Chapter 2
International Order, International Society and Globalisation

Fundamental aspects of international relations following the Peace of Westphalia (1648)

International order and international society after the Cold War

Globalisation, international order and international society

Conclusion

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

• Understand what is meant by international order
• Understand what is meant by international society
• See how international order and international society have evolved over time
• Understand rival theoretical approaches to understanding international order and international society
• Explain how current globalisation affects our understanding of international order and international society

Source: Getty Images
Many International Relations scholars agree that the ‘modern’ state system dates from the Peace of Westphalia (1648), an agreement which ended the wars of religion that had plagued Europe for decades. This led eventually to the emergence of numerous states uniformly characterised by a centralisation of political power and a dramatic reduction in the influence of religion in politics. Since then, the process of what is usually referred to as ‘modernisation’ has accelerated enormously. Not least, international relations has expanded to include greater numbers to include a wide variety of state and non-state actors, while the levels of economic development among states has varied considerably. Further, there are now many more states (nearly 200), as well as numerous and important non-state actors, such as the United Nations, the European Union and al-Qaeda. All this has occurred in the context of rapid technological change, political transformations, industrialisation, the emergence from colonial domination of the developing world after the Second World War, the rise and fall of ideological conflict between the USA and the (now defunct) Soviet Union during the Cold War which followed the Second World War and, most recently, the impact of the multifaceted processes of globalisation.

**Introductory box: International order and international society**

International order can usefully be thought of as an arrangement or regime based on general acceptance of common values, norms – including the body of international law – and institutions that enforce it. In international relations a regime is a set ‘of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations’ (Krasner 1983: 2). Such areas include: human rights, human and social development, and democratisation and democracy.

In international relations, a combination of actors, rules, mechanisms and understandings works to manage states’ coexistence and interdependence. There are challenges to current international order in international relations. For example, what is the effect on international order of including extremist Islamist organisations, such as al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba? What is the impact of increased international involvement and significance of various countries, including China, which highlight non-Western views of the world, such as Asian Values, which appear potentially to highlight different conceptions of international order?

The idea of international society is that states form a community shaped by shared ideas, values, identities and norms that are – to a significant extent – common to all. In this chapter we shall see that the ‘English School’ of international relations theory maintains that there is a ‘society of states’ at the international level, despite the condition of ‘anarchy’ (literally the lack of a ruler or world state).
In order to understand how international relations has developed over time and what factors have played a key role in its development, this chapter examines the relationship between international order, international society and globalisation.

**Fundamental aspects of international relations following the Peace of Westphalia (1648)**

Most International Relations scholars would agree that the modern international system dates from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Peace of Westphalia marked off the mediaeval from the modern period in international relations. Following the Peace, growing numbers of independent states – initially in Europe then, via colonisation, in the rest of the world – became the key components of international relations.

The Peace of Westphalia ended the last and most devastating of the great wars of religion, fought between armies of Roman Catholics and Protestants, that had by the
mid seventeenth century raged across much of Europe for thirty years (known as the Thirty Years War). Although the causes of the religious conflict were complex, the devastating outcome it led to was clear: across mainland Europe, there were millions of civilian casualties, with between one-third and one-half of the populations in many areas dying. There was also massive and widespread destruction of property, food shortages, and rampant disease. Because of this destruction and chaos, the impact of the war on Europe was similar to that inflicted centuries later by the First World War (1914–18) and the Second World War (1939–45): wholesale reorganisation of international relations with a view to lessening conflict between states.

The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War (1618–48), is actually a collective term which includes two separate peace treaties, Osnabrück (May 1648) and Münster (October 1648). The Peace involved the following countries and leaders: the kingdoms of France, Spain and Sweden, the Dutch Republic, and the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand III. The Holy Roman Emperor is a term used by historians to denote a ruler in the Middle Ages, who received the title of ‘Emperor of the Romans’ from the Pope of the Holy Roman Church, now widely known as the Roman Catholic Church. From the sixteenth century, the Holy Roman Emperor was also a monarch governing the Holy Roman Empire, a Central European union of territories which existed at this time.

The Peace of Westphalia resulted from the first modern diplomatic congress in 1648, which had the effect of starting a new political order in Europe, based upon what was then a new and innovative concept: a sovereign – that is, an autonomous or independent – state governed by an individual leader. From this we can see that the chaos of the Thirty Years War was instrumental in galvanising a revolutionary change in the way that European states sought to order their mutual relations. From this time, they wanted to create and develop a new form of international relations based on interactions between sovereign states with little or no input from either the Holy Roman Emperor or the Pope. In this way, the Peace of Westphalia helped create the basis for a new, decentralised system of legally sovereign and equal states. Henceforward, there was no idea that any one figure would be the leader of Europe. From now on, power was scattered among separate sovereign states, the main way of organising international relations. The result was a fragmentation of authority, with individual rulers enjoying absolute domestic authority and interacting as equals in international relations.

