

Introduction

International Studies, as defined in this textbook, focus on the issues of today. In my time teaching International Studies, I've had new topical issues to discuss every year: the first year of Donald Trump's presidency in 2017, #MeToo in 2018, worldwide mass protests (in Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Algeria, Catalonia, Bolivia and Chile) in 2019, Black Lives Matter in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, the Gaza war in 2023, issues of international law (genocide, occupation and apartheid) in 2024, the American reconfiguration of global relations in 2025. Discussing these issues in a textbook means it is continuously out of date. What this textbook will do, therefore, is provide the structures, backgrounds and methodologies that will help the students of the introduction course to International Studies to understand global events and the role of people in it. It is then up to the instructor to connect the lectures to current events, and up to the students to keep track of daily events.

The term 'global' is not without contestation. Many scholars will argue that it denies the particularities of the local and the individual. That is a valid concern. But at the same time, we cannot deny that certain developments happening across the world share distinct similarities and therefore merit the denomination 'global'. International Studies as conceived in this textbook seeks to connect the dimensions of the global and the individual. To do so, this textbook will use a framework of globalism (consisting of 'global structures', 'global trends' and 'global challenges') that are superimposed on the dimensions of the local, national and global, and viewed from a perspective of human and social sciences. This structure will be elaborated further in the following chapters.

The notion of 'International Studies' is in its infancy and has not yet been fully conceptualized. This textbook can therefore not be conclusive nor comprehensive, but it will contribute to the theorization of International Studies by offering a lay of the land and providing International Studies students with concepts, frameworks and viewpoints to navigate it. In doing so, it will make use of the ten years of experience we have built at the International Studies program of Leiden University. One of the pitfalls I learned to avoid during these years, is the geographical and epistemological vantage points that come with teaching at a university in Western

Europe. Currently, International Studies are predominantly taught at universities in Europe and North America which is why this textbook provides frameworks and concepts that are relevant to the wide variety of societies and experiences of the entire world, not just the Western world.

