

PART II

Global Structures

To understand the human dimensions of global complexities, the student of International Studies must understand the global structures that are in place in today's world. These are the mechanisms and organizational structures that are entrenched in our world and therefore shape the ways humankind operates. Some of these mechanisms and structures are as old as humankind, like migration, economy, patriarchy, arts, belief systems. Others are of a more recent date, like international agreements or intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations. A selection of seven global structures will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 1

Beliefs and belief systems

A unique feature of humans is their ability to believe. They can believe to be member of a nation, they can believe in gods or stories of creation, in ideas and ideologies. Believing is the conviction that something is true. It is a driving force behind *ideas* as well as *identities*, which are two of the 3 I's. The act of believing has always been an elementary force that helps shape the way we see our world and the way people should interact. It can also be extremely powerful as a force that drives people to act. For instance, wars are often caused by ideas that people feel strongly about. One such idea may be that they are superior and therefore entitled to rule others, or that their nation is under threat, or that a 'motherland' needs to be reunited. Similarly, enormous monuments are erected, wholly or in part to celebrate a belief, like the pyramids of Egypt and Central America, the Roman and Greek temples, the gothic churches of Europe, the Buddhas of Bamyán in Afghanistan, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the Boru Budur in Indonesia, to name but a few.

Monumental belief

In Göbekli Tepe in Turkey, remains have been found of monumental buildings of stone, with carved pillars of five meters and six to seven tons in weight. They date from 11.500 years ago (that is twice as old as Stonehenge in England that dates 5.500 years back, and almost three times older than the pyramids in Egypt that date 4.500 years back). It was the period that people started to settle in larger agricultural communities. Since these buildings do not seem to have any practical use, archaeologists think they may have had a religious purpose.

We call a belief a **belief system** when the beliefs and belief practices of a people are structured and organized. The notion of beliefs is usually equated with religions. Examples of religious belief systems are Judaism, Christianity and Islam, that have elaborate traditions of rituals and scriptural scholarship. Other religious belief systems are less structured (like Hinduism) or focus more on oral transmissions (like many 'indigenous' religions). Belief systems other than religious ones include ideologies like capitalism, communism or fascism. In some instances, even certain cultural customs and practices are considered belief systems. (See below for a discussion on the relation between religion and culture, and between religion and ideology.)

While a belief *system* can emerge, evolve and disappear, the underlying activity of *believing* is a distinct mechanism that is entrenched in humanity, and therefore a global structure.

A **belief** is a conviction about something that one holds to be true. A **belief system** elaborates a belief in a coherent set of doctrines, concepts and rituals.

‘Dreaming’

Aboriginal peoples in Australia have an oral tradition that is often referred to as ‘Dreaming’. By means of song, knowledge is preserved and transmitted about a variety of topics, like mythology, law, kinship, and medicine. When this knowledge is about navigating land routes on the ground as well as paths in the sky, these are referred to as ‘Dreaming Tracks’ (also: ‘Songlines’).

Horizontal and vertical bonds

When someone believes in intangible powers beyond oneself (transcendental powers), this creates a bond between that person and a larger order which may be referred to as divine creation, a cosmic order or a universal truth. It is a bond that may lead to a belief system, like Judaism or Hinduism, or to a mythology, like the ones of the Greeks, the Babylonians or the Mayas, or to a universal order like human rights. We may imagine this as a vertical bond of believing, that is, between a person ‘down here’ and a higher order ‘out there’.

We can also imagine a horizontal bond of believing, that is, among people. We believe in each other, we believe in the legends and myths of our ancestors, we believe in the values and traditions that we find typical for our community. This kind of belief is what shapes people’s identities, whether it is religious, cultural, ethnic or something else. This kind of belief creates a bond among people and acts as the glue that keeps communities together.

It has become common practice to distinguish between the vertical and horizontal bonds as ‘religion’ and ‘society’, respectively, whereby society is usually marked as ‘neutral’ or ‘secular’, meaning non-religious. For that reason, they are often considered to be two separate realms. However, this view is typical for Western epistemology. In most societies, religion plays an intricate role in the daily lives of people, combining rather than separating the transcendental (‘vertical’) and the daily practical (‘horizontal’).

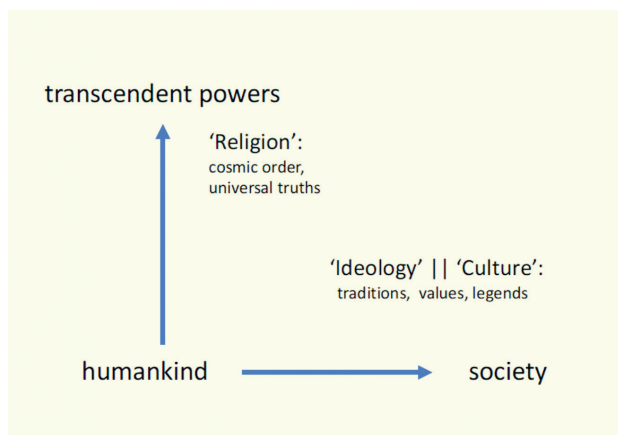


Figure II.1.1 Separating religion and society

Ideology or religion?

This distinction between vertical and horizontal bonds may help explain the difference between religion and ideology. The ways people believe in and practice their religious faith can sometimes be very similar to the ways people believe in and practice communism. What then is the difference between the two? Is communism not like religion, or is Christianity not like an ideology? The distinction between ideology and religion can be illustrated with the notion of ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ beliefs. Religion is the (‘vertical’) belief of people in something ‘out there’ and deals with transcendent forces and spirituality, and wonders about the meaning of life. An ideology, on the other hand, deals with the practicalities of life on earth, the here and now, and as such is a belief in human (‘horizontal’) relations. This admittedly schematic differentiation can become blurred when religious views are being interpreted and expressed in norms and rules that regard society and politics. We see this happening today with Hinduism in India, Judaism in Israel, Islam in countries like Iran and Saudi-Arabia, Christianity in America. In those instances, it may be justified to term these uses of religion as ideology.

Culture or religion?

A similar discussion exists about the relation between religion and culture. However, this is a distinction that is often harder to make. An example to illustrate this is female genital mutilation (FGM), also euphemistically called ‘female circumcision’. The severe forms of this practice are widespread in several African countries where it has been a custom for thousands of years, and it is still widely practiced by Muslims as well as Christians and people of other religions. It could therefore be argued this custom is not religion-specific. However, the practice is so deeply imbedded in the local culture of these people, that they consider it a religious imperative, even when religious leaders have publicly and clearly stated that this practice is *not* part of their

respective religions. People apparently feel so strongly about it, that they believe they are held by a higher order or power to continue carrying it out.

FGM shows how culture and religion can be intertwined. Does it matter then whether we call something culture or religion? From the perspective of believing in something, both culture and religion can have the same importance to people. From that viewpoint, the terms religion and culture can be used interchangeably. On the other hand, there is a distinct difference between culture and religion regarding the *source* of that belief. Simply put, a culture is shaped by the norms and rituals to which one is accustomed ('this is how we do things here'), while religion, especially as a belief system, is shaped by what divine authorities are assumed to have ordained ('this is what my religion requires'). In practice, these two may very well overlap in the strength of their beliefs, but the motivation of the two is different.

Countries with the highest FGM-rates:

Somalia	99%
Guinea	95%
Djibouti	90%
Mali	89%
Egypt	87%
Sudan	87%
Eritrea	83%
Sierra Leone	83%
Gambia	73%
Ethiopia	65%
Mauretania	64%

(UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation Database*, 2023)

Beliefs and the state

Throughout human history, religion has played an important role for rulers of empires and states. And more recently, in the twentieth century we see how ideologies – especially socialism and communism – have played a similar role. Below, we will focus on religion as it has a longer legacy and, so it seems, still has a stronger impact than ideologies (many states halfway through the 20th century who called themselves socialist are now emphatically referring to a religious identity, including Russia, Poland and Egypt). In its relationship with the state, religion assumes four roles that are sometimes separate, but mostly overlapping:

First, religion is used to **legitimize state rule**. Kings and leaders have often felt the need for endorsement from higher powers to legitimize their rule. To achieve that, the ultimate leadership of rulers was framed in terms of a God-given rule (or, like in China, a mandate from heaven). Nowadays, in most states, this connection with higher powers has been legally severed, and the legitimacy of rulers officially rests no longer on something that is God-given, but on the will of the people. Still, quite a few rulers today feel the need to show that they are close to religion and its institutions.



Figure II.1.2 President Trump and religious community leaders

The second role that religion plays is as the identity of a people, empire or country. In most instances this is made official by naming a religion the **state religion**. This usually means that other religions are allowed, but that the state religion serves as the identity for that state. This has, in the past, also had consequences for the legal and social structure of such countries. The state religion would set the basic rules of that society. For instance, changing religions would be considered laudable when converting to the state religion, but possibly punishable when converting to another religion. Another aspect of religion that was very prominent in the past was that most societies were organized along religious lines: religious segregation was very common, with people belonging to the state religion taking up prominent positions, and people usually marrying within their own religious community and living in their own towns or city quarters in accordance with their own religious customs.

This all changed dramatically in the nineteenth century when, starting in Europe and then gradually spreading to most of the world, the notion of **citizenship** was introduced (a global trend which now has become a global structure). This was a radical break with a centuries-old tradition in which religion usually determined the social fabric of society: the introduction of citizenship meant that all citizens were considered equal, regardless of their religion. The consequences were enormous, because from then on every citizen, regardless of their religion, could obtain social positions that were previously reserved for those who belonged to the state religion. Most states today recognise that equality, although it is often more in rule than in practice: many countries will not have a president with a religion different from that of the majority population or from the state religion.

The third role of religion is that of **guardian of morality**. That which is good or wrong in a given society was usually phrased in religious terms. Nowadays, most states try to pass laws and regulations that are allegedly of a more 'neutral' or otherwise non-religious nature. But still, the overlap remains. For instance, those who oppose the legalization of abortion are mostly not arguing from the legal point of view that killing is a crime, but from the moral and religious point of view that life is sacred.

The fourth role is that of **religion as an institution**. These institutions arose to teach and guide people in their religion, to serve them in performing rituals, to provide them with counsel, to legitimize the rule of state leaders and to determine what is good and what is bad. In doing so, these institutions became powerful actors themselves, whether by their association with the most important state institutions or as actors in civil society. Throughout history and to this day, there have always been tensions between religious institutions and state governments because they both need each other, but also want to keep their independence. Both of them combined in one person is rare today, the most conspicuous examples being the pope (leader of both the Catholic Church and the Vatican) and the supreme leader of Iran.

Secularism and secularization

Two terms need explanation since they are often used interchangeably but have entirely different meanings. **Secularization** is the social process whereby religion becomes less important to the believers and so plays an increasingly lesser role in that society. Whereas secularization has to do with people's relationship with religion, secularism has to do with the state's relationship with religion. **Secularism** is a manner in which the state distances itself from religion.

