked not only by conflicts among nations, but also by conflicting worldviews.

In addition, an appreciation of these competing worldviews is an essential aspect of critical thinking, which necessarily entails looking at issues and problems from many perspectives. This is why students in debating clubs and societies are required to defend positions regardless of their personal opinions. Presenting and defending positions other than your own is an intellectual exercise that aids critical analysis, encourages you to think about the structure of argument and the nature of evidence, and makes you aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your own position. Someone who cannot understand or faithfully present an opposing point of view can never really understand his or her own.

Thus, in order to cultivate this sort of critical analysis, a textbook needs to accomplish at least three tasks. First, it must provide a foundation of knowledge that enables you to think about current events in a broader *historical context*. Second, it has to make you aware of the differing worldviews that influence analyses of international affairs so they can analyze events in a broader *intellectual context*. And third, it should examine issues from multiple perspectives so that you can get into the habit of seeing international relations from many different angles.

Plan of the Book

This text has two sections. The first provides the historical and theoretical foundation. It begins (Chapter 1) with a broad survey of the development of international relations, focusing on the emergence and evolution of what we call the “modern state system.” Although any attempt to summarize more than five centuries in a single chapter inevitably sacrifices much detail, it is still possible to convey the most significant elements of change and continuity. This historical survey is followed by an introduction to the major perspectives that offer alternative ways of explaining and understanding international relations (Chapter 2).

The second section, which forms the bulk of the text, is devoted to enduring and contemporary controversies in international relations. Individual chapters focus on a central international issue, ranging from the very abstract and theoretical (e.g., war and human nature) to the extremely concrete and policy-oriented (e.g., nuclear proliferation and terrorism). Whatever the specific issue, the format of each chapter is similar: A brief historical and factual introduction is followed by a discussion of competing perspectives or arguments.

Of course, it is impossible to do justice to every conceivable position on each issue. In the real world, there are never just two sides to an argument or debate. There are always nuances of emphasis and gradations of belief in academic and policy debates. But before we can deal with nuances, we need to appreciate the more basic and fundamental differences. Thus, rather than covering the full range of positions on every topic, the focus will be on two or three major positions reflecting differences on fundamental questions. This allows us to concentrate on the most significant points of disagreement, develop arguments, and discuss evidence in some depth.

The transition from the classroom to the “real world” is provided by each chapter’s “Points of View” section, which includes an eclectic mix of official foreign policy statements, government documents, news stories, and editorials. What are you supposed to get from these documents? Sometimes they are intended to demonstrate that ideas, which can often appear very theoretical, have real-world consequences. Other documents require you to think outside the box a little by presenting positions that depart somewhat from those presented in the chapter. Finally, some documents are straightforward news stories providing real-world examples of various phenomena.

After the Final Exam

Few of you will make a career of studying international relations. This may be both the first and the last international relations course you will ever take (though hopefully not). But whether you like the subject or not, your life will be influenced by international affairs. Long after the exams and quizzes are an unpleasant memory, many of the issues and problems that you studied here will come up again. Even if you do not emerge with a burning interest in international relations and a passionate desire to learn more, I hope that you will come away with an appreciation of the important issues at stake, that you will listen to candidates and their proposed policies, and that you can identify and understand the assumptions and beliefs that inform them. You should be able to analyze arguments and evidence rather than accept them at face value. You should aim to become an interested, informed, articulate, and thoughtful citizen of a nation and world in which all of our lives and fates are increasingly intertwined and dependent.

NOTE

¹Cathal J. Nolan, *The Longman Guide to World Affairs* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995), p. 178.



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Change and Continuity in International History

Change and Continuity

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, are the most recent in a series of events or crises considered critical turning points in international relations. Slightly more than a decade earlier, in 1989, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall signaled the beginning of the end of the Cold War, eliminating the conflict that had defined international relations for almost four decades. Some argued that the demise of communism removed the final obstacle to the eventual global triumph of liberal democracy. This optimism was reinforced in 1991, when a broad international coalition under the authority of the United Nations reversed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, prompting talk of a “new world order.” The horrors of war in the former Yugoslavia and genocide in Rwanda during the 1990s dispelled much of this optimism. If there was a new world order, it seemed little better than the old one. Then came the assessment that the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq had “changed everything.”