Once the principle of equality of states was established, there evolved an informal arrangement to minimise conflict and maximise cooperation in international relations, known as the balance of power. Over the next 140 years – that is, from the Peace of Westphalia (1648) until the French Revolution (1789) – there developed what is known to international historians as the ‘golden age of the balance of power’. It is characterised in this way as it was a lengthy period, by and large, without significant international wars. There were still conflicts between states but they tended to be localised and limited, with civilian populations relatively unaffected. In other words, there were no widespread international wars from the mid seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century; it was a period of relative international tranquillity, ended by the French Revolution in 1789.
One reason for this period of relative international tranquillity was the existence of a shared outlook – today, we would use the term ‘ideology’ – among Europe’s rulers. This is a reference to the fact that Europe’s leaders agreed that the status quo was desirable and that challenges to Europe’s equilibrium were unwelcome. This is a way of saying that Europe’s rulers had much more in common politically and culturally with each other than they did with the mass of ‘ordinary’ people living under their rule. But this elite unity did not eventually prevent a political challenge to this form of rule in France, in the form of the French Revolution in 1789. The Revolution highlighted that although there was elite unity among Europe’s rulers there were also pronounced class divisions, with European countries characterised by a tiny elite of rich people and a huge mass of poor and underprivileged people. Over time, this led in France to that country’s revolution in 1789. While the French Revolution was most obviously a profound challenge to the existing political order in France, its significance was also felt beyond that country. The ‘have-nots’ of France had a rallying cry: ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’. This reflected a desire for fundamental political and economic changes shared by millions of ordinary French men and women.

Beyond France the impact of the Revolution was, first, dramatically to destabilise Europe’s status quo and, second, to highlight the importance of international order for peaceful and cooperative international relations. Three aspects of international order were of particular importance: the balance of power, international law, and diplomacy. They were important not only because they provided important bases of international order but also because they encouraged the development of international society, shaped by ideas, values, identities and norms that are – to a lesser or greater extent – common to all. This is the idea, held by the ‘English School’ of International Relations theory, that there is a ‘society of states’ at the international level, despite the condition of ‘anarchy’ (literally the lack of a ruler or world state).
The balance of power

To explain the importance of the balance of power for the development of international order we need briefly to go back in time again, before the French Revolution. This is because the decades between the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the French Revolution (1789) were decades of relative international peace. Why was this? To explain what happened, many International Relations scholars point to the importance of the balance of power. The notion of the balance of power is a simple one, although it has many meanings. I am using it here in the sense of an arrangement whereby governments temporarily agree to work together to thwart a perceived threat to international order, emanating from another state. The balance of power first came into play in the early eighteenth century, when the states of Europe collaborated in a defensive war against King Louis IV of France, who was thought to have designs on the creation of a French-dominated super-state incorporating both France and Spain. Britain, the Dutch Republic, Austria and Prussia united against France in what was called the War of Spanish Succession (1702–1713), a conflict that ended in exhaustion of all warring parties and a temporary settlement, signed at Utrecht. Later examples of the balance of power in operation included a defensive coalition, featuring Britain and Prussia, which emerged to thwart the French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, in the early nineteenth century, following the French Revolution and associated revolutionary conflicts. Napoleon’s aggression resulted in the formation of a protective alliance – involving, among others, Britain and Prussia (the forerunner of Germany) – to defeat his bid for international domination. Later, during the Second World War (1939–45), the balance of power was invoked again, with Britain and later the USA leading a coalition to deal with Germany’s Adolf Hitler and the Nazis and their dream of 1,000 years of German domination.

The balance of power – that is, an arrangement whereby governments temporarily agree to work together to thwart a perceived threat to international order, emanating from another state – needs four conditions to work successfully:

- enough states to work together to thwart the designs of a country seemingly intent on systemic domination
- states with relatively equal power – so that no single country can realistically dominate international relations
- continuous but controlled competition for scarce resources, including: territory, trade, and international influence
- agreement that the status quo benefits all.