Confusing about the terms secularization and secularism is that their adjectives are the same: 'secular'. When a state or a person is called secular, it can refer to

secularization as well as secularism. A 'secular state' can mean that a state wants to keep government and religion separate, but it can also mean that the people of that state are not very religious. To complicate matters, 'secular' is often used to denote non-religious. That is not necessarily the case. Persons can be religious and secular at the same time: they can be very religious and do not want the state to interfere with their personal beliefs.

Secularization relates to people: it is the process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose their social significance. **Secularism** relates to the state: it is the legal and political way a state distances itself from religion. **'Secular'** is the adjective of both terms.

Another – mostly Western – alternative term for secularism is the expression **'separation of church and state'**. However, this expression is not clear as it manifests itself in three very distinct ways:

a) *The separation of government and religious institutions.* Religious institutions are not the same thing as belief systems or a community of believers: they are the organized forms of religious communities with a clergy, infrastructure, and offices. In a secular state, religious institutions and governments are assumed to operate independently from each other.

b) *The separation of religion and politics.* This relates to the degree that a country allows religion to be part of politics. In certain countries it is allowed to have religious political parties (like the many 'Christian Democratic' parties in Europe), in other countries that is strictly forbidden (like in France and, until recently, in Turkey).

c) *The separation of religion and the public domain.* This is when religion is reduced to a private affair that should preferably not be visible in the public domain. According to this principle, people are free to be religious, but they are not to show it in public. France is a typical example of this, as it actively bans expressions of religion from all public places that belong to the state, such as parliament, all public offices, post offices, state banks, public schools, and the like.

These three different manifestations of the 'separation of church and state' may help to navigate the complex ways in which each state has arranged its relationship with religion. Still, confusion about these relationships will remain. This is not only caused by the many different structures that exist in regulating this relationship, but also by the religious history and culture of each society. For example, The Netherlands and the United States both claim to uphold a system of secularism, but they are quite different in the manner they do this. The Netherlands has several explicitly religious political parties (Christian and Islamic), while the United States does not. However, in The Netherlands one finds very little if any religious discourse

in the public or political domain, as opposed to the States. This is not a result of a political or legal order, but of custom: the Dutch have a culture where religion is not considered part of the public or political domain, while in the United States religion is customarily very much part of the public and political domain

Further reading

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CHAPTER 2

Economics

Interests, or the first 'I' of the 3-Is, encompasses a wide variety of domains, ranging from what sustains a person (food, energy, clothes, shelter) to what makes life livable (medical care, body care, education) and enjoyable (sports, arts, leisure). Providing for these interests is done by managing the production and distribution of resources and goods. The management of the production, distribution and consumption of such goods is called economy. These activities have always been part of the lives of humankind. People have structured their economic activities on individual, communal, national and global levels.

Economy refers to the way in which people provide for their needs. **Economics** is the name of the academic discipline that studies how and why people make decisions about production and distribution of goods and services.

Economic systems

An economy is a mechanism that balances the needs of people with their resources (land, ores, oil, water – see chapter 'Resources and Climate'), their 'inventories' (raw materials, foodstuffs, product parts) and 'capital' (everything needed for production, like human labor and ingenuity, tools, machines, factories, transport). Important in this equation are the people themselves: they determine their needs and what must be produced to cater to those needs, just as their qualities and abilities will determine if and how they manage to produce what needs to be produced. These needs can be stimulated by technology (think of inventions like agriculture, machines, mobile phones), but also by *ideas* (such as the prohibition or the encouragement of certain foods or practices like veganism, religious dietary laws, religious bans on electricity or vaccination).

The ideal situation would be the perfect balance of needs and resources so that people can live a good life. To reach that balance, people developed various types of economies. The early forms were **pastoral**, **trade-based** and **agriculture-based** economies to be joined later by the **industry-based** economy. How these economies were implemented and how they evolved, differed depending on time and place. While pastoral economies gradually disappeared with time, the other three economic systems became increasingly global and very few countries today have a national economy that is fully self-sustainable ('autarkic').

With the emergence of states and industrialized forms of production, two other types of economy developed. One is the **planned economy** in which governments regulate production and therefore consumption. In this system, people only participate in the production process in positions that are allocated to them, and their consumption is usually rationed. The other type is known as the **market economy**, in which the government plays a minimal role, and the production and consumption of goods are left to the needs and initiatives of the people. Of course, these are two archetypes of economic systems, and most of today's economies are a mixture of the two. But these are not economic systems of their own accord: they are put in place by people or, more commonly, their governments. The manner in which economies are shaped stem from *ideas* that people have on how best to manage them.

Ideas about economy

Economists and ideologues have come up with various ideas on how an economy could be organized to best serve the interests of society. In the nineteenth century, two models emerged that still apply today, albeit with many adaptations. Key to these models are the notion of private ownership and the role of the state.

The first model is **capitalism**. It is based on the notion of private ownership, meaning that the capital (labor, tools, money, etc.) needed for production is privately owned and its owners are free to decide what to do with that capital. The state ideally plays no role in the regulation of the market or in labor rights, nor in environmental, ethical or public health issues. That's why capitalism is usually found in market-based economies. In such economies, however, different choices can be made regarding the financial involvement of the state in matters of education, housing, healthcare and infrastructure. While these choices are matters of political debate, all states nowadays agree that the organization and costs for the protection of the country (judiciary, army and police) are the exclusive domain of the state.

The second model is **communism**. Communism was a response to some of the excesses of the capitalist system whereby people without capital (who represented the largest part of the population) depended on those with capital. This disparity led to poverty among the greater working population and excessive wealth among the few who owned the capital. That is why the communist model denounced private ownership and stipulated that all capital should be jointly owned by those who did the work (the working class). The entire population of a country should become a single working class, and the state, as the representative of the population, must administer and manage the joint ownership of capital. While in name the people own all the capital, the state has a central role in regulating anything that has to do with the economy. One of the downsides of such a system of planned economy

was that various communist states made political or economic miscalculations in regulating the production of goods. For instance, the Soviet Union emphasized the development of heavy industry in the 1930s which resulted in famine because there were not enough resources left for agriculture.

Nowadays, most states use hybrid forms of these two systems, whereby the main question is always how much (or how little) power the state should hold in regulating the economy. Choices made in this respect are always driven by *interests* and *ideas* and are therefore highly political. For that reason, matters of the economy are often connected to ideas about **freedom**. Countries that embrace 'political' freedoms and consequently refrain from interfering in people's opinions or organizations, also tend to hold back in matters of the economy. On the other hand, a country that embraces 'social' freedoms, might regulate matters of the economy with the purpose of a 'fair' distribution of wealth which may leave people little freedom to determine that for themselves. Governments often try to find the middle ground.

The road to serfdom or freedom?

Economist Friedrich Hayek is one of the godfathers of neoliberalism, advocating free market in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), with the argument that state control of economic decision-making would lead to oppression of freedoms. Economist and Nobel prize winner Joseph Stiglitz argues in *The Road to freedom* (2024) that neoliberalism has led to the freedom of a few to oppress the many, and that the state needs to play an active role to guarantee civil liberties.

Market and trade

Rare is the situation that a person or household or community is completely self-sustainable. The same applies today to states: few, if any, have all the wealth, including the human resources, to meet the needs of its population. Usually, there is an imbalance between what is produced and what is needed. Exchange, or **trade**, is a way to compensate for this imbalance: what one needs is imported from elsewhere, and what one has in surplus can be exported. Trade has always been a part of humankind, and the many ancient trade routes across continents and seas show that consumptive needs were such that it paid off to get the wanted goods from afar.

The imbalance between that which is produced and that which is needed could be compensated for by **diversification**, that is to generate as many different types of products as possible to reduce the dependence on importing what is lacking. However, some economic theories argue that diversification weakens one's

economic position, and therefore advocate the opposite, **specialization**: a country should focus on its primary resources or production capabilities and use it for export, the proceeds of which can then be used to buy and import all the goods the country needs. For that reason, countries like Egypt and Uzbekistan converted much of their agriculture to cotton in the 1950s, Vietnam to coffee in the 1980s, and so on. Specialisation also contributed to an increase in global trade: for instance, Taiwan is one of the few producers of semiconductor chips and is the main exporter of these chips across the world just like Brazil is the world's number one exporter of soybeans (60% of the world trade).

Rentier state is the name for a state whose income relies almost exclusively on the export of a single product for which little labor is required, like oil or gas. Such a state is said to live of the rent revenues of that product. When the income is such that no national production is needed (because the 'rent' income is so high that everything can be bought), then the 'rentier' situation is considered disruptive for the domestic economic situation, and often also for the social-political situation.

The result of an imbalance between what people have and what they need creates a **market** that is driven by supply and demand. The changes in supply and demand influence the price of the commodity at hand. If the demand for a product increases, but supply cannot keep up with demand, the price that consumers are willing to pay will rise. This mechanism can even itself out in time, but in complex societies states will often feel the need to interfere with the market: governments may stockpile certain products or set prices, raise tariffs against foreign goods or provide subsidies.

Impact of a global economy

The increasing interconnectedness of economies today has had an impact on the world in unprecedented ways, both positively and negatively.

The main example of the negative impact is that interconnectedness can also lead to interdependence. This showed in the financial crisis of 2008, which was sparked by defaults on subprime mortgage loans in the United States which triggered a near meltdown of banking systems across the world. Another example is the climate. The more companies rely on importing and exporting across the world, the more the transports needed for that will have an impact on the climate. The so-called carbon (or environmental, or energy) footprint has become the indicator of such an impact. With increasing concern about climate change, pressure has mounted on consumers as well as producers to be careful of that footprint.

Belt and Road Initiative

For centuries the 'Silk Route' existed across Asia, consisting of myriad routes linking up to a commercial highway connecting Eastern Europe with Central and Eastern Asia. In 2013, China coined the term 'Silk Road Economic Belt' (later: 'Belt and Road Initiative') for an extensive program of investments and development with numerous countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, creating a network of transport and cooperation.