These events and reactions highlight a recurring problem for students of international relations: How do we evaluate the significance of events and changes in the world? In the abstract, the question of whether a new world order is emerging depends not merely on those aspects of international relations that are changing, but also those that are constant. What matters is the relative significance of changes compared to continuities. Unfortunately, continuities are often overlooked. Looking primarily at current and recent events, it is all too easy to focus on change because it is interesting and dramatic. The danger is that we will miss important elements of constancy. For this reason, it is important to approach current issues from a larger historical perspective, with an appreciation of the events and forces that have shaped the world in which we live.

The Emergence of the Modern State System

We take certain features of our world so much for granted that they fade into an unremarkable background. Some things are almost too obvious to mention. If asked what a friend looks like, we are unlikely to describe them as having two arms and two legs. That may simply be too basic, but it is no less important for being so. To avoid overlooking the obvious, it is sometimes useful to play a mind game and imagine how someone with no previous knowledge of our world might see it. An alien visiting planet Earth would notice first some of the basic features of our world that most of us take for granted. In terms of our planet's political order, most striking would be the division of all of the planet's inhabitants (some 7 billion of them) and all the world's territory (about 58 million square miles) into a relatively small number of large political entities called *states* or *countries* (about two hundred) that at least claim to be independent. There is no central political authority that unites these different political entities. In pointing out these facts, the alien would be describing the fundamental features of the **modern state system**: a relatively small number of relatively large, independent political units recognizing no higher political authority. But had the visitor arrived a thousand years ago, he would have seen a very different world, and if he returns a thousand years from now, it will certainly look different still. A good place to begin looking at the history of world politics is with how, why, and when the modern state system came into being.

The modern state system has been around (at least in the Western world) for about four hundred years. Some date the beginning of the modern state system to 1648, the year that the **Thirty Years War** (1618–1648) ended with the **Peace of Westphalia**. Although 1648 is a convenient dividing point, the modern state system did not just appear overnight in that year: The world of 1647 did not look much different from the world of 1649. The emergence of the modern state system was in reality a slow, gradual process driven by important economic, religious, and military developments that eventually undermined the feudal order and replaced it with a new way of organizing European politics. As European influence spread throughout the world in subsequent centuries, this new way of organizing things would come to characterize international politics on a global scale, for better or worse.

A tourist cruising down Germany's Rhine would see the remnants of the feudal order—picturesque castle ruins every few miles. Along the 120 miles from Cologne to Mainz alone, there are thirty-nine castle ruins. Mostly quaint tourist attractions today, in its day each castle was the center of one of the many small kingdoms and fiefdoms that dotted the landscape of feudal Europe. That there are so many castles so close together indicates that these political units tended to be quite small (see Map 1.1). Each unit was ruled by nobility—princes, dukes, or other potentates—who ran them largely as personal property. They did not enjoy formal independence; rather, they were connected to one another in a complicated, chaotic, and often confusing pattern of obligations. Even though one might look at a map of the period and see a few larger countries (e.g., France or England), their appearance is misleading. Political power was not as centralized as the maps suggest. Central governments and rulers were usually very weak and struggled

modern state system The international state system characterized by a relatively small number of relatively large independent or sovereign political units. Although the modern state system is the result of several complex economic, religious, and military changes, a convenient date for its foundation is 1648, when the Thirty Years War ended with the Peace of Westphalia.

Thirty Years War The name given to a series of bloody and devastating wars fought largely on German lands between 1618 and 1648. Although several complex causes and motivations fueled these wars, the conflict between Protestants and Catholics over the authority of the Catholic Church and the pope was a central issue.

Peace of Westphalia The agreement that officially ended the Thirty Years War; significant in that it marked the origins of modern principles of sovereignty.

MAP 1.1 Feudal Europe, 1300

This map of Europe in 1300 illustrates the political fragmentation of the medieval period.



