

POL309

THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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Series 1: Foundations of International Relations

1.1 Basic Concepts in International Relations

- 1.1.1 Definition and Scope of International Relations
- 1.1.2 Importance of International Relations in Global Politics
- 1.1.3 Key Actors in International Relations (States, Non-State Actors, International Organisations)

1.2 Historical Evolution of International Relations

- 1.2.1 Early Traditions and Classical Roots
- 1.2.2 Post-World War Developments
- 1.2.3 Contemporary Trends and Globalisation

1.3 Core Theoretical Perspectives

- 1.3.1 Realism and its Variants
- 1.3.2 Liberalism and Institutional Approaches
- 1.3.3 Alternative Perspectives (Constructivism, Critical Theories)

1.4 Tools and Methods of Studying International Relations

- 1.4.1 Models and Conceptual Frameworks
- 1.4.2 Simulation and Game Approaches
- 1.4.3 Comparative and Systems Analysis

Introduction

International Relations is a field that helps us make sense of how states, organisations, and individuals interact across borders. In today's interconnected world, decisions made in one country can quickly affect others, whether through trade, diplomacy, or conflict. This Series sets the stage for your study of International Relations by introducing the fundamental ideas, historical developments, and theoretical perspectives that underpin the discipline.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the foundational knowledge of International Relations, enabling you to define its basic concepts, trace its historical evolution, and explain the major theoretical perspectives and methods used in its study.

We shall commence this Series by examining the basic concepts in International Relations, including its scope, importance, and the key actors involved. Next, we will explore the historical evolution of the discipline, tracing its classical roots and



contemporary developments. Following that, we will analyse the core theoretical perspectives such as realism, liberalism, and alternative approaches. Finally, we will wrap up by considering the tools and methods used to study International Relations, including models, simulations, and systems analysis.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 1.1 define the basic concepts and scope of International Relations,

SLO 1.2 explain the role of key actors in International Relations,

SLO 1.3 trace the historical evolution of International Relations from classical traditions to contemporary trends,

SLO 1.4 analyse the major theoretical perspectives in International Relations, including realism, liberalism, and alternative approaches, and

SLO 1.5 demonstrate how tools and methods such as models, simulations, and systems analysis are applied in the study of International Relations.

1.1 Basic Concepts In International Relations

1.1.1 Definition and scope of International Relations

International Relations (IR) refers to the study of interactions among states, organisations, and individuals across national boundaries. It examines how political, economic, social, and cultural factors shape these interactions. The **scope** of IR includes diplomacy, security, trade, human rights, and global governance. By studying IR, learners gain insight into how decisions made in one part of the world can influence outcomes elsewhere.

Fill in the blank: International Relations is the study of interactions among _____ across national boundaries.



THE SCOPE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Source: OER International Relations Overview.

Diagram showing the scope of International Relations (politics, economics, security, culture, environment) Caption: Figure 1.1 Scope of International Relations

1.1.2 Importance of International Relations in global politics

The importance of IR lies in its ability to explain and predict patterns of cooperation and conflict. It helps us understand **power**, defined as the capacity of an actor to influence others, and how it is distributed globally. IR also provides frameworks for analysing **conflict**, which refers to disagreements or clashes of interest among actors, and **accommodation**, which means the processes of compromise and adjustment. These concepts are central to explaining why wars occur, why peace is maintained, and how alliances are formed.



Fill in the blank: The ability of an actor to influence others in International Relations is called _____.



Image of diplomats at a negotiation table Caption: Plate 1.1 Diplomacy as a tool of International Relations

1.1.3 Key actors in International Relations

The main **actors** in IR include **states**, which are sovereign political entities with defined territories and governments; **non-state actors**, such as multinational corporations, non-governmental organisations, and terrorist groups; and **international organisations**, like



the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Each actor plays a role in shaping global politics, whether through cooperation, competition, or regulation.

Fill in the blank: Organisations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization are examples of _____ actors in International Relations.

Actor type	Examples	Role in IR
States	USA, Nigeria, China	Sovervenity, diplomaci, security
Non-state actors	NGOs, MNCs, terrosit terrosit groups	Advocacy, economic influence, disruption
International organisations	UN, WTO, AU	Regulation, peckewing, corperation

Source: OER International Relations Glossay. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

] Caption: Table 1.1 Categories of actors in International Relations

Pilot questions 1.1

Which term refers to the study of interactions among states, organisations, and individuals across borders?

What is the capacity of an actor to influence others called in International Relations?



Give one example of a non-state actor in International Relations.

What does accommodation mean in the context of International Relations?

Name one international organisation that plays a regulatory role in global politics.