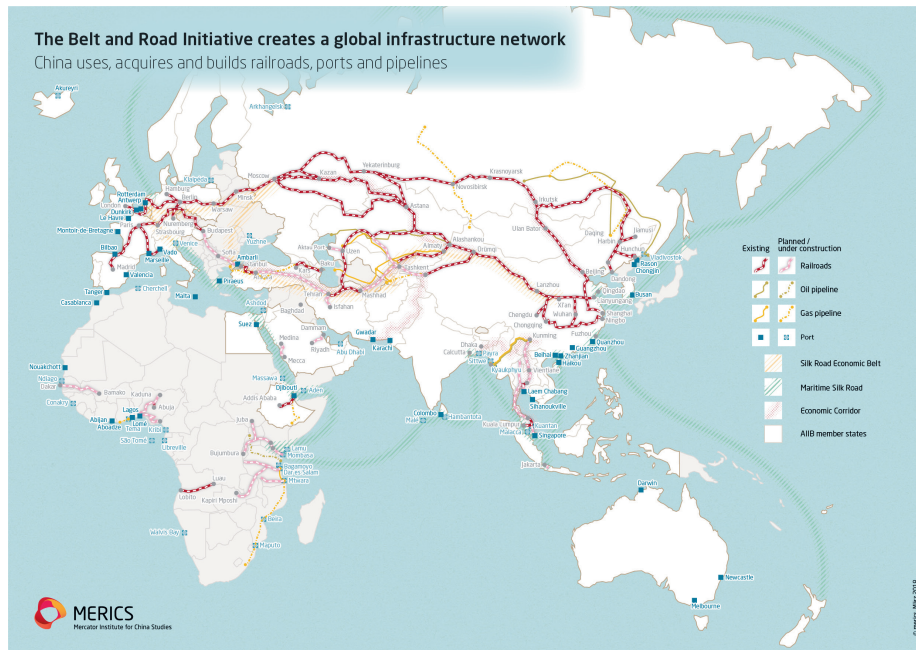


Figure II.2.1 China Belt and Road Initiative

The global economy also has its advantages. The main advantage is for companies: they have easy access to resources, parts and production, and they have more flexibility in allocating production. For instance, they can move their entire enterprise to another country because the local salaries or legal environment there are considered more beneficial. While this will create job opportunities in the new countries where production facilities are started, it also creates unemployment in the country that is being left. Another advantage of the global economy is the wide availability of products. This has contributed, for instance, to an increase in food production that, together with agricultural innovations, allowed for sustaining a rapidly rising world population.

Ukraine, the world's granary

Ukraine is one of the largest exporters of wheat and barley in the world. Countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan import 25-50% of their wheat from Ukraine. These supplies suffered greatly from the 2022 Russian invasion in Ukraine. The shortages were supplemented by other wheat-exporters, including Russia, that increased their exports.

The global economy has also raised the concern that certain products and brands may lose their typical 'national' identity once they are being reproduced across the world (like French wine and Greek feta cheese), or when they are assembled outside of their country of origin (like Swedish Volvo and Japanese Nintendo). For some of these products, the national brand is considered of the essence, causing the rise of lobbies to protect the national naming of these products.

It may look like individual consumers are crushed in these global developments, but the contrary is true. Consumers have united in international pressure groups that boycott certain products to force companies to change their methods. This is happening in the case of coffee, for instance, where consumers are encouraged to only drink coffee from companies that treat the coffee workers fairly. Similar actions are undertaken against the sweat shops in South-East Asia that produce the clothing that is sold at low prices in Western stores. Such pressure is also increasingly exerted for political reasons: international companies like McDonalds and Starbucks have been boycotted for their commercial ties with countries like China and Israel.

Economy and democracy

During the 1990s, there was a general assumption among mostly Western countries that democracy was the prerequisite for a functioning economy. Southeast Asian countries, however, showed that a flourishing economy could be achieved without fulfilling the conditions of democracy.

Criticism

Economic thinking has received its share of criticism from economists and outsiders. Two types of criticism will be discussed here.

The first criticism regards the assumption that people act as the *homo economicus*, which refers to economic decision-making based on reasoned calculations. This assumption has allowed economists to construct models based on what were considered logical decision processes. The so-called behaviorists, however, have indicated the erratic and sometimes even irrational processes of human thinking,

including in economic practices: their decisions are often based on instinct, bias, and emotions. The behaviorists have shown that rational decisions are usually the result of slow thinking processes while the emotional and instinctive decisions are made quickly. As a result, people do not necessarily act consistently and rationally in their economic actions: they may spend an extra hour in the car to drive to a store on the other side of town for a relatively small price advantage, or take high insurance for relatively cheap appliances, or are more willing to spend one hundred euros on several products that are on sale than the same one hundred euros on a single quality product that they really need. These ‘cognitive illusions’ appear to be the prime drivers of economic behavior rather than calculated rational consideration.

Brain ‘kinks’

Professor Kahneman (died 2024) introduced the notion of universal brain “kinks” to indicate inconsistencies in economic thinking. Famous is the kink of ‘loss-aversion’ which means that loss hurts more than gain – for instance, the loss of \$100 seems to hurt about twice as much as the gaining of \$100 brings pleasure.

(Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 2011)

Another criticism of economics as practiced today is that it deviates from its original goal, that is: organizing behavior to make people more comfortable and improve their well-being. Rather than being a means to an end, critics argue that economics has shifted to being the end itself. Their concern is that there is an increasing tendency to use the notion of ‘economic growth’ as a goal and justification in its own right, instead of using economics in such a way that it satisfies the needs that sustain the individual, community, or society. To put it in simple terms: greed has become the ingredient for what has become an immoral economy. One of the results of such economic systems is the increasing divide between the rich and the poor. Several economists, like Piketty and the Nobel prize winners Joseph Stiglitz, and Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson (who shared the 2024 Nobel prize), have pointed out how this inequality can become a source of disruption in today’s democratic societies.

“When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men living together in society, they create for themselves in the course of time a legal system that authorizes it and a moral code that glorifies it.”

(Frederic Bastiat, *economist*, 1801-1850)

These two issues – the paradoxes of human (economic) behavior, and the misuse of economic systems – have been food for political debates about the question of how to distribute wealth fairly. But this question has also become a global challenge: how can one balance the coexistence on the same planet of extreme richness and poverty, and of food waste and famine? This will be partly discussed in the chapter ‘Sustainable Development.’

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Nation and state

People tend to identify with their own kind, based on a shared ethnicity, culture, history, language, and religion. Here, the two I's of *ideas* and *identity* are the main bonding forces. What is unique about humans is that they also bond in this way in groups that are much larger than families or tribes and therefore surpass the number of people that can claim to know each other. When such large groups of people who are unknown to each other but nevertheless live together in a cohesive and enduring connection, they are often referred to as a **nation**.

A nation usually occupies a territory and can, but does not have to, be organized in a political unit. For instance, most **empires** encompassed several nations under the leadership of a single nation. Empires usually allowed religious and cultural differences to co-exist within its realm. The paradox of almost each empire was that they were established by violence and destruction but then continued by establishing their own civilization (often by using elements of the civilizations and cultures of the nations that were conquered). Empires have existed everywhere in the world, the first known empires dating from the 4th millennium BCE and the last ones being the European colonial empires (although it has been argued that hegemonical states like the United States and the Soviet Union also constituted empires, and the same is being said about certain corporate firms that are globally active).

Another type of political organization is the **nation-state** which assumes that its people form a single nation that shares a territory and shapes their nationhood by means of state education and national commemorations and religious holidays. Since the nineteenth century such nation-states have replaced empires, and emerged as the new world entity that expresses its desire for self-determination in a political unit called a state.

State and Empire

An **empire** is established by military force and encompasses large territories and many peoples. An empire can subsume one or more civilizations, and usually develops a new civilization within its realm.

A **state** can have two meanings: a) specific: a political unit that claims to have a single culture and people ('nation'); b) general: a political unit with an organized and complex form of governance (which may also apply to an empire, for instance).

Global structure and 3-I's

The nation-state has become so entrenched in today's world that it has become a global structure. This shows in several ways. First, all countries today express themselves as nation-states. The collapse of the last colonial empires resulted in the formation of numerous new states, so that the number of states has almost quadrupled since 1945.

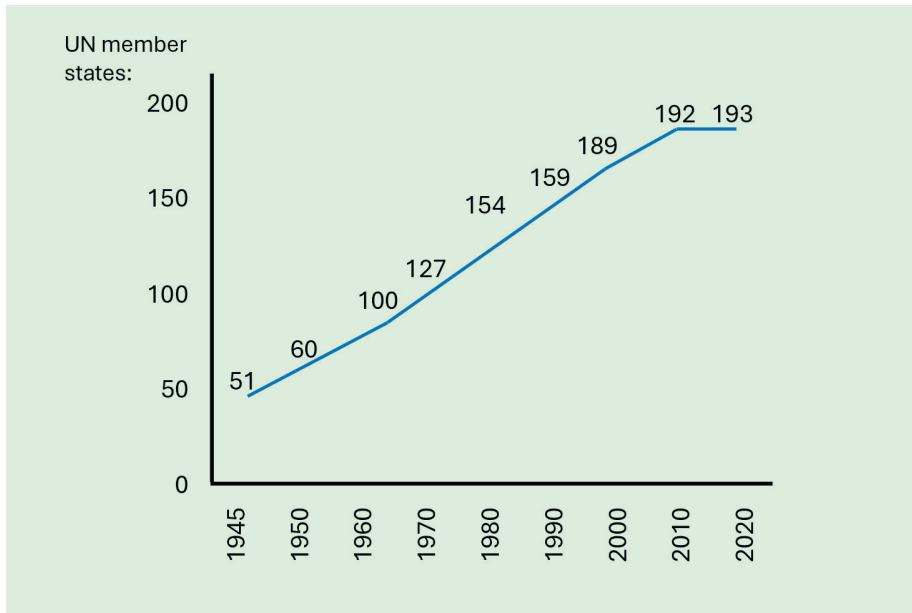


Figure II.3.1 The increase in number of states in the world

While many of these states may be based on civilizations and political units that had existed for centuries before they declared themselves states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the novelty of the 'state' is its structure. All states in the world work with the same organizational blueprint of parliament-government-judiciary, and almost all states refer to themselves as 'of', 'for' or 'by' the people (many states named themselves 'republic'). Finally, states have become the main drivers of almost all international and global activity, as we will see in the following chapters. In doing so, an international playfield has been created in which states are the main players. Even states that oppose the domination of an international order or morality – like Iran, Russia, China – play by the rules of that playfield.

The famous sentence “**Government of the people, by the people, for the people**” by President Lincoln in 1863 refers to a government owned by the people (‘of’), executed by the people (‘by’) and serving the people (‘for’).

All 3-I’s – *interests, ideas, identities* – are powerful drivers behind the notion of a state. They explain the existence of a state: to pursue the interests of its people, to be organized and governed in accordance with certain ideas, and to bind the people in a national identity. The 3-I’s are also helpful in explaining the actions of states towards each other. Such international relations are usually described in terms of interests: states trade, negotiate or wage war with each other in the pursuit of land, resources, and power. But ideas and identities are often just as important motivators for such interaction: national pride, political ideologies, religious or economic beliefs may push states to cooperate or to fight each other, just like identities – cultural, religious, linguistic, historical – can bring states together or push them apart.

States as we know them today have three important qualities. First, they have a connection with their population, which is often referred to as the ‘nation’. Second, states have developed a strong sense of being an independent, self-regulating unit that retains power over all people and issues within its borders – a notion known as sovereignty. And third, almost all states of today are modelled on a similar organizational structure. These three qualities will be discussed in more detail below.

The nation

The term ‘nation’ has acquired two meanings: a people sharing a cultural bond, and a people sharing a socio-political union (like a state or a form of self-governance). Today’s notion of the state assumes that these two – state and nation – conflate, but that is not always the case. Most states today will propagate their unity as a political nation, but very few consist of a single cultural nation. Also, all nations live in one state or another, but not all nations have their own state. The Kurds, for instance, are a nation with a strong sense of a shared history and culture and language, but they live in the states of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq, where they partake in the social-political unity of each of those states.