The bullet points above indicate, however, that the balance of power is more than a series of pacts – it is in addition an arrangement which has wider ramifications for how power is distributed in international relations. It is important to note that such defensive coalitions were short-term alliances that almost inevitably fragmented following elimination of the aggressive threat from, for example, Louis IV, Napoleon or Hitler. This emphasises that the key characteristic of a coalition of states to defend the balance of power is its temporary
nature: short-lived unity to defeat a common aggressor. The balance of power was not intended to prevent all international conflicts; it was not an institutionalised, formal mechanism to ensure long-term systemic stability and peace. There were no serious attempts to create such a mechanism until after the First World War ended in 1918, when the League of Nations was created. In summary, a balance of power exists when there is relative equilibrium between the leading countries in international relations. If a country tries to upset this equilibrium – like Louis IV in the early eighteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte in the early nineteenth century and Hitler in the mid twentieth century, then a short-term defensive coalition forms in order to deal with the threat and defend the existing balance of power.

In sum, in international relations, a balance of power exists when competing forces are ‘balanced’. It expresses a doctrine that was intended to prevent any one state from becoming sufficiently strong so as to enable it to enforce its will upon the rest.

**International law**

The balance of power was not the only means developed from the seventeenth century to try to maintain peace in international relations. Over time, in addition, a body of international law developed, intended to cover many forms of international interactions. A key starting point for development of international law was publication in 1625 of a famous book, *Law of War and Peace* written by a Dutch student of law, Hugo Grotius.

*Law of War and Peace* was significant because Grotius tackled a key issue in international relations: when is fighting war morally justified? He argued that all governments should follow specific rules of conduct when dealing with each other – even when their relations break down and war results. Over time, the idea developed that there should be universal rules covering war fighting, resulting in internationally agreed rules of conduct during times of conflict: for example, only civilians should not be ill-treated. Grotius developed his argument by identifying similarities between how individuals and states behave. He noted that while there was international anarchy – in the sense that there was no universal government – there was a variety of ways that states were linked with each other (for example, via religion, culture, customs) which could help significantly to regulate their conduct.

Grotius was pointing to the emergence and development of international order – regulated by international law – to form an international society of states. This term implies existence of a group of similar political entities – states – which regulate their mutual relations through broadly comparable domestic institutions – governments – and which use various international tools to reduce conflict and increase cooperation. Over time, European states began to accept that warfare should only be used for purposes of self-defence, righting an injury, or for upholding the fundamental outlines of international relations, including its norms and laws. A historian, Geoffrey Best (1982), has called the sixty-year period prior to the start of the First World War in 1914 as the law of war’s
'epoch of highest repute'. This is because, during this time, states established a positive or legislative – that is, written – foundation which superseded earlier, more informal arrangements rooted in religion, chivalry and customs. Best’s observations are also rooted in the fact that from the mid nineteenth century there developed a series of international conferences – for example, the Congress of Berlin in 1884–85 to carve up Africa among European states – emerging as the principle forum for debate and hopefully agreement between governments, a key way to recognise and promote international agreements between countries.

**Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is the third factor to take into account when thinking about the development of international order. Diplomacy can be defined as the art or practice of conducting international relations, as in negotiating alliances, treaties, and agreements. Yet diplomacy was not new in the period after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. By that time, official contacts between governments had been practised for hundreds of years, involving not only European states but also many farther afield, including China, Egypt, India, and the Ottoman Empire led by Turkey. The result was that over time diplomacy developed: a system of international interaction involving delivery of messages and warnings, pleading of causes, and the giving and receiving of gifts and/or tribute.

A new phase of diplomacy developed from the eighteenth century reflecting the growth and development of international relations. It was an important component facilitating development and extension of the norms, values and rules that underpin international relations, and which characterise international society. Country representatives became negotiators on behalf of their governments, not merely messengers. A permanent, institutionalised system of diplomatic interaction was established, developing into a cornerstone of international relations, reflective of a widespread desire for order and stability. Diplomats became agents of the state sent abroad for negotiation, reporting and intelligence work. They reported regularly to their home government. In sum, development of a diplomatic system underlined that all governments need regular contact with others and rules to govern such interaction, in order to ensure stability, order and development of mutually acceptable international norms and values.

**Summary**

Three cornerstones of international relations – the balance of power, international law, and diplomacy – developed following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. They were mutually reinforcing, fundamental aspects of the development of international order, serving to lay foundations for the international relations of today. This is a global network involving the world’s nearly two hundred states and thousands of important non-state actors, such as multinational corporations, global civil society, international organisations and transnational religious organisations.
International order and international society after the Cold War

In this chapter we have looked at three cornerstones of the development of international relations from the mid seventeenth century: the balance of power, and the development of international law and diplomacy. We have seen how this took place in the context of development of international order. International order can usefully be thought of as an arrangement based on the more or less consensual acceptance of common values, norms – including the body of international law – and institutions that enforce it. This combination – of actors, rules, mechanisms and understandings – works to manage the coexistence and interdependence of states and leads to the existence of an international society.