Source: *Periodical Historical Atlas of Europe*, EurAtlas-Nüssli, Copyright 2001, www.euratlas.com. Used by permission. © Cengage Learning.

constantly with lesser nobles over whom they supposedly held authority. In general, “the pattern of politics in medieval Europe was ... a crazy quilt of multiple and overlapping feudal authorities and reciprocal allegiances. ... Central governments, when they existed at all, were consequently very weak.”¹

Holy Roman Empire The larger political entity that brought some political unity to medieval Europe under the authority of the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.

commercial revolution The revival of trade and commerce as Europe began to emerge from the stagnation that characterized much of the period after the fall of Rome in 476 CE. This was one of the forces for the creation of larger and more centralized political units, one of the essential features of the modern state system.

gunpowder revolution The dramatic military, social, and political changes accompanying the introduction and development of gunpowder weapons in Europe, beginning in the fourteenth century, made previous means of defense less reliable and placed a premium on land and larger political units.

Protestant Reformation Martin Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church in 1517 marked the emergence of a non-Catholic version of Christianity. The growing conflict between Protestants and Catholics was one of the major contributing forces to the Thirty Years War.

As if this division of power were not messy enough, much of Europe was theoretically united under the **Holy Roman Empire**. The basis for unity was Europe's common Catholic identity. To make things even more complicated, the Holy Roman Empire had both religious and secular leaders (the pope and Holy Roman Emperor), and it was not always clear where their authority began and ended. Furthermore, the empire itself was a very weak entity in which local nobles and religious figures enjoyed substantial independence from the emperor and Rome. Thus, feudal Europe was a fragmented place of numerous small political entities entwined in a confusing and complicated mishmash of political authority.

Three major developments began to transform Europe beginning in the 1200s or 1300s (it is impossible to pick any specific date). These three “revolutions” would ultimately create much larger political units, organized on the basis of sovereignty and independence. First, the **commercial revolution** (not to be confused with the Industrial Revolution) provided a powerful economic impetus for the creation of larger entities. Second, the **gunpowder revolution** dramatically altered the requirements for defense in ways that gave substantial advantages to larger entities. Finally, the **Protestant Reformation** and the resulting Thirty Years War (1618–1648) destroyed the Catholic unity of Europe and led to the modern notion of sovereignty. Let us deal with each of these revolutions in turn.

The Commercial Revolution

Beginning in the 13th and 14th centuries, Europe began its slow emergence from the stagnation that had prevailed after the fall of Rome 700 years earlier. Part of this resurgence was the revival of commerce and the growth of a new commercial class whose livelihood lay not in production, but in trade. The commercial class faced obstacles because an extremely fragmented Europe was unable to provide many of the prerequisites for commerce. Law enforcement was weak, making the transport of valuable commodities very risky indeed. The infrastructure was in a terrible state of disrepair—roads, ports, and marketplaces had all deteriorated since the fall of Rome. Small fiefdoms did not possess the resources to build the infrastructure, and political fragmentation made coordination very difficult. Finally, systems of measurement and currency were unreliable.

All of these obstacles to commerce could be traced to the small size of political units. The emerging commercial class realized that larger political units with more effective central governments were essential. Ambitious rulers also desired larger kingdoms and increased power over local nobility. The result was a convergence of interests in favor of larger political units with more powerful central governments. A tacit alliance emerged between the commercial class and rulers who wanted to expand and centralize their authority. The commercial class provided resources in the form of taxes, and in return, the rulers provided the roads, ports, markets, law enforcement, and reliable currencies needed for trade. Thus, the economic imperatives of trade and commerce contributed to the emergence of larger political units with more effective central governments.

The Gunpowder Revolution

The weapons of the feudal age are familiar to us from movies about the period—knights in shining armor on horseback carrying swords, lances, and spears; and archers on foot wielding crossbows. War between kingdoms often turned into long sieges, with the attackers surrounding a fortified castle within which people sought safety. Once surrounded, the goal was to harass and starve the inhabitants until they surrendered. The military problem was that the attackers could do little about the thick castle walls—spears and arrows did not make much of a dent, though catapults might propel fireballs over the walls to wreak havoc within. This type of warfare began to change with the introduction of gunpowder from China. Gunpowder weapons (first cannons, and later handheld firearms) significantly altered the military equation. Most important, a kingdom could no longer resist attack by retreating behind castle walls because “from the 1430s onwards the cannons deployed by the major states of Western Europe could successfully reduce most traditional vertical defenses [i.e., walls] to rubble within a matter of days.”² Consequently, an adequate defense required much more complicated (and expensive) fortifications, enough land to absorb an attack, or both, while marshaling one’s forces to meet the attack and defeat it. A kingdom only 40 or 100 miles across, with a castle in the middle, was now extremely vulnerable. Only larger states had the land and wealth necessary to conduct war and defend themselves in the gunpowder age.