A **nation** is a people who share a culture, history, language, ethnicity, religion, and who identify as a member of that nation. Ideally, a nation has its own territory and political organization (**nation-state**). However, most states today are made up of various nations, and a nation often lives in various states.

By the late nineteenth century, the notion of **self-determination** emerged, that is the right of a nation to determine its own fate (see chapter 'Equality and Self-determination'). This concept has been realized in various forms of autonomy for nations ranging from limited self-rule to full independent governance. The term nation-state is used when a nation regulates its affairs within an independent socio-political structure with its own territory and institutions. Ideally, this nation should share both a cultural and political-social bond, but reality proves differently.

Nationality and nationalism

The political and cultural bonds that one may feel as a person belonging to a nation converge in the notion of **nationality**. Nationality comprises both a legal and a cultural identity. Being 'Japanese' or 'Argentinian' means that one is the holder of a passport of that country which grants certain rights and duties, but it can also mean that one feels a cultural bond with that country. The difference between the two may show in the situation of migrants obtaining the nationality of the country they migrated to. This raises questions of a cultural nature: a Nigerian who obtains Japanese nationality, is she Japanese? She may consider herself Japanese, and may even speak fluent Japanese and be well-acquainted with Japanese history and culture, but will her fellow Japanese accept her as such? Being a 'native' of a country sometimes seems to be an extra prerequisite for belonging to a nation, together with one's appearance. (See also chapters 'Migration', 'Identity', and 'Transnationalism'.)

'National minorities', 'ethnic minorities', and 'Indigenous Peoples'

A state that perceives itself as a single political and cultural nation will refer to 'other' nations within the state as 'national minorities': they share the (legal) nationality of everyone in the state, but not the cultural identity of the majority. Three types of such minorities can be discerned.

A **national minority** is the minority that belongs to a nation that has a state elsewhere. Examples are the Chinese in Indonesia, the Germans in Hungary, the Tajiks in Afghanistan. The presence of these national minorities can be caused by their migration, or by state formation whereby borders were re-drawn so that a nation was carved up among several neighbouring states.

An **ethnic minority** is a nation that lives in more than one state, like the Yoruba in Nigeria, Benin and Togo, or the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq

Indigenous people are the people who are native to a land where other people have settled and taken over.

An important factor in the emergence of states as we know them today is **nationalism**. Nationalism is the oil in the process generating the bond that a

nation feels to a state and vice versa. Key roles are played by *identity* and *ideas*. The nations and their states are of such size that what binds its people cannot be established by personal relationships and interests, as would be the case in smaller communities, but must be accomplished by ideas and identities that are shared by all. A nation can consist of millions of people, but they nevertheless share this feeling of belonging together and to the country in which they live. For this reason, nations and states are also called ‘imagined communities’.

‘Imagined communities’

Nationalism imagines nations to exist, it creates something new, something that has not necessarily existed before.

(Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1983)

Nationalism creates a bond among people who do not necessarily know each other. Unlike other ‘isms’, nationalism has no ideologues or worked-out ideologies. It emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century and became a *global trend* leading to the emergence of the state as we know it today. One effect of nationalism is that it is *exclusive*: it only applies to ‘our own kind’ and does not extend to others who have different cultures, languages, or religions, and it does not *want* to extend to those others. Here we see an important difference with the old empires that often contained many nations (although often the members of only one nation ruled). Nationalism has caused various instances of cultural domination of one nation over others (by imposing a single language and culture, for instance), sometimes even leading to **ethnic or religious cleansing** by removing other nations from the territory of the nation-state.

‘Successful’ ethnic cleansing

After several years of war, Greece and Turkey decided in 1923 that it was for the best to ‘exchange’ the peoples in each other’s countries. And so, an estimated 1 million Turkish people in Greece (many who had lived there for centuries) were moved to Turkey, and an estimated 1,5 million Greeks in Turkey (many of whom traced their roots to the ancient Greek colonies of more than two millennia ago) were moved to Greece. In the light of violent ethnic and religious cleansing in the Balkans at that time, this was considered a successful diplomatic solution.

Nationalism emphasizes as well as reinforces the nation’s bond by means of **national rituals and symbols**. Some of these are cultural traditions, others are

religious celebrations, and some are new traditions that have been invented for that purpose. Some rituals and symbols also specifically focus on the state itself, like raising the flag, singing the national anthem, cheering the national sports team, or performing commemorative services at a monument of the Unknown Soldier who died for the country. In doing so, people emphasize their national bond (which may be considered problematic when some citizens of a state have affiliations with another nation – see chapter ‘Transnationalism’). These expressions of celebrating statehood are today shared by all states.

‘Invented traditions’

Many national traditions that countries today celebrate may “appear or claim to be old [but] are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.”

(Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983)

Sovereignty

The second characteristic of today’s state is **sovereignty**, that is the right and the power to have full say on everything that happens within the state’s borders. Sovereignty is also explained as the principle that states should not interfere in each other’s internal affairs. One of the questions that has arisen since the 1990s is whether a humanitarian catastrophe in a state may justify the intervention by other states without permission by the state where the catastrophe is taking place. Some argue that in such a cases humanitarian needs overrule sovereignty. This is a hotly contested issue that will be discussed in the chapter ‘Security’.

Sovereignty also became a loaded issue with the emergence of international cooperation among states: when sovereign states agree to work together, does this mean they have to give up part of their sovereignty? We will see in chapter ‘International organizations’ that states are generally unwilling to do so. A similar discussion arose regarding *judicial* sovereignty, and the question of whether an international court can decide over issues pertaining to a state (see chapter ‘International agreements’). Relinquishing parts of judicial sovereignty became more common in the second half of the twentieth century but it remains contested: for the United Kingdom it was one of the reasons to leave the European Union in 2020 because it did not want the European Court of Justice to decide on British matters, and for the United States of America it has been the reason not to sign numerous international treaties.

Sovereignty is the right of states to manage their own national affairs in any way they see fit, without interference from other states.

Recognition

To be (or: to become) a sovereign state requires inward as well as outward action. Inwardly, people must organize themselves as a socio-political polity. To maintain the autonomy and independence of this polity, outward action is required in terms of international relations, often bolstered with the armed capacity to defend that independence if need be. In the 20th century, a new element was added to being a state: recognition by other states. This can create complex and paradoxical situations: what if a state has established sovereignty but is not recognized as such (Somaliland)? What if a nation is recognized as a state even though it is not a functioning state (Palestine)? What if most states want to recognize a state but decide not to do so as not to antagonize one of the great powers (Taiwan)?

Recognition as a state

There are functioning states that are member the United Nations even though they are not recognized by all world states, like Israel (not recognized by 30 of the 193 world states) or Kosovo (not recognized by 49 of the 193 world states). Taiwan is a fully functioning state but is not a member of the United Nations and is only recognized by 12 states (a situation that created under pressure by China). Palestine is an example of a state that is not functioning as a full state, and that is not member of the United Nations, but that by 2025 was recognized by 145 of the 193 world states.

International recognition and (military) state power make up for an uneasy balance. History is rife with examples of states that conquered (parts of) other states whereby these conquered lands, in due time, became accepted as part of the conquering state. Nonetheless, a state may incorporate parts of other states by means of military power and claim that this land is now part of their state, even though it is not recognized by the majority of world states (examples are Russia in Ukraine and Georgia, Israel in Gaza, Golan, East Jerusalem and the Westbank). Opposed to one state claiming a territory, the reverse can also happen, that is, when a territory (and its people) claim independence from the state to which it officially belongs. The world states recognized this claim to independence by Timor-Leste from Indonesia (2002), for instance, but not by Catalonia from Spain (2019).



Figure II.3.2 In 1976, Burnum Burnum of the Wurundjeri tribe planted the Aboriginal flag in the shores of Dover and symbolically claimed England: “In claiming this colonial outpost, we wish no harm to you natives.”

Micro-states and Micro-nations

Micro-states is the term for states that are very small in size and population (examples are Andorra, Comoros, Tuvalu). **Micro-nation** is the term commonly used for tiny entities, sometimes not more than rocks in the sea or a piece of land the size of several football fields, that claim independence. They often make a point of having their own flag, national anthem, and stamps. No one takes them seriously, and they are usually dismissed as a laughing matter. But they do touch upon the fundamental question what it means to become a sovereign state. Examples are North Dumpling Island (Conn., US); Conch Republic (Florida, US); Freetown Christiana (Denmark); Republic of Saugeais (France); Principality of Seborga (Italy), Principality of Hutt River (Australia.)

Organization of a state

Almost all states today have a similar organizational structure. What follows is a brief outline of the main elements of this organizational structure. The emphasis hereby will be on the Humanities perspective, both externally and internally.

Externally, we see that states often behave like human organisms, with emotions of pride, rage, fear, and so on. This is the stuff of (national) identity, which is a powerful mover of states. Internally, we see a similar dynamic whereby the various state organs can operate as actors by themselves.

Trias politica

Almost all states today adhere to the organizational structure of *trias politica*, the nineteenth century concept of a division between the executive (government), the legislative (parliament) and the judicial (courts) power. This was considered the best form of government and apparently is still considered to be so as all states are structured along these lines. If it is all functioning well, then an important condition is fulfilled of what today we call 'good governance' (see chapter 'Democracy and good governance'). But reality can be very different. This is because of what people do with these structures. There can be wide discrepancies between the structures as outlined on paper and the manners in which they function in practice. But today even the most autocratic rulers feel the need to legitimize their rule by paying lip service to the *trias politica*.

Bureaucracy

The civil service, better known as the bureaucracy, is a governmental power that is often underestimated. Civil servants are not elected, and they represent continuity while governments come and go. That is why they are also called the 'fourth power', in addition to the three official powers of government, parliament, and judiciary.

Civil society

States are usually divided between the state institutions and the people. In quite a few states the people are given a rather passive role, as the power is exercised by the institutions, and people can only let their voice be heard during elections. However, people often organize themselves (unless the state represses this) in parties, unions, organizations, churches, communities, clubs, and so on. The aims of these organizations can be very different: it can be to influence politics, do business, help the poor, play sports, promote culture, discuss current events. But the main feature of all these organized activities is that they are undertaken not by the government but by the people themselves. All this activity together is called **civil society** which is also described as a **public sphere** that hovers between the population and their governing institutions.

According to **Civil Society Theory**, the notion of civil society can explain the mechanisms of democracy. This theory argues that civil society is beneficial to a thriving democracy because the more people organize themselves, the more they

discuss, criticize, promote and support certain issues that they find important, the more a country will become governed by and for the people. In the 1990s this theory became popular among policy makers in Western countries who promoted the support for civil society in non-democratic countries to enhance the formation of democratic structures in those countries (see chapter 'Democracy').

“Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organized public spheres.”

(Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 2004 (repr. from 1996), p. 367)

Social movements

The concept of civil society may explain the workings of democracy, but it does not explain why people rally for a cause, take to the street to demonstrate, or find other ways to pressure governments to make social or political changes. To study these phenomena, the Humanities uses the notion of social movements. A social movement is not an organization as we might find in civil society; a social movement emerges – often spontaneously and unexpectedly – and is loosely organized. While civil societies usually function on a national level only, social movements may take on global proportions. Examples are the climate movement, the anti-globalization movement, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo. Social movements are mostly mass movements, and, of course, members and organizations of civil society participate in them. For instance, the choirs and music organizations of Estonian civil society participated in the independence movement of 1990, just as the student unions participated in the Hong Kong demonstrations of 2019, and in the climate movement we find many established civil society organizations that work on sustainable development, nature preservation and ecology.

Social Movement Theories

‘Social Movement Theories’ (or ‘SMT’) stands for various theories that try to explain the mechanisms of social movements. The wide variety of SMT theories is a result of the variety of questions that are addressed: What is the goal of these movements? What is the opportunity that made the movement happen? What is the diagnosis of the issue that movement is protesting for (or against), and does it present solutions? Do the members of the movement share an identity?

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CHAPTER 4

Non-state actors

The term ‘non-state actors’ denotes organizations or even individual people that operate independently of states and that possess considerable power that may sometimes even compete with that of states. It is a relatively new term for an ancient phenomenon. Think of banking families, the elite societies of aristocracy, international trading companies, the networks of monasteries, and organized crime organizations. These kinds of organizations have been operating for centuries all around the world. Since the second half of the 20th century, however, the number and diversity of non-state actors that are active globally has grown exponentially.

International non-state actors are organizations or individuals that a) are largely or entirely autonomous from central government control, b) originate from civil society, market economy, or from political impulses beyond state control, and c) operate as, or participate in networks which extend across the boundaries of at least two or more states.

There are different types of international non-state actors. Well-known are the organizations set up by people from various civil societies, like Amnesty International, Green Peace, or the Red Cross. Such non-state actors are commonly called ‘non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) and often combine working locally, nationally, and globally at the same time. NGOs based on motivations of faith – often referred to as ‘faith-based organizations’ (FBOs) – form a special type of NGO. Other examples of non-state actors that operate on a global scale are commercial corporations and criminal and terrorist organizations. Some even argue that certain individual billionaires who are acting internationally, whether as entrepreneurs or as benefactors, can be considered non-state actors. The same may be said of individuals with great charisma, like the Pope and the Dalai Lama, or people like Ghandi or Mandela. One might describe these people and organizations as civil society on a global scale.

Non-governmental organizations (or NGOs) are organizations set up by civil society and operate independently from the state. NGOs that are motivated by faith are also called **faith-based organizations** (or FBOs). Some NGOs work only locally or nationally, others also globally.

Impact

The impact that today's international non-state actors have on the world depends on the type of their activities:

Humanitarian causes

Organizations that focus on humanitarian causes, like human rights, development, ecological wellbeing, anti-racism, and the like, have their greatest impact by **raising awareness** in the general public and state governments. In some instances, this has been successful: human rights have become part of international politics and national laws, the United Nations has set development goals, and climate change has become part of the international political agenda, to name a few examples. That is quite an achievement. The non-state actors have been able to make many states and large segments of the general public aware of these situations and, sometimes, prompted them to undertake action.

Some NGOs focus on **conflict resolution**. The impact of these activities seems to be limited, however, as it is usually the states that play leading roles in finalizing the resolution of a conflict. Still, in the processes leading up to these conflict resolutions, it is often individuals who have the greatest impact, although their work is mostly unseen by the outside world. The abolition of apartheid in South Africa in 1991, for instance, or the Oslo accords of 1993 between Palestine and Israel, or the Good Friday agreement in 1998 between the United Kingdom and the IRA, were the result of years of quiet, patient work by individuals, often aided by outsiders that acted as mediators and go-betweens. The states were the ultimate peacemakers in these conflicts, but they could not have done so without the help of these (mostly individual) non-state actors.

Impact of Faith-Based Organizations

A 2022 study shows that the 'faith-aligned impact' of FBOs in terms of world finance is quite significant: approximately US\$ 5 trillion. The breakdown is as follows: Islamic capital (\$ 4 trillion), Dharmic capital (\$ 300 billion), Christian capital (\$ 260 billion), Jewish capital (\$ 160 billion). However, these numbers relate to finances, which does not necessarily cover all humanitarian or development related activities of FBOs.

(Oxford Faith-Aligned Impact Finance Report, 2022)

Business and technology

The impact of international businesses is significant: they produce and provide what people need and want, ranging from electronics, energy, foodstuffs and pharmaceuticals to cars and tobacco. This production, however, is increasingly

being questioned for its many downsides, in particular the negative impact on global health, consumerism, and climate change. To address these problems, it is argued that not only the producers but also the consumers need to make adjustments to, respectively, their production processes and lifestyles (see chapters 'Sustainable development' and 'Resources and Climate').

Non-state actors are also often responsible for the development of technology. The latest examples of such technology that have had an enormous impact globally are the internet, mobile phones, social media, space travel technology and Artificial Intelligence. However, the development of these technologies depends on the business environment in which they work that includes an educated work force, infrastructure, economic stability, and legal security. Such an environment is usually provided or at least guaranteed by the state. In other words, the non-states actors are the decisive factor in making this technological impact, but they cannot do so without the help of states. Similarly, once technological inventions have been made, it is the state that regulates their use.

Private international business impact

In his Space X program, private entrepreneur Elon Musk has developed space transport technologies that for the first time have become profitable. Elon Musk also owns hundreds of satellites that his organization has launched and controls. In 2022, he granted the Ukraine access to these satellites so that it could maintain communications during the war with Russia.

Private entrepreneur Bill Gates made his fortune as co-founder of the software company Microsoft and now has one of the largest charity funds in the world (with a capital of \$75 billion in 2023) that focuses on education, poverty reduction and healthcare.

Crime and terrorism

The global impact of international crime and terrorist organizations is evident, but not easy to measure, also because they are different in nature, with varying interests. International **crime organizations** have financial interests, and since they are active in domains that are considered destructive to society – drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, weapons – the impact of their activities is usually exactly that: destructive to individuals and society. **Terrorist organizations**, on the other hand, pursue political interests. They usually identify themselves as resistance or liberation organizations, and use terrorist means to reach their goals. When they do so internationally – for instance, attacking their enemies in other states, or attacking states that support their enemies – these actions can have a global impact. The first hijackings of airplanes by Palestinians in the early 1970s, for instance, precipitated in a worldwide securitization of airports. In the 1970s, leftist

extremist groups from across the world participated in joint training camps and so became a global menace. And the 2001 attacks by Al Qaeda on the United States led to a global ‘War on Terror’ with invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. It was only after 2001 that terrorism was recognized as a global challenge (see chapter ‘Security’).

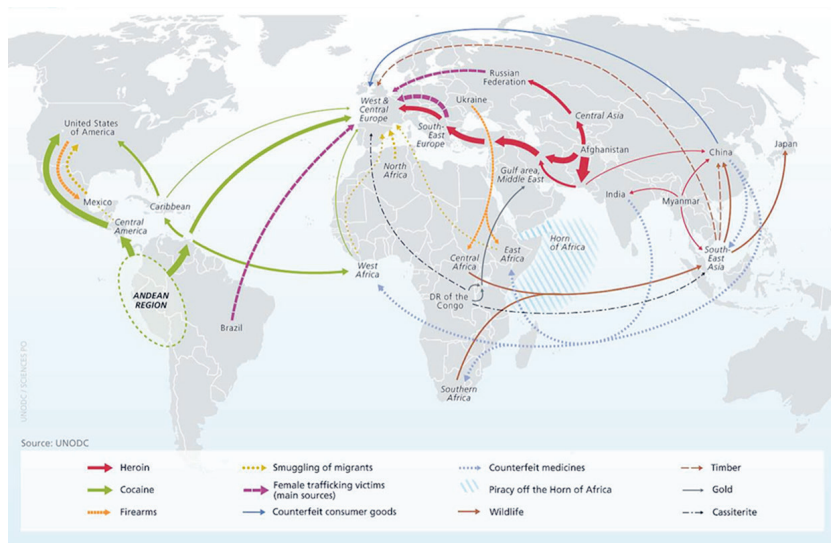


Figure II.4.1 Transnational organized crime

Criticism

Whether non-state actors are a blessing or a curse is debateable. In the case of international terrorist or criminal organizations, the verdict seems clear. In the case of international commercial corporations one can argue that they serve the needs of entire populations (to provide energy, basic materials, foodstuffs, consumer products, or employment) but one may question the means used to achieve these ends. In the past decades, the criticism of such corporations has increased.

Shell in Nigeria

Following a large oil spill in 2008, a group of Nigerians from Bodo, Ogoniland, launched a lawsuit against Shell in 2012. Shell agreed to pay £50 million in compensation after a Dutch court found the company partially liable for the Bodo oil spills. In 2021, a Milan court acquitted Shell for charges of corruption and bribery allegedly totalling \$1.3 billion. In the same year, Shell paid \$112 million as settlement with a Nigerian community over another oil spill.

But the criticism also extends to renowned non-state actors that engage in non-profit activities for humanitarian causes, like Oxfam, Amnesty, Greenpeace, or Feed the Children. The problem with these non-state actors, the critics say, is that they are self-righteous at best and elitist at worst, with little transparency or accountability. The criticism aimed at such altruistic organizations is therefore not aimed at their goals, but at the way these organizations are run: what gives them the authority to decide what needs to be done, and how truly independent are they? These criticisms are reminiscent of the image of the aristocratic elite of the old times – it may very well be that they act in the interest of the common good of the people, but they do so without transparency or accountability.

Criticism of NGOs expressed in mocking acronyms:

- GINGOs: government-controlled NGOs
- MANGOs: male-controlled NGOs
- BINGOs: business-controlled NGOs
- RINGOs: reactionary NGOs
- TINGOs: tribal-controlled NGOs

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Intergovernmental organizations

International organizations can be formed by non-state actors, as we saw in the previous chapter, but also by states. The latter can be grouped under the term intergovernmental organizations. They must be distinguished from alliances: an alliance is a temporary cooperation between parties, an international organization is a new entity established by several parties. Alliances are of all times, on the level of individuals, families, tribes, nations, and states. Intergovernmental organizations, on the other hand, are relatively new but have become one of the most pervasive global structures in the world today. States establish these organizations to achieve at least one of three goals: prosperity, peace, and the promotion of values. In terms of 3-Is, they therefore mostly pursue *interests*, in particular peace, security, and trade. A spin-off of these interests, however, is the pursuit of certain *ideas* (like free-market, human rights) and *identities* (pan-Islam, Pan-Africanism, European unity).

In this chapter, several types of intergovernmental organizations will be discussed whereby the main question is *why* they were established. What we will see with all these intergovernmental organizations is the dilemma of their founding states who, on the one hand, feel the need to establish such organizations but, on the other hand, are reluctant to give up their state sovereignty. The result is that most intergovernmental organizations are given little power to implement their decisions or policies, which reduces their effectiveness and autonomy.