International Relations emerged as an academic discipline after the First World War, as a conscious attempt to discover the causes of international conflict and arrive at ways of eradicating it. Many interpretations of its subject matter and concerns emanated from an influential worldview known as Realism. Realism has three fundamental premises:

- State foreign policies seek to achieve greater power. Note, however, there are two forms of power: ‘hard’ power (the power provided by military and economic clout) and ‘soft’ power (the power to persuade).
- All states share similar international motivations and goals, for example, they all want as much power and influence as possible.
- The international system is a chaotic, self-help system, characterised by competition, conflict and cooperation.

In Britain, an important centre of international relations enquiry, there emerged from the 1950s what became known as the 'English School' of international relations, a reaction against and an alternative to Realism. The English School focuses on states’ shared norms and values and how they may regulate international relations. Examples of such norms include diplomacy and international law. The English School’s focus was on what its proponents believe is the most important post-Second World War development in international relations: creation, evolution and operation of ‘international society’ and the norms and values that underpin it.

Box 2.2 The English School of international relations

The English School acquired its name because most of its key figures, while not necessarily English by birth, worked in English universities including the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Oxford and Cambridge universities. Key names associated with the English School include: Hedley Bull, Barry Buzan, Tim Dunne, Robert Jackson, James Mayall, R.J. Vincent, Nicholas J. Wheeler, and Martin Wight.

The English School can be thought of as an established body of both theoretical and empirical work. The English School’s approach is characterised by a concern with both morality and culture in international relations, and a focus on problems of coexistence, cooperation and conflict.
The English School analysis of international society focuses primarily on states. Conceptually, the idea of ‘international society’ involves a network of ‘autonomous political communities’ – that is, states – that are free of control from any higher authority. For Hedley Bull, an International Relations scholar who, although an Australian, was a founder of the English School, the ‘starting point of international relations is the existence of states, or independent political communities, each of which possesses a government and asserts sovereignty in relation to a particular portion of the earth’s surface and a particular segment of the human population’ (Bull 1977: 8). Thus for Bull, the main focus of study of International Relations is the ‘world of states’ not sub-state entities – such as nations, ethnic groups or religious communities – or claimed universal categories, such as ‘humanity’. These various entities do feature in other analytical frameworks in International Relations, such as liberalism, as we shall see in later chapters.

In summary, it is a key premise of the English School approach that when states interact regularly and systematically they do not merely form an international system – that is, a purely functional arrangement for mutual benefit – but comprise an international society. An international society differs from an international system in a key way: an international society is an arrangement whereby members of the system accept that they have things in common – such as the pursuit of peace or good trade relations – which leads them to behave in certain ways, involving responsibilities towards one another and to the society as a whole. As we have already seen, in international relations over time, key ways to develop these shared norms and ways of behaving were developed in various ways, including international law and diplomacy.

Adherents of the English School approach to international relations would contend that international order is maintained by a shared conception of international society. This is the idea that the world’s states form an international society – not ‘just’ an international system – whose constituent parts interact and are bound together by the pursuit and protection of common interests, values, rules, and institutions. The consequence is that the English School’s distinctive approach to the study of international relations emphasises problems of coexistence, cooperation and conflict, especially in relations between sovereign states, the main focus of the approach.

Globalisation, international order and international society

A cursory reading of what we have covered in this chapter so far would come to the conclusion that for international order and an international society to develop, it is necessary to have all constituent entities agreeing to certain kinds of conduct, which will come about through shared acceptance of certain ways of behaving. We have seen that from the time of the Peace of Westphalia, international relations was dominated by European states and their associated norms and values focused in the balance of power, international law and diplomacy.

How has international order and international society developed in recent years, specifically since the end of the Cold War two decades ago? The collapse of the Soviet
Union and its allied communist state systems – in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, East Germany and Hungary – came about soon after the Cold War ended. As we saw in Chapter 1, the Cold War was a defining feature of international politics for forty years, from the late 1940s until the late 1980s. The conflict centrally involved the USA and the Soviet Union. Because both sides had massive quantities of nuclear weapons and could count on other countries as allies, the conflict between them was widely agreed to be the most serious global crisis. The end of the Cold War was sudden and unexpected – followed by the swift collapse of all communist state systems in Europe a few years later. This amounted to a fundamental change in international relations – a watershed separating one era from another.

