

Problems in International Politics

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In everyday language, 'problems' are questions to be considered, tackled, or answered. In science, 'problems' are 'puzzles', identified by Thomas Kuhn as topics amenable to explanations within scientific paradigms. If we combine these two definitions, "Problems in International Politics" can be defined as issues to be considered, tackled, or answered thanks to theories, concepts, and methods used in the discipline of International Relations.

The aim of this course is to address some contemporary international problems by having a look at them through the scientific lenses provided by IR. Given the potentially huge domain of international issues, the topics concerned will focus on international security, broadly defined, rather than international political economy.

The analyses proposed are debatable: there are no neutral, or objective, analyses in social sciences – just more or less rigorous ones.

Syllabus

I. Systems and Structures

1. The Cold War: State of War or Long Peace?
2. The Contemporary Interstate System: Unipolar or Multipolar?
3. The American Hegemon: Messianic Crusader or Reluctant Sheriff?
4. The Consequences of China's Rise: Balance or Parity?

II. Institutions and Organizations

5. The International Society: Pluralist or Solidarist?
6. The UN: Sovereign Equality or Legalized Hegemony?
7. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Alliance or Community?
8. Western Democracies in Action: Democratic Peace or Democratic Violence?

III. Conflicts and Crises

9. The Israeli-Arab-Palestinian Conflict: Hobbesian Enmity or Lockean Rivalry?
10. The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More Will Be Worse or Better?
11. Russia in its Near Abroad: Old-Fashioned Geopolitics or Timeless Power Politics?
12. Global Terrorism and Asymmetric Wars: Clash of Civilizations or Haves vs. Have-Nots?

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