International organization is a general term for any organization that works on an international scale. **Intergovernmental organizations** are international organizations founded by states. **International non-governmental organizations** are international organizations founded by non-state actors.

International cooperation: the United Nations

As early as in the 1920s, immediately after the First World War, the initiative was taken to create a world platform where all states could come together to solve their differences. However, the League of Nations was unable to withstand the aggression of Japan in China and, later, Germany in Europe. The Second World War showed again the need for some kind of international platform for states to discuss issues of peace and conflict, and in 1945 the United Nations was established. The United Nations ran all the risks of being stillborn, just like its predecessor the League of Nations. However, two global situations arose that made the United Nations one of the most important players in international relations.

The first situation was the **Cold War** whereby the two hegemonic superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, perceived the other as an existential threat and, paradoxically, contained that threat by the doctrine of 'mutual assured destruction' (MAD). At the same time, they used all their persuasive powers to win over other states to their camp. This was what for the next decades would determine international relations. The United Nations, and especially its Security Council, was one of the few locations where the Americans and Soviets could meet and discuss their disputes. Also, in other conflicts the United Nations proved successful in diffusing some disputes that might otherwise have led to a full-blown war.

The second international issue that confronted the United Nations immediately after its foundation was the **process of de-colonization**. After the Second World War, the colonial empires started to crumble and as a result the United Nations, in the first two decades of its existence, expanded to include more than thirty new states that had gained their independence. This created tensions between the General Assembly, where these new states were voicing their anti-colonial criticism, and the Security Council where four of its five permanent members, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and America, had been (and in some instances still were) colonial powers. Paradoxically, in the 1950s and 1960s, America and the Soviet Union both proclaimed staunchly anti-colonialist policies, but these were mostly directed towards the British, French and Dutch colonies.

Organization of United Nations

The United Nations consists of two bodies: the Security Council and the General Assembly. The **General Assembly** represents all the member states, but their resolutions and declarations have no decisive power. That power belongs exclusively to the **Security Council**. This council has five permanent members (United States, Soviet Union, China, United Kingdom, France) and ten members that rotate with 2-year terms. Only the five permanent members have the **right of veto**.

The undemocratic set-up of the United Nations is questioned regularly, especially with the sharp increase of member states (from 51 states in 1945 to 193 states in 2024) and the emergence of new economic and political powers (India, Japan, Germany, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil). An extra point of contention is that many of the new member states are former colonies of France and the United Kingdom who are both permanent member of the Security Council.

Regional political and economic cooperation: the European and African unions

It may seem perfectly logical for certain regions who share a historical, linguistic, and cultural legacy to cooperate in issues of trade, and perhaps even politics. It is interesting therefore that a European Union came into existence despite its multiple languages and cultures, while an Arab Union has never come about even though the more than twenty Arab countries share a language, history, and, to a certain extent, culture. This makes more pertinent the issue of ‘why’ such regional cooperation comes into existence. We will discuss this below using two examples, the European Union and the African Union.

European Union

After the devastating experiences of First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945), the *raison d'être* of the European Union was the **prevention of war**. It was in this situation that the French minister of foreign affairs, Robert Schuman, who was from the German-speaking part of the French Elzas, formed a plan “to make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible.” In 1951, Germany, France, and four other countries established the European Coal and Steel Community, in which they shared the coal and steel industry so that no country had exclusive access to these weapon-making resources. This European community was unique in the world because it was the first intergovernmental organization wherein states gave up sovereignty over these resources, and placed control of them outside its national authority. This is also known as supranationalism.

Supranationalism means that an issue is elevated outside and above (‘supra’) the national state which gives up its right of say in this issue.

In 1975, the Coal and Steel Community was turned into the European Economic Community. The main goal was still to create a situation that would guarantee peace on the continent, but this new community also hoped to attain that goal by creating an **open market** whereby people and goods could freely move across borders. This single action accomplished two aims at once: it created prospects for a European economic prosperity, and it would build an interdependency among the member states so that they would benefit from each other rather than fight each other.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated after 1989, Eastern and Western Germany were joined to become the Germany that we know today. Allowing the union to take the place of a country that only half a century ago had drawn the continent into a devastating war shows how far the Europeans had come and how much trust there was among them. This spirit of togetherness also had its effect on the community

itself. In 1992, a new transformation was made, and the European Economic Community became the European Union, a union that maintained its first two goals of preventing war and free movement of people and goods but now added a third goal as a **community of shared values**. However, these values, together with the rapid expansion of the Union, have created tensions among the member states. The large number of member states had increasing differences of views about the values they were supposed to share. Also, the system of taking decisions by consensus was harder to achieve with many than with few. And in several member states there was a growing opposition to the supranational character of the Union.

African Union

The reason for the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 was decolonization: the entire African continent had been colonized by European powers, and most of these colonies obtained their independence in the 1950s and early 1960s. But the movements that had called for state independence had also called for some kind of African unity. This unity was known as **Pan-Africanism**, but although it was a notion that mobilized people, it was not entirely clear whether it referred to the unity of a shared past of colonialism, or a unity of a culture that was called Africa, or a more pragmatic unity of political or economic cooperation.

While acclaiming Pan-Africanism, all the new independent African states adhered to their separate **territorial and national unity**. However, many of these states, due to their colonial legacy, had little unity as a nation, since they upheld the colonial boundaries that cut through former tribal, territorial, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Nevertheless, territorial and national unity inherited from colonial times was strictly adhered to. Moreover, these states held a strong sense of **sovereignty**, and by consequence would not give any part of it up for some supranational organization, nor accept any interference from fellow-African states. The Organization of African Unity therefore became a loose association of independent and sovereign states. What remained of the ideal of Pan-Africanism was the objective to find African solutions for African problems, which was often more a slogan than an actively pursued objective.

This changed by the late 1990s. Two countries took the lead in reforming the Organization of African Unity: Nigeria, one of the most vibrant economies of the continent, and South Africa, that had just thrown off the system of apartheid and that had gained enormous prestige and authority in the continent. These two countries merged the concepts of good governance and human rights (based on the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe) and a project called the 'African Renaissance' which focused on poverty reduction and sustainable development. In 2002, these initiatives led to a restructuring of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union. This Union still maintains as its main goal the 'common vision of united and strong Africa'. But this time the member states had given this

Union powers to reach that goal, including the right to intervene in cases of war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and 'serious threats to the legitimate order'. This power of intervention is like that of the United Nations but goes much further than is, for instance, the case in the European Union. Since then, the African Union has summoned numerous military peace keeping missions to intervene in conflicts on the continent.

Faith-based state-organizations: Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Catholic Church

Among the international organizations are many that are based on faith. Most of these are non-state actors, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but there are two that have a distinct state-quality that deserves closer attention.

Intergovernmental organization based on faith: the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) unites states with a Muslim majority population (and some with a Muslim minority population, like Surinam). What binds these states is not a region, like the European or African Union, or a purpose, like the United Nations, but a religion. However, the main reason for the OIC to be established in 1969 was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Apparently, this was considered an Islamic issue more than a political one.

The OIC had set itself three goals. The first was the **defense of Palestine**, but the organization failed to achieve any change or to play any significant role in the conflict. The OIC provided no material support nor did it initiate any diplomatic initiatives. The second goal was to promote **unity and cooperation** among its member states. The assumption was that the common bond of faith would generate shared interests. But this did not transpire, because even though the member states included such extremely wealthy countries as Saudi Arabia and Brunei, as well as extremely poor and developing countries like Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the solidarity among these states was apparently not enough to establish a system of sharing wealth and economic assistance.

The third goal was to create a **pan-Islamic identity**. This was perceived as a shared identity, and not as an ideology to unify the states. The charter of the OIC made clear that the member states enjoyed a sovereignty that was not to be violated nor surrendered to any supranational ideals. Nevertheless, it was in this identity that the member states found a common goal in the 1990s. In those years, criticism of Islam had become increasingly strong in Europe and in the United States. The OIC quite successfully used its diplomatic channels to put this issue on the international agenda: it introduced a resolution at the United Nations that

called on the member states to prohibit the 'defamation of religion'. After years of deliberation, a compromise was reached: the OIC agreed that European countries did not need blasphemy laws to protect Islam, but the European countries would pledge themselves to jointly combat intolerance, discrimination, and violence that was based on religion.

Faith-based state with a transnational community: the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has maintained organizational structures that date back more than a thousand years. At the same time, the Church has absorbed key elements of today's state and international organizations, making it a unique hybrid organization that is national as well as international and transnational (see chapter 'Transnationalism'). This shows in the following characteristics:

National: the place where the seat of this organization is established, Vatican City, is effectively a state, but with the special feature of being an absolute autocracy, with the Pope holding full legislative, executive, and judicial powers. This situation is not intentional but has grown historically. Vatican City State is not only functioning as a state but is also internationally recognized as such.

International: The Catholic Church has permanent observer status at the United Nations. This requires some explanation. Even though Vatican City is a recognized state, it never applied for membership of the UN. Instead, it preferred the status as permanent observer, which it got in 1964. Its full title was 'Non-Member State Permanent Observer' which is not a state like all the other states, but it is effectively treated like a state. The only other two entities that have such status are Switzerland (until it decided in 2002 to become a full member state) and Palestine since 2019.

Transnational: the Catholic Church represents a community of 1.2 billion believers all over the globe. This makes it the largest transnational organization in the world. The leader of the Church, the Pope, has an absolute say in what unites all these people: their faith.

Through all these organizational forms the Catholic Church has, in the words of Pope Francis (since 2013), one principal mission: 'evangelization, bringing the Good News to everyone'. The International Relations theorists therefore call the Catholic Church a '**norm entrepreneur**', that is. an actor who promotes certain norms.

The Catholic Church maintains **two separate foreign relations**. One is political, by means of diplomats, also called nuncios, who are posted in other states (and those states also send their ambassadors to Vatican City). The other is religious, by means of bishops, who are also posted all over the world.

Other international purpose-oriented organizations

States have also established other types of organizations, mostly for specific purposes. Some of these organizations are intergovernmental, and some can be classified as alliances or as mere forums to meet. For instance, the United Nations has set up several intergovernmental agencies that are semi-independent and that work on specific issues, like the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. States have also set up their own intergovernmental agencies for specific purposes, separate from the United Nations, like the World Bank (goal: 'reduce poverty'), NATO (goal: 'consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues'), International Organization for Migration (goal: 'humane management of migration'), to name but a few. The degree of independence of these organizations from their founding states differs per organization.

Other intergovernmental forms of regional cooperation

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (10 member states): cooperation among states to "accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development". No transfer of sovereignty: non-interference is explicitly agreed upon.

OAS - Organization of American States (34 member states): pursuit of four goals: democracy, human rights, security, and development. No transfer of sovereignty, but mutual accountability and transparency.

OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (57 member states): Comprehensive approach to security, which also includes concerns about democracy, human rights, minorities, environment. Partial sovereignty transfer by means of the organization's ministerial council and parliament.