Initially there was widespread optimism that a ‘new world order’ (a term much used by, among others, President George H.W. Bush in 1991–92) would now develop, characterised by the spread of shared norms and values – including liberal democracy – with regular elections, many political parties, and improved human rights. Collectively, this would amount to a new regime – in effect, a new international order with a renewed and cohesive international society – that would hopefully spread to previously non-democratic countries, including the former European communist countries noted above. An American political scientist, Giovanni Sartori, summed up the changed international mood at the 1990 American Political Science Association meeting in San Francisco. After the Cold War, he claimed, liberal democracy ‘now found itself without enemies or viable alternatives’, a view also championed by the influential American commentator Francis Fukuyama, in his book The End of History and the Last Man (1992).

Feelings of optimism were, however, generally short-lived: many soon realised that Western political control of world events and dangers was diminishing rather than increasing in the post-Cold War era. In particular, the 1990–91 Gulf War (fought by the United Nations and led by the USA to oust Iraq from Kuwait, which it had invaded) made it clear that, despite the demise of the Soviet Union, there were, arguably, new challenges to the status quo – such as religious nationalism, as exemplified by Saddam Hussein’s attacks on Israel at this time – which would require Western vigilance and solidarity. However, no sooner had the challenge of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait been thwarted than serious civil conflicts emerged in Haiti, Somalia, Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union itself; outcomes of such conflicts very often seemed to be beyond the West’s control. Optimism that a peaceful, cooperative post-Cold War order, stimulated by the spread of liberal democracy and improved human rights to Eastern Europe and the developing world, would underpin both international order and international society, faded significantly from the early 1990s. Instead, older concerns resurfaced. These included a burgeoning number – often of increasing intensity – of conflicts within countries, many of which spilled over into neighbouring territories: such as those in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. Such conflicts and their regional and international ramifications made it plain that one of the more widespread, albeit less expected and unwelcome, outcomes of the end of the Cold War was an array of nationalist, religious, and ethnic conflicts – especially in many developing and former communist countries, which sprang up once the ideological straitjacket of the Cold War disappeared.
With hindsight, it is easy to see that the optimistic scenarios of analysts like Sartori and Fukuyama were both simplistic and wrong. They were simplistic because it was no more than wishful thinking that the apparent demise of communism in Central and Eastern Europe would herald a new global liberal democratic dawn; they were wrong because it proved impossible to plant and cultivate the norms and institutions of liberal democracy and improved human rights into many previously undemocratic countries.

In order to see post-1989 changes in perspective it is necessary to place them in historical context. The end of the eighteenth century was marked by a transformation of the political and social order courtesy of the French, American and Industrial Revolutions. The end of the nineteenth century was characterised by industrialisation and the emergence of socialist and social democratic parties in the West. The last years of the twentieth century were notable for simultaneous political, economic, and technological revolutions, with the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Central and Eastern European communist states especially significant.

It is now reasonably clear that global changes associated with globalisation are having an impact on three issue areas of importance to international relations. First, economic relations, with particular impact on both manufacturing and employment, a result of the relentless globalisation of the world economy; second, in scientific discovery, with important advances in communications technology of particular significance. Third, there are political changes; rather than an ‘end of history’ as Francis Fukuyama prophesied, what we are seeing is an apparent return to history, with a common revival of older forms of politics, notable for the construction or reconstruction of ethnic and religious anxieties and expectations – serving, in dozens of countries around the globe, to reopen conflicts for long thought to be a thing of their ‘traditional’ pasts.

Globalisation is, as we noted in Chapter 1, a multidimensional process. Globalisation is simultaneously dealing with external developments that can influence domestic outcomes. As a result of globalisation, all states – both ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ – experience increasing ‘porousness’ of national borders. This leads to increased complexity requiring policy makers routinely to deal with external inputs when making and executing policy at both home and abroad. In sum, thinking about the idea of international society we must take into account how globalisation potentially affects both its viability and the bases of its existence.
'hard' boundaries and a consequent diminution of governments’ ability to control both their domestic and international environments. That is, globalisation is said to reduce the power of governments to make definitive decisions regarding their state’s and citizens’ future; for example, the 2008–2009 international economic crisis demonstrated how hard it is for governments, even those which preside over strong economies, consistently to make and implement policies which take little or no cognisance of wider global developments.