The Protestant Reformation

Until 1517, Christianity was largely synonymous with Catholicism. Because the Catholic Church was such a central feature in the social and political life of feudal Europe, the rise of Protestantism had a profound effect on European societies and politics. Martin Luther’s challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church marked the emergence of a Christian alternative to Catholicism that spread throughout Central and Northern Europe. The political problem was that many of the newly Protestant areas were located within the Catholic Holy Roman Empire. Protestants eventually sought freedom from the authority of the pope and Catholic rulers, resulting in a series of wars known collectively as the *Thirty Years War*. Though most of Europe was involved, the fighting occurred largely on German lands. By any measure, it was a war of unusual brutality and savagery. Estimates of the German population killed in the war range from 30 to 50 percent. Part of the barbarity and savagery of the war can be traced to its religious underpinnings: “Combatants on all sides thought that their opponents were, in a literal sense, instruments of the devil, who could be exterminated, whether they were soldiers or not. Indeed extermination of civilians was often preferred, precisely because it was easier to do away with civilians.”³ One need look no further than Martin Luther’s German translation of the Bible to see the depth of this hostility. The only illustrated section was the book of Revelation, which foretells the coming of the Antichrist. Illustrations made the identity of the Antichrist perfectly clear—the pope. After thirty years of devastating and unspeakably brutal warfare, not much of Europe’s sense of a common Christian identity survived.

The Thirty Years War ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, which solved the religious question by granting rulers the right to exercise authority over their territories. Rulers would now determine questions of religion on their territory. They no longer had to answer to any higher, external authority such as the pope. This new freedom, however, did not imply religious tolerance or freedom—rulers often brutally suppressed religious dissidents in their countries. What the treaty established was the modern notion of **sovereignty**—that rulers were not obligated to obey any higher, external authority.

sovereignty In international relations, the right of individual states to determine for themselves the policies that they will follow.

Thus, between the 1300s and the late 1600s, the commercial revolution, the gunpowder revolution, and the Protestant Reformation combined to alter the nature of European societies, states, and international relations. The first two revolutions helped usher in larger political entities, and the Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years War led to the notion of national sovereignty, creating the modern state system—a relatively small number of relatively large, independent political units. These features continue to define our world. This basic continuity does not imply the absence of important changes. Even though certain essential features of international politics have endured, the modern state system has evolved in many important respects. We need to understand not merely the emergence of the modern state system, but also how it has evolved over the past four centuries.

The Age of Absolutism and Limited War (1648–1789)

The period between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution (1789) was relatively uneventful compared to what came before 1648 and what was to come after 1789. There were no major continentwide wars or political revolutions. Though they occurred frequently, wars tended to be modest affairs—small, professional armies fighting limited wars for limited objectives, with limited casualties and destruction. This period is sometimes viewed as a golden age of diplomacy in which negotiation, compromise, and the balance of power prevented any repetition of the horrors of the Thirty Years War. This relative calm, however, depended on a certain political and social order that would not long survive the erosion of that order in the decades after the French Revolution.

absolutist monarchism The political order prevailing in almost all of Europe before the French Revolution, in which kings and queens claimed divine sources for their absolute rule and power unrestricted by laws or constitutions.

When people tour Europe today, they inevitably visit one of the grand palaces that make for beautiful postcards, such as the Palace of Versailles on the outskirts of Paris. Situated on massive estates with finely manicured gardens and dramatic fountains, these mansions have hundreds of rooms covered in gold and valuable art. They are the physical manifestations of the social and political order of **absolutist monarchism**. Between 1648 and 1789, monarchs claiming absolute power and authority ruled virtually every nation in Europe. They claimed authority under the doctrine of the **divine right of kings**, which held that their legitimacy was derived from God, not the people over whom they ruled.

divine right of kings The political principle underlying absolutist monarchism in which God, not the people over whom leaders ruled, granted the legitimacy of rulers.