G-7: Forum where the 7 states with the world's largest economies (all Western) meet and discuss pressing issues. Sometimes the forum is extended to 20 states.

BRICS - Forum of emerging market economies that meets to discuss pressing issues. The forum is a political-economic response to the G-7. The acronym refers to the founding states: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa. Since 2024, new member states are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia.

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CHAPTER 6

International agreements

We have seen that states work together to achieve at least one of the following three goals: prosperity, peace, and the promotion of values. Some of the resulting organizations are so ambitious that they strive for all three goals, others attempt to achieve just one or two of them. The Church wants to promote peace and certain values related to human life, the African Union wants to achieve peace and prosperity, the United Nations and the European Union want all three. The way to do this is by agreement. Agreements among people are called contracts, among states they are called treaties, conventions, or charters. Treaties date back to the times that people organized themselves in communities and made agreements with other communities. Later, such treaties were signed between cities and states. Today, international treaties have become a new global structure.

A **treaty** is concluded among two or more states. A **convention** is a treaty that states can sign up for (they then become 'member' to the convention). A **charter** is the rules and principles that an international or intergovernmental organization has set up for itself.

Why sign international treaties?

No state is forced to sign any treaty. So why would a state sign any treaty that will somehow limit its sovereignty? Ideally, because they expect that it will serve their interests. A peace treaty, or a treaty on the reduction of import tariffs does that. But in the case of a convention – that is a treaty offered to states in a region or the entire world to sign – there is also another reason: states want to be part of such a treaty because everyone else is. That treaty itself might perhaps not always be entirely beneficial for a state, but being part of the larger group of member states may serve the state's interests in the long run. The idea of an **international community** therefore hinges mostly on the psychology of belonging and peer pressure, which are elements that very few states can resist.

This phenomenon becomes particularly clear in human rights conventions (see also the chapter on 'Human Rights'). Some countries have signed very few, if any, such treaties, and they have become international pariahs, like North Korea. So was Sudan, until it signed most human treaties all at once in 2004 (a move that may be explained by the psychological factor of wanting to be part of the larger world community). Perhaps the most interesting example of those few who refuse

to give up their sovereignty by signing human rights treaties is the United States of America. Its position is primarily motivated by the idea that it already has a functioning legal system that needs no additional treaties, but other considerations play a role as well (see text box).

Specific reasons why America has not signed human rights treaties

America had specific reasons to not sign the following international treaties:

- *International Criminal Court*: no American should be tried before a foreign court, including the embarrassing risk that an American president might be called before the court.
- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*: this would allow the right to abortion which is restricted in most, and fully banned in several American states.
- *Rights of Child*: the provision against child soldiers (under 18) would go against the practice of the American military to recruit soldiers at high school.
- *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture*: this treaty allows for inspection to detention facilities which America, with the largest incarcerated population in the world (2.3 million), considered 'overly intrusive'.

Treaties, particularly in the form of conventions, are a typical product of the global trend of multilateralism since the second half of the twentieth century: states were intent on cooperating and creating a world order by agreeing to abide by the same rules. It came therefore as a shock when the United States unilaterally withdrew from international treaties like the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program, the 2016 Paris Climate Accord that, among other points, sets standards for carbon dioxide emission reduction.

How to sign international treaties

When reference is made to states that have signed a treaty, a few legal-technical aspects need to be considered. First, there is a difference between a state 'signing' or 'ratifying' a treaty. **Signing** a treaty means that a government agrees with the treaty but still needs permission from parliament. A signed treaty is therefore not yet binding for that state. Once that permission is granted, the treaty can be **ratified** which means that the state is bound by it.

When a state ratifies a treaty, it can make reservations. A **reservation** means that a state ratifies a treaty but stipulates that some of the articles of the treaty are not applicable or need to be interpreted in a certain way. For example, America has

ratified the International Convention for Cultural and Political Rights but made the reservation that the article prohibiting the death penalty for minors is not applicable. And several Muslim majority countries have ratified human rights treaties with the reservation that they only apply if they do not contradict the 'sharia'.

Has a state signed, ratified or made a reservation to a treaty?

To check the signatory status of states to treaties, one can peruse the online lists provided by the United Nations (<https://treaties.un.org> under 'Status of Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General'). There, one can check for each state whether it has signed and/or ratified the treaty and has possibly made any reservations.

Enforcing international treaties

Once certain rules and principles are agreed upon among states through a treaty, the question arises as to how the member states can be held to that treaty. Nationally, when a party breaks a contract, the other party can go to court to obtain a court order to have the contract enforced, and the court order will be enforced by the police. In the international community of states there is no such mechanism of enforcement: there are very few international courts (see next paragraph), and those that exist often have limited mandates. But more importantly: there is no international police. Therefore, a system has been created whereby states can hold each other accountable.

One of the ways to do so is **annual reporting**. During annual meetings, treaty member states assemble to report how they are upholding the treaty and to criticize each other for violations of that treaty. Accusing other states for not upholding the principles that they signed up for has no repercussions other than an international loss of face. This is a subtle way of public shaming and blaming and shows the psychology and diplomacy of international interactions.

A second option of enforcement is the deployment of **military force**. This option has been used in numerous instances by intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, the African Union and NATO. It must be noted that the United Nations has no army, but the Security Council may decide that military force is permitted in a particular situation. The African Union and NATO, both of which can instruct member states to use their armies, will only do so upon the permission ('mandate') of the United Nations. This international use of military force has marked a change in the use of national armies: their function is now not only to defend their own country but may also be to defend peace elsewhere in the world. However, the deployment of such international defense forces is often questioned

because of the limited mandates that they are given by the intergovernmental organization that deploys them. Usually, their presence merely serves as a buffer between warring parties, and military force is only allowed as a measure of self-defense, which severely limits the options to use force (see chapter 'Security'). Only a few times have international forces been given the mandate to exercise military aggression, like in the case of North-Korea (1950-1953) and Iraq (1990-1991, and 2003).

NATO's Article 5

According to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, all member states are required to come to the defense of another member state if that state is being attacked.

Another way to enforce treaties is through **international courts**. Several of the international and regional organizations have given supranational powers to international courts to adjudicate in matters that are defined by the charters of these same organizations. The first such court is the International Court of Justice, mandated by the United Nations to adjudicate between member states based on **international law** (which is based on the amalgam of treaties, UN resolutions, and international practices). This Court has been mainly used in border conflicts between states, but also in matters of war (Nicaragua-United States in 1984, Congo-Uganda in 1999, Ukraine-Russia in 2014 and 2022), apartheid (South Africa in 1960, Israel in 2024) and genocide (Serbia in 2015, Myanmar in 2020, Israel in 2024). Another international court established by the United Nations is the International Criminal Court, that does not prosecute states but only individuals who are accused of crimes against humanity. Sometimes, the United Nations has set up ad hoc courts, like the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, or the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Regional organizations may also install courts to adjudicate on matters relating to the charter of the organization. This is the case with the Court of Justice for the European Union, and the Court of Justice for the African Union. Sometimes a regional organization may install a court that only deals with issues of **human rights**, such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. In all these instances the states that established these courts have been willing to submit part of their judicial sovereignty to these courts. Sometimes it was the logical thing to do because the court was meant to adjudicate in conflicts among members of an intergovernmental organization or to explain legal points of its charter. But sometimes it was a principal decision to subject certain domains of law - in particular human rights - to a supranational court.

The thorny issue with international courts is the enforcement of their rulings. If the proceedings involve individuals, as is the case with human rights and international criminal courts, the enforcement of those rulings is undertaken by the countries of the convicted person (except in the case of the International Criminal Court in The Hague which has the use of its own prison). In court rulings among states, which is the mandate of the International Court of Justice, there is no enforcement mechanism, and there are cases known where the convicted state refused to implement the ruling, and the international community did not have the will or means to enforce it.

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CHAPTER 7

Migration

Migration is as old as humankind: people have always moved, either because they were forced to do so by wars, hunger, or natural calamities, or because they sought a better place to live. As such, migration can be considered a global structure.

The issue of definitions

Migration is usually defined as the movement of persons away from their habitual place of residence to another place which can be in the same country or elsewhere. This movement can be temporary or permanent. While this definition would, strictly speaking, also include tourism and pilgrimage, these two forms of human movement are usually excluded from the discussion on migration.

Migration is usually defined as the movement of people to another place where they reside at least twelve months. **International** migration is a movement that crosses at least one border. **Domestic** (also: **internal**) migration takes place within a single country. **‘Emigration’** is a term often used for people moving out of a country, **‘immigration’** for people who move into a country.

Average number of annual pilgrims (in millions):

India:	Hindu Mela (Hindu)	10-70
India:	Ayyappan Saranam, (Hindu)	30
Mexico:	Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic)	20
Brazil:	Our Lady of Aparecida (Catholic)	15
Iraq:	Karbala (Shi’ite Muslim)	10
France:	Lourdes (Catholic)	6
Portugal:	Fátima (Catholic)	4-5
Israel:	Wailing Wall (Jewish)	4-5
Nigeria:	Qadiriyyah shrine (Muslim)	3
China:	Wutai Shan (Daoist)	2
Saudi-Arabia:	Mecca (Muslim)	2

This definition of migration is descriptive and must be distinguished from legal or political definitions. For example, the term 'migrant' has no status under international law as opposed, for instance, to the notions of 'refugee' or 'migrant worker' that are specific types of migrants as defined in international treaties. Similarly, it is common for international organizations to use the term 'labor migration', while the notions of 'economic refugee', 'economic migrant', 'undocumented migrant', or 'irregular migration' are mostly used in national political and public discourse, often with the implication of illegality.

In this chapter, we will use the descriptive and legal terminology as used by international organizations: the political terminology will be discussed in the chapter 'Unwanted migration'. Still, occasional confusion will arise when using this terminology because it often refers to the specific frameworks of these organizations and treaties and is subject to the goals they pursue. The International Organization of Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) may serve as examples. The UNHCR only uses statistics of refugees who are registered with the UNCHR. Their use of the term 'refugee' is based on the International Refugee Treaty that defines such person as someone who flees conflicts or persecution. The IOM, on the other hand, uses a much wider definition of the migrant as 'a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.' Since the 2010s, both organizations have identified climate change as a source of 'forced migration' and are developing strategies to address this issue. For the IOM this means an expansion of practical projects, for the UNHCR it may mean an expansion of the number of 'refugees' who are entitled to legal support. Another source of confusion in terminology is the notion of 'migrant workers'. When the IOM and ILO use this notion, it is commonly meant as a type of voluntary migration. Moreover, these organizations usually focus on the 'legal' labor migration, that is migrant workers who have permission to work in another country. However, there are many politicians who are worried about the 'illegal' (or: 'undocumented') migrants (see chapter Unwanted Migration). The numbers of this latter category of migrants are subject to speculation since they are not registered and therefore cannot be easily determined.

Goals of international organizations working on migration

International Organization of Migration (IOM): a) to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, b) to promote international cooperation on migration issues, c) to assist in the search for practical solutions arising due to migration, and d) to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need.