The ‘globalisation thesis’ – a view which highlights the ability of globalisation to impact upon state policies in various ways and with a variety of outcomes – is, however, at odds with key assumptions of international relations analysis, notably those associated with Realism. For Realists, the world comprises: (1) confined political territories governed by sovereign – that is, independent – states; (2) nation states; and (3) national economies. For Realists, these are the fundamentals, the building blocks, of international relations. The globalisation thesis implies, however, that these long-standing arrangements are in the process of being overtaken by new developments involving the reduction in importance of states and the rise of various kinds of non-state actors: including various international and regional bodies, such as the United Nations and the European Union; and multinational corporations, such as Nike, Google and Apple. Globalisation not only poses a significant challenge to the dominance of state-centric international relations but also highlights various kinds of transnational networks for understanding international relations today.
In short, globalisation not only undermines the concept of international society as traditionally understood but also questions the bases of international order.

The issue of how to maintain and strengthen international order has received much attention, especially since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Some analysts contend that a key impact of globalisation on international relations is to undermine the international state system, so that it is now in decline (Held and McGrew 2002). This is characterised by: withdrawal of the state or at least a reduction in its authority in various issue areas, including economic concerns, and the emergence of new realms with only minimal state involvement (such as, cyberspace and the Internet), as well as ‘the rise of non-state actors showing signs of successfully influencing states’ policies, and taking over subject areas that the state largely ignored or mishandled’ (Mendelsohn 2005: 50). Despite such concerns, however, there is no consensus on the extent to which such issues collectively

**Case study: Lashkar-e-Taiba and the bombing of the Taj Hotel in November 2008**

Attacks by Lashkar-e-Taiba on India’s largest city, Mumbai, took place from 26–29 November 2008. They are known collectively as India’s 9/11. The attacks involved more than ten coordinated shooting and bombing attacks. They were carried out by Islamist terrorists from Pakistan. In the attacks, more than 170 people were killed and over 300 were wounded. Following a siege of the Taj Hotel where many of the Islamists were holed up, India’s National Security Guards stormed the hotel, in an action officially named ‘Operation Black Tornado’, which ended all fighting in the attacks. Ajmal Kasab, the only attacker captured alive by Indian security personnel, admitted that the attackers were members of Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), a Pakistan-based radical Islamist organisation, considered a terrorist entity by the governments of India, the United States and the United Kingdom.

On 7 January 2009, after more than a month of denying the nationality of the attackers, Pakistan’s Information Minister, Sherry Rehman, officially accepted Ajmal Kasab’s nationality as Pakistani. On 12 February 2009, Pakistan’s Interior Minister Rehman Malik, in a televised news briefing, confirmed that parts of the attack had been planned in Pakistan and said that six people, including the alleged mastermind, were being held in connection with the attacks.

A man who identified himself as a former Lashkar militant now working with its charity arm, claimed in late 2009 that the organisation’s aims in the Mumbai attacks – as well as more generally – was to wage ‘war on the enemies of Islam’ (Rosenberg 2009). But it is not clear what this means. Who, exactly, do Lashkar-e-Taiba, and similar organisations like al-Qaeda, perceive as the ‘enemies of Islam’? Such Islamist groups have two sets of linked enemies: the ‘West’ and their own domestic rulers, who they regard as ‘non-Islamic’ and ‘pro-Western’. These politically organised, radical Muslims are not a new phenomenon, rather they are a well-established tradition in the Muslim world. They are people who characterise themselves as the ‘just’ involved in struggle against the ‘unjust’. The division between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ in the promotion of social change throughout Islamic history parallels the historic tension in the West between ‘state’ and ‘civil society’. In Islam, the ‘unjust’ rule the state while the ‘just’ look in from the outside, aching to reform the corrupt system. This is the goal of militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and al-Qaeda: to create a pan-Islamic state, which will, in the process, exclude Western influence from their regions and overthrow their own rulers. They do not imagine that such a state would be ruled via Western interpretations of democracy, where sovereignty resides with the people. This is because they see such a system as one that negates God’s own sovereignty.

But the rise of groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and al-Qaeda are not restricted to one or two countries. They are in many Muslim countries of the Middle East. Their existence reflects much popular disillusionment with decades of disappointing economic and political progress.

To what extent are groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba a threat to international order?
represent a new and significant threat to international order. On the one hand, many important, non-state transnational actors accept the desirability of international order, albeit one normatively characterised by, for example, better human rights, more democracy and greater justice. For example, various Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the world’s largest, have pursued such agendas in recent years. They are a key component of a global coalition of forces – both religious and secular (such as Amnesty International) – which work towards the aim of developing an international society based on liberal values (Thomas 2005). Serious challenges to such a conception of international order come from various terrorist groups, including Islamist terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Not as well known as al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba is a Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist group which was responsible for a dramatic hotel bombing in Mumbai in late 2008 with the loss of many lives (Tankel 2009). Such terrorist groups emphatically do not accept the legitimacy of the existing international order and the foundations on which international society is based. Instead, they try to advance an alternative order, based on quite different laws, norms and values.