The prevalence of absolutist monarchism helps explain the relative calm of the period. Domestically, this was not a form of government that fostered loyalty between rulers and their subjects. Indeed, the very term *subjects* hints at the critical point. People who lived in France during this period were not in any meaningful

sense “citizens” of France; they were “subjects” of the monarch. But even though their power was absolute, in reality monarchs made limited demands on their people. They did not, for example, expect their subjects to serve in the military and fight wars. For this task, monarchs maintained professional armies. Unlike volunteer armies of today, soldiers did not have to be from the countries in whose armies they served; these were mercenary, not volunteer, armies. On the eve of the French Revolution in 1789, for example, nearly a quarter of the French army consisted of foreign soldiers.⁴ Such armies were very expensive to maintain. Even the wealthiest rulers supported armies of only around 100,000 in peacetime, although this could swell to 400,000 in wartime. Given armies of this size, it was quite rare for battles to involve more than 80,000 soldiers.⁵

The professional and mercenary nature of European armies of the period reveals a reality in which most people were excluded from politics, which was synonymous with royal court scheming and intrigue, not elections, political parties, interest groups, opinion polls, and so on. In the absence of any emotional sense of loyalty and connection between people and their rulers, nationalism as we know it did not exist. It was an era of dynastic nationalism, not popular or mass nationalism. Wars during this period were not conflicts involving entire nations; they were conflicts among royal families. France *as a nation* did not go to war with Spain or Austria; instead, the Bourbons, France’s ruling dynasty, went to war with Austria’s Hapsburgs.

The absence of mass nationalism helped keep wars and conflicts limited. The major issues leading to war were territorial disputes, economic and commercial interests, and questions of dynastic and royal succession.⁶ Because European monarchs adhered to the same basic principles regarding how societies should be organized and ruled, wars were not waged over ideology. Consequently, “they were not concerned with religion as their seventeenth-century predecessors had been, nor political ideology as their post-1789 successors were to be.”⁷ The monarchs fought over *things*, not ideas, and wars over things are often less intense and bloody than wars over beliefs.

A final reason why wars remained limited affairs was the ability of European monarchs to maintain a balance of power through a constantly shifting pattern of allegiances and alliances. Throughout this period, there were usually five or six major powers in Europe—some combination of England, France, Spain, Prussia, Russia, Austria, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), Sweden, and the United Provinces (i.e., Holland)—that were successful in preventing any one power from becoming powerful enough to dominate all of Europe. Whenever one became too powerful or ambitious, the other major powers would align against it. Because the power of monarchs was absolute and they had no real ideological differences, allegiances could shift rapidly when the balance was threatened. Absolutism did have its advantages.

The Age of Revolutions (1789–1914)

As the 1700s drew to a close, few had any inkling of the dramatic changes about to transform European society, politics, and international affairs. Within a span of 120 years, Europe would cease to be a place where monarchs waged limited wars

with professional armies, becoming one in which popular governments fought wars with millions of men, resulting in casualties and destruction on an almost unimaginable scale. The story of how the comparatively genteel world of the 1700s gave way to the horrors of the trenches of World War I involves two interrelated developments. The first was the rise of modern nationalism, which altered the relationship between people and their governments, thus eroding the foundations of absolutist monarchism. And as absolutist monarchism faded, the international order that it supported began to change. The second development was the Industrial Revolution, which would alter the social and political character of European societies and increase dramatically the destructive potential of warfare. Modern nationalism would eventually combine with industrialism on the bloody battlefields of World War I. This is a complicated story that begins with two political revolutions, one in the new world and the other in the heart of monarchical Europe.

The American and French Revolutions

French Revolution The popular revolt against the French monarchy in 1789 that resulted in the establishment of the French Republic. Along with the American Revolution (which occurred around the same time, in 1776), it marked the emergence of modern nationalism.

popular sovereignty The principle that governments must derive their legitimacy from the people over whom they rule. Embodied in the French and American revolutions, this doctrine challenged the principle of the divine right of kings.

The American Revolution of 1776 and the **French Revolution** of 1789 signaled the introduction of a new idea that would in time unravel the political order of European societies. Before these revolutions, the rulers of Europe claimed divine sources of legitimacy: Louis XVI ruled over the people of France not because they wanted him but because God willed it. At the core of the American and French revolutions was the dangerous, indeed revolutionary, idea of **popular sovereignty**—the notion that governments needed to derive their authority and legitimacy from the people over whom they ruled.