United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR): to protect refugees, displaced and stateless people by a) advocating for their rights and b) holding states accountable to international human rights standards.

International Labour Organization (ILO): to promote a) social justice and b) human and labour rights

(Paraphrased from the organizations' mission statements, IOM *Glossary on Migration*, and ILO-IOM Agreement 2020)

Why migration?

A distinction is usually made between voluntary and forced migration. **Voluntary migration** is triggered by 'pull factors', that is factors of a place that attract people to move there, examples of this would be study, work, or better living conditions. **Forced migration** (also: 'displacement') is triggered by 'push factors', that is, factors at the place of residence that make life so unbearable that people are coerced to leave. Examples are war, calamities, famine, drought, poverty. Of course, this typology is not always accurate. 'Voluntary' migration may be considered a misnomer if we consider that people in general do not want to leave, unless their living situations are considered difficult or untenable. The 'voluntary' motivations to migrate can therefore differ widely, ranging from Western European farmers who migrate to countries like Ukraine or Kenya to escape stringent legal regulations in their country of origin, to people who move to Europe to escape dire poverty. In both cases of voluntary and forced migration, the reason for migration can be viewed as a combination of escaping a specific situation and a pursuit of better opportunities. However, since the terminology of voluntary and forced migration has become common parlance in national and international politics, and therefore also in most academic literature, it will be the terminology used in this chapter.

‘Forced’ migration and ‘(internally) displaced persons’

The definition by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) of ‘forced migration’ distinguishes between migration caused by human conflicts and migration caused by natural disasters. In both cases, these migrants are referred to by the IOM as ‘displaced’, which can be domestic (‘internal displaced’) or across borders. Depending on their circumstances, these displaced persons can receive the status of ‘refugee’ by the UNHCR.

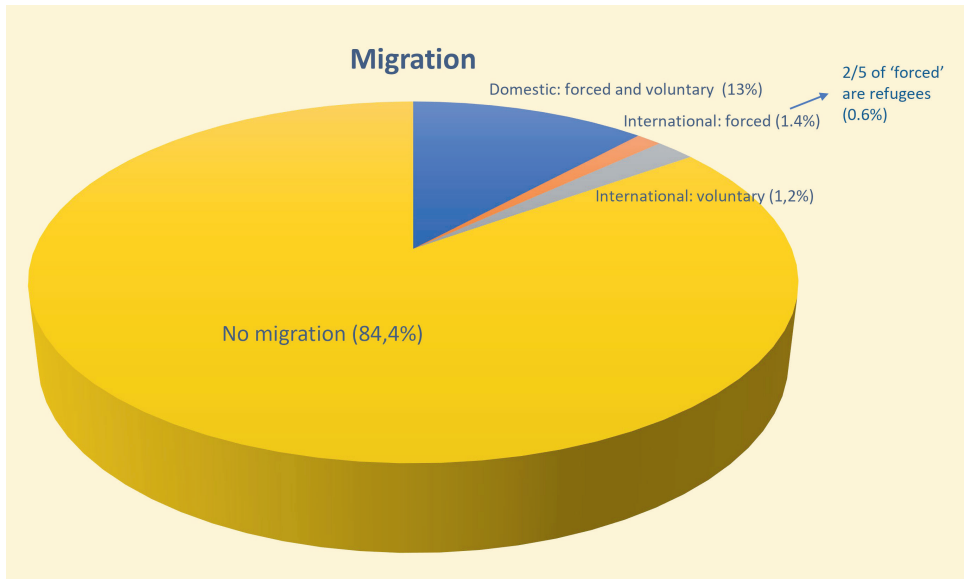


Figure II.7.1 Migration in the world

A form of forced migration that took place on a large scale in the past but has been formally abolished today is **slavery**. Capturing people and selling them into slavery was widely practiced almost everywhere in the world for thousands of years, resulting in moving the enslaved peoples away from their place of origin. One of the latest examples of such massive deportations was the trans-Atlantic transport of African people into slavery in America. While slavery has been abolished and is forbidden by all countries in the world, hidden forms of it still exist.

Forced migration (or: displacement) worldwide (2024 statistics)

Total: 117 million

Domestic: 68-71 million

International:

refugees: 35-38 million

asylum-seekers: 5.5-7 million

'Others': 5-6 million

Of these forced migrants:

73% from following countries:

- Afghanistan: 6.4 million

- Syria: 6.4 million

- Venezuela: 6.1 million

- Ukraine: 6.0 million

- South Sudan: 2.3 million

39% hosted in following countries:

- Iran: 3.8 million

- Türkiye: 3.3 million

- Columbia: 2.9 million

- Germany: 2.6 million

- Pakistan: 2.0 million

(IOM and UNHCR, 2024)

Modern slavery

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an estimated 50 million people were living in '**modern slavery**' worldwide in 2021. This group of people consists of 28 million in forced labor and 22 million trapped in forced marriage.

(ILO, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, 2024).

Academic researchers have indicated that **human trafficking** is mostly persistent in various (often serious) forms of labor exploitation, but is hardly ever of the same nature as slavery.

(Hein de Haas, Stephen Castles, Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 2023.)

Whereto migration?

The main part of today's migration is domestic, that is migration that does not cross borders but remains within the country. This type of migration predominantly moves from the countryside to the large cities (a process also known as **urbanization**), but

some of it is forced migration because of war, famine or natural disasters. Domestic migrants make up approximately 60 percent of all known migration and 13 percent of the world population.

Urbanization

In 2016, half of the world's population lived in cities. By 2030, it is estimated that 60 per cent of people globally will live in cities, and of these, one in every three people will live in cities with at least half a million inhabitants.

(UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2016*)

Most (political) focus, however, is on international migrants (approximately 3.6 percent of the world population) and even more so on refugees (approximately 0.3 percent of the world population). Of the international migration, an estimated one-third is considered forced migration and two-thirds is voluntary (often also called 'labor') migration. Voluntary migration today is directed towards America and Europe, and recently also towards the fast-growing economies in the Arab Gulf and in South-East Asia. It must be kept in mind that these are the known ('registered') numbers and that the estimates of undocumented migrants are unknown and therefore prone to speculation.

International migration destinations

1. USA
2. Germany
3. Saudi Arabia
4. Russia
5. United Kingdom
6. United Arab Emirates
7. Canada / France
8. Australia
9. Spain / Italy
10. Turkey

(IOM, *World Migration Report*, 2024)

Effects of migration

The effects of migration are manifold, depending on the type of migration and on the perspective of the place of departure or arrival. Domestic migration, for instance,

has **depopulated** rural areas and in hot areas sometimes even contributed to desertification because the agricultural lands left un-maintained. As regards the point of arrival (mostly the city), domestic migration has resulted in rapid expansion of these cities, sometimes even developing into mega-cities. While migration to the city is usually referred to as **urbanization**, a large influx of people from rural areas may have the effect of **ruralization** on city life, meaning that certain traditions and values from the countryside may impact urban traditions and values. (In some Western countries the term 'ruralization' is now also used to refer to the gradual movement of well-to-do people from the city to the countryside.)

Mega-cities

A mega-city is usually defined as a city with more than 10 million inhabitants. They are considered future global challenges because of their unique issues on an environmental, governmental, migratory, social and political level. The largest mega-cities are:

Tokyo (Japan):	37 million
Jakarta (Indonesia):	35 million
Delhi (India):	32 million
Guangzhou (China):	27 million
Seoul (South Korea):	26 million

In some instances, migration may lead to a '**brain drain**': the high-skilled people that have little opportunity in their own country, either because the pay is low or because there is no employment for high-skilled labor, may decide to move to countries where such skills are needed. As a result, the country of origin may become depleted of the knowledge and skills that are needed to develop the technological and economic infrastructures of those countries

Migrant workers who move abroad to find work often do so with the purpose of sending money back to their families in the country of origin. These so-called **remittances** may amount to significant sources of income for those countries. The statistics show that labor migration does not originate in poorer countries only: people from relatively rich countries, like France, may also take on jobs abroad and send their money home (see infogram).

Migration may have an impact on the **demographics** in the country of arrival. This may be considered a problem if it causes a population to grow significantly (which is almost never the case), but from a demographic point of view it may be considered beneficial for countries with an aging population. If the birth rate is so low that there are more elderly people than young, a society runs the risk that there are too few people to sustain the population. It has been argued that a demographic 'injection' from abroad may bring the demographics back into balance.

Remittances

The total sum of remittances in 2023 was estimated between US\$ 669 and 831 billion*.

The top remittance recipients in that year were:

India:	\$125 billion
Mexico:	\$67 billion
China:	\$50 billion
Philippines:	\$40 billion
France:	\$34 billion

(*) World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief No.39*, 2023 lists US\$ 669 billion, while the IOM, *World Migration Report 2024* lists US\$ 831 billion

Migration may also have an impact on the society of arrival from a **socio-cultural** point of view. When the numbers of migrants are significant, the receiving society may perceive it as a threat to its social and cultural identity and values. This is mostly the case in Western countries, and it is one of the major reasons that in these countries migration is considered one of the main challenges that their societies are facing (for further discussion, see chapter ‘Unwanted Migration’).

The individual dimension of migration

Migration is usually discussed in relation to mass movements and, therefore, in numbers and statistics. Consequently, migration is addressed as a matter of policy by states and international organizations and as a type of social movements by scholars. The individual migrant receives very little, if any attention. In everyday life, however, many people are dealing daily with individual migrants as people who have left their country of origin or are settling in the country of destination, just as these individual migrants are balancing the connection with their home and host countries (see chapter ‘Transnationalism’). These experiences are individual and therefore very diverse but may lead to generalizations in public and political discourses when the migration is significant in numbers. The few instances that migration is being individualized is when news media provide background stories about migration, or when organizations want to raise awareness of migration issues: in these instances, usually the stories and images of individual migrants are being used. Such images and stories can be informative, but also a way to frame the discussion and perception of migration, just as the critics of migration may use images of masses of people to amplify the impression of migration as mass movement that threatens the destination country.

What to call the migrant after arrival?

Destination countries use terms like 'refugee', 'immigrant', 'foreigner', 'alien'. The motives for these terms may differ for legal or policy reasons, but they all have in common that they make a distinction between the 'national' and the 'other'. Some countries feel the need to continue making the distinction between 'migrants' and 'native population' when it regards the next generations that are born and raised in that country and have the nationality of that country. Academics must therefore beware of the terminology they use: do they refer to the country's official vocabulary, or the terminology that is commonly used in that society, or can they find a neutral and descriptive term?

Further reading

- David Bartram, Maritsa V. Poros & Pierre Monforte, *Key Concepts in Migration*, Sage Publications, 2017
- Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Red Globe Press, 1998
- James F. Hollifield and Neil Fole (eds.), *Understanding Global Migration*, Stanford University Press, 2022
- Elizabeth Mavroudi and Caroline Nagel, *Global Migration: Patterns, Processes and Politics*, Routledge, 2023 (2nd edition)