Over time, the principle of state sovereignty in international society has been sustained by two important conditions: first, the absence of transnational – that is, cross-border – ideologies that fundamentally compete with nation states for people’s political loyalties; and second, by the existence of a common set of values held by governments that engenders an element of respect for other rulers and regimes. Involvement of religious terrorist groups in international relations, such as al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba, seriously weakens these two ‘pillars’ of the Westphalian system. This is because their challenge is bolstered by the development of new – or newly significant – transnational allegiances that challenge popular allegiances to the state by focusing on politically significant alternative, and often incompatible, beliefs and values – in this case radical Islamist values. As a result, they do not sit well alongside established Westphalian principles of international order. This is especially the case if these beliefs and values reject and hence undermine the basic rules on which post-Westphalian international order was founded and the institutions that seek to maintain it. This is expressed in four ways:

1. Such challenges can manifest themselves in the rejection of the state as the main political unit in international relations – the rejection of the principle that leaders of states have the right and duty to deal with other leaders in international relations.
2. Negation of the principle that states are the sole actors that can legitimately use force is significant, as rejection of restrictions on the use of force (for example, in international law civilians cannot legally be targets of war; terrorists, on the other hand, may explicitly target civilians as a key war-fighting technique).
3. Violent non-state terrorist actors also challenge values of international society in a third way: they undermine state–society relations by weakening the ability of governments to carry out a basic governmental responsibility to their citizens: general security. It is very difficult for governments to protect citizens against random terror attacks, as seen on 9/11 in the USA and in Mumbai in November 2008.
4. Violent non-state terrorist actors can also undermine international society by provoking an overreaction by the internationally dominant power, such as the USA, which invaded both Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) following 9/11. This has the effect of undermining the accepted code of conduct which decrees that states’ sovereignty is normally inviolable.

One of the impacts of recent globalisation on international relations is to highlight the importance of various entities in international relations which do not share the norms and values of international society, including transnational terrorist Islamist organisations such as al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba (Haynes 2007). These groups’ activities highlight an important theoretical and practical question in international relations: Are international order and international society, based on shared norms and values, now possible in the multicultural, multinational, multi-religious international environment we inhabit? For the International Relations theorist, Chris Brown, it makes sense to think of the idea of international society as ‘an occasionally idealized conceptualisation of the norms of the old, pre-1914 European states system’ (Brown 2005: 51). What he means by this is that, in order to be relevant, international society must be built on consensual – or at least widely shared – norms and values among the members of the society. If Brown is right, can such a conception of international society be a satisfactory starting point when we bear in mind that most existing states are now not European? The Council of Europe has forty-seven member states. The Council of Europe was established in 1949 with the goal of working towards European integration, focusing on regional legal standards, human rights, development of democratic rule, the rule of law, and cultural cooperation. On the other hand, over three-quarters of the one hundred and ninety-two members of the United Nations are not European countries.

Brown is also referring to the fact that the pre-1914 international order functioned relatively well – in the sense that there were no significant international conflicts between the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and the First World War, a century later. Could this, however, have been the result of a high level of cultural homogeneity among the then members of international society which now no longer exists? At the time, most Europeans had a common history informed not only by cultural origins in the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations but also by their Christian faith. The latter did not, however, necessarily imply peaceful relations: historical relationships between European states were often marked by competition or conflict between, for example, followers of the (Greek) Orthodox and (Roman) Catholic churches or between Protestant and Catholic interpretations of Christianity, as in the Thirty Years War (1618–48). How much more likely is it now in our multicultural international system that the potential for competition and perhaps conflict is increased, given that the earlier normative basis for international society is said to be based on shared European religious and cultural underpinnings?

In recent years, some have suggested increased potential for international conflict linked to what is referred to as a ‘clash of civilisations’. An American academic, Samuel Huntington, coined the term ‘clash of civilisations’ in the mid-1990s. Huntington claims
there is a developing conflict between ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’, an important source of inter-
national rivalry, antagonism and, potentially, conflict. Huntington’s views have been
regarded with interest by many within the International Relations scholarly community.
Some at least accept the view that Islamic fundamentalism has now replaced communism
as the main threat facing not only the United States (Halper and Clarke 2004; Dolan 2005)
but also the West more generally. In addition, Willy Claes, a former secretary-general of the
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, an intergovernmental military alliance based on the
North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4, 1949, has stated that

Muslim fundamentalism is at least as dangerous as communism once was. . . .
Please do not underestimate this risk . . . at the conclusion of this age it is a serious
threat, because it represents terrorism, religious fanaticism and exploitation of
social and economic justice. . . . NATO is much more than a military alliance. It
has committed itself to defending basic principles of civilisation that bind North
America and Western Europe’.