The French Revolution did not start as a revolution, but merely as resistance to King Louis XVI's attempts to raise taxes (largely to pay off debts incurred when the French sided with the American colonists in their war for independence). The resistance eventually snowballed into a revolt against the monarchy itself, resulting in the overthrow of Louis XVI in 1792 and the establishment of the French Republic. A Reign of Terror eventually ensued, in which thousands of nobles and supposed enemies of the revolution met with a gruesome end, usually via the infamous guillotine. Even Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, were not spared the blade.

To grasp the significance of the French Revolution, we need to appreciate that the king of France was not just another king; he was *the* king, the most powerful and prestigious monarch in all of Europe. As a result, the revolution and overthrow of the French monarchy came to be seen as a threat to the entire system of absolutist monarchism. As one might expect, this was viewed as an undesirable development in the royal courts of Europe, though it did take a while for the enormity of what had happened to sink in. The initial reaction was not one of great alarm, perhaps because the revolution was seen as weakening France and unlikely to succeed in the long run. Thus, at first the response was largely to ignore and isolate revolutionary France.⁸

As it became apparent that the revolution would succeed, and maybe even spread, the monarchs concluded that they had a vested interest in crushing the revolt and restoring the French monarchy. The revolutionary government anticipated hostility and prepared to defend itself. France's first step was the creation

of a massive citizen army. The call went out for volunteers, with the appeal being made not on the basis of financial reward, but rather loyalty to the revolution and nation. When this failed to produce sufficient forces, the government instituted the **levée en masse** in 1793, conscripting all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 25 into military service. As a result of the *levée en masse*, “by the summer of 1794 the revolutionary army listed a million men on its rolls, of whom 750,000 were present under arms—a great force which, in terms of social class, occupation, and geographical origin, accurately reflected French society. It was the nation in arms composed of the best young men France could offer.”⁹ Unlike the pre-revolutionary French army, French citizenship was a prerequisite for service. This was now the *nation’s* army.

Although the citizen army of the French Republic successfully defended the revolution against its foreign enemies, the Republic had other problems. Constant fighting, some military setbacks, domestic political conflicts, and economic difficulties led to political instability. Exploiting domestic strife, Napoleon Bonaparte, an ambitious revolutionary general known for military brilliance and personal arrogance, staged a coup in 1799. Though he eventually crowned himself emperor, there was a critical difference between Napoleon and his monarchical predecessors. Echoing the ideals of the revolution, Napoleon maintained that his right to rule was derived from the French people. In claiming nearly absolute power while also insisting that his rule derived its legitimacy from the people, Napoleon became the first (but certainly not the last) populist dictator in modern Europe.

After consolidating power, Napoleon embarked on a program of conquest cloaked in the rhetoric and ideals of the French Revolution. The **Napoleonic Wars** (1802–1815) plunged Europe into another thirteen years of war. Given the unprecedented size of the French army, motivated by emotional appeals to spread the revolution, it was war on a grand scale. Napoleon’s forces swept across Europe until France controlled most of the continent. It was not until his armies reached the outskirts of Moscow in 1812 that the tide finally turned. Napoleon’s ambitions had gotten the better of him. His invasion of Russia proved to be a fatal mistake. A series of military defeats for France ended with the final failure at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

In many respects, the battles of the Napoleonic Wars looked very much like those of the 1700s—the soldiers and their weapons all looked the same. The major difference was scale. France’s ability to mobilize and conscript men by the hundreds of thousands forced the other nations of Europe to respond in kind. Before the French Revolution, a battle involving 80,000 troops would have been extremely rare. Such battles were dwarfed by the major clashes of the Napoleonic Wars. The Battle of Leipzig (1813) involved more than 200,000 French and another 300,000 Austrian, Russian, Prussian, and Swedish forces.¹⁰ With more than half a million troops on the field, the Battle of Leipzig involved at least five times as many men as a very large battle of the pre-revolutionary era. The scale of war had changed to the point where it was no longer just a different level of warfare but a fundamentally new way of preparing for and waging war.

This expanding scale of war was possible because people were increasingly willing to fight and make sacrifices for their governments—and governments were

levée en masse The mobilization (conscription) of all able-bodied French males to defend the French Republic from attempts by European monarchs to restore the French monarchy.

Napoleonic Wars The French wars of European conquest following Napoleon’s rise to power. Demonstrated the potential impact of modern nationalism through total national mobilization for war and widespread conscription.