(Claes 1995)

Such arguments, as expressed separately by Claes and Huntington, point to the new
significance of what are known generically as cultural factors in international relations.
According to an International Relations commentator, Simon Murden, the cultural dimen-
sion to international relations ‘appeared to be reaffirmed amid the reorganization of world
politics that followed the end of the cold war and the release of new waves of globalization’
(Murden 2005: 539).

In addition to the challenge to international order emanating from radical Islamism,
there is also a differing interpretation of international order expressed in the worldview
known as Asian Values, found in various countries in East and South East Asia – a region
with religious, economic, historical and political diversity. In recent years, there has been a
debate between two viewpoints involving what are the most politically and culturally
important characteristics of the region’s countries. One view maintains that the region’s
various forms of non-democratic rule – found in, for example, Burma, China and Vietnam
– are ‘culturally appropriate’. The other maintains that various non-democratic rulers in
the region merely turn to old stereotypes as a way of denying democracy in their countries
(Barr 2002).

Some analysts have argued that Asian Values do exist, linked to some of the region’s
religious traditions, such as Confucianism, a ‘value system most congruent with Oriental
authoritarianism’ (King 1993: 141). The American International Relations scholar, Francis
Fukuyama, claims that Confucianism is both ‘hierarchical and inegalitarian’ and character-
istic of ‘the community-orientedness of Asian cultures’ (Fukuyama 1992: 217). His overall
concern is that, according to the proponents of a distinctive ‘Asian culture’, including the
prominent Chinese intellectual, Jiang Qing, liberal democracy – a centrepiece of the values
of current international society – is actually ‘culturally alien’ to South East and East Asia
(Ommerborn n/d). This is because the region’s countries are said to have political cultures
and histories that, while differing from country to country in precise details, nevertheless
reflect an important factor: a societal emphasis on the collective or group, not the individual as in the West. The collective focus also emphasises ‘harmony’, ‘consensus’, ‘unity’ and ‘community’ – all cornerstone values of Confucianism – that are said to differ significantly from ‘Western culture’ and its liberal, individualistic, self-seeking values. Such values are central to Western-focused views of international society and it appears that articulation of Asian Values highlights the potential for a competing set of norms and values to make their mark in international relations.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we examined how international relations has developed over time in relation to international order, international society and globalisation. We looked at the balance of power, international law and diplomacy as key components of the development of international order following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. We also focused upon international society, a form of international community which over time developed according to the values and norms of behaviour championed by Western countries. Finally, we turned to the issue of how post-Cold War globalisation had the effect of bringing to the fore non-Western challenges to international order, especially those from Islamist terrorist groups and governments espousing non-liberal ‘Asian Values’.

**Resource section**

**Questions**

1. What was the balance of power and why was it important for the development of international order?
2. How did the Peace of Westphalia help build international society?
3. What are the main characteristics of the English School of international relations?
4. Do you agree that current International Relations reflects Western ideas of international order?
5. Is there still an international society or do radical challenges undermine it significantly?

**Recommended reading**


This book surveys the relationship between International Relations theory and political theory, showing the way in which the two, for long considered separate, now overlap. In the first part of
the book, Brown presents an historical overview of international political theory from the Peace of Westphalia to now, with brief accounts of the law of nations, and the notion of an ‘international society’.

Bull explores three main questions: ‘What is the nature of order in world politics?’; ‘How is it maintained in the contemporary state system?’; and ‘What alternative paths to world order are feasible and desirable?’. According to Bull, the system of sovereign states is not in decline and far from being an obstacle to world order is actually its essential foundation.

Buzan offers a bracing critique and reappraisal of the English School approach. He begins with the often neglected concept of world society, focusing on the international society tradition and constructivism. He then develops a new theoretical framework that can be used to address globalisation as a complex political interplay among state and non-state actors.

Brian Orend contends in this book that Immanuel Kant’s theory of international justice not only accommodates just war’s traditional understanding of the morality of war, but improves it. The main strengths of Orend’s book lie in its clear writing, theoretical analysis, and insightful interpretation of Kant’s theory of international justice as well as his views on the morality of war.

This classic work examines not only the issues surrounding military theory, war crimes, and the spoils of war from the Athenian attack on Melos to the My Lai massacre, but also a variety of conflicts in order to understand exactly why, according to Walzer, ‘the argument about war and justice is still a political and moral necessity’.