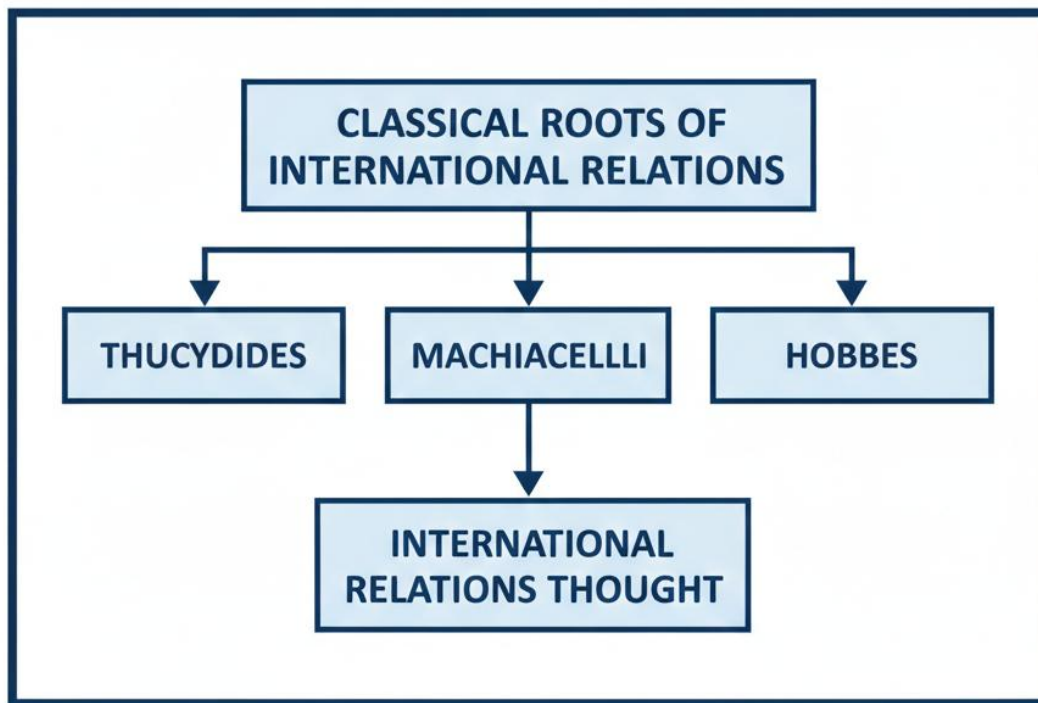
1.2 Historical Evolution Of International Relations

1.2.1 Early traditions and classical roots

The study of International Relations has its **classical roots** in the writings of philosophers and historians who examined the nature of power, war, and diplomacy. Thinkers such as Thucydides, who chronicled the Peloponnesian War, highlighted the role of **power politics**, defined as the pursuit of national interest through strength and influence. Similarly, philosophers like Machiavelli emphasised the importance of pragmatic leadership in securing state survival. These early traditions laid the foundation for later theories by stressing the realities of conflict and cooperation among states.

Fill in the blank: The chronicler of the Peloponnesian War who emphasised power politics was _____.





Source: OER International Relations History.
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Diagram showing early contributors to International Relations thought (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes) Caption: Figure 1.2 Classical roots of International Relations

1.2.2 Post-World War developments

The two World Wars transformed the study of International Relations into a distinct academic discipline. After the First World War, scholars sought ways to prevent future conflicts, leading to the rise of **idealism**, defined as the belief that international cooperation and institutions could secure peace. However, the outbreak of the Second World War shifted focus towards **realism**, which stressed the inevitability of conflict and the centrality of state power. The Cold War further shaped IR, with emphasis on nuclear



deterrence, alliances, and ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Fill in the blank: The belief that international cooperation and institutions could secure peace is known as _____.



Source: OER Diplomacy Archives. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Image of the League of Nations assembly in session Caption: Plate 1.2 The League of Nations as an early attempt at global governance

1.2.3 Contemporary trends and globalisation

In the post-Cold War era, International Relations has expanded to address issues beyond military conflict. **Globalisation**, defined as the increasing interconnectedness of



economies, societies, and cultures, has become a central theme. Scholars now examine challenges such as terrorism, climate change, migration, and digital diplomacy. The rise of non-state actors and international organisations has also reshaped the field, making IR more complex and multidisciplinary.

Fill in the blank: The increasing interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures is referred to as _____.

SELECTED CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Terrorism and security threats
2. Climate change and environmental politics
2. Migration and refugee crises
4. Digital diplomacy and cyber politics

Source: OER International Relations Glossary. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 1.1 Selected contemporary issues in International Relations

Pilot questions 1.2



Who is considered the chronicler of the Peloponnesian War and an early contributor to International Relations thought?

Which school of thought emerged after the First World War emphasising international cooperation?

What major global conflict shifted focus towards realism in International Relations?

Name one key feature of the Cold War that influenced International Relations.

What term describes the increasing interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures in the modern era?

1.3 Core Theoretical Perspectives

1.3.1 Realism and its variants

Realism is a theory in International Relations that emphasises the centrality of states, power, and security. It argues that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no overarching authority above states, and therefore states must rely on their own capabilities to survive. Variants of realism include **classical realism**, which focuses on human nature as the cause of conflict, and **neorealism**, which stresses the structure of the international system as the main determinant of state behaviour.

Fill in the blank: The belief that the international system lacks an overarching authority is described as _____.



KEY ASSUMPTIONS OF REALISM

- 1. ANARCHY:** Absence of a central authority in a international system.
- 2. STATE-CENTRIC:** States are a primary actors.
- 3. POWER POLITICS:** States act in their self-interest to maximiaze power.
- 4. SECURITY DILLEMMA:** Actions taken to increase to on'te own security decrease the security of others.

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing realism's key assumptions: anarchy, state-centric, power politics, security dilemma Caption: Figure 1.3 Key assumptions of realism

1.3.2 Liberalism and institutional approaches

Liberalism highlights cooperation, institutions, and interdependence among states. It argues that states are not only concerned with power but also with economic prosperity, peace, and collective security. Institutions such as the United Nations and treaties like the European Union are examples of frameworks that promote cooperation. Liberalism also stresses the role of democracy and trade in reducing conflict.



Fill in the blank: According to liberalism, institutions and interdependence help to promote _____ among states.



Image of the United Nations General Assembly in session Caption: Plate 1.3 International institutions as instruments of cooperation

1.3.3 Alternative perspectives (constructivism, critical theories)

Constructivism argues that ideas, norms, and identities shape international politics. Unlike realism and liberalism, which focus on material factors such as power and institutions, constructivism highlights the importance of social interactions and shared



meanings. For example, the perception of a state as a friend or enemy depends on identity and norms rather than just military strength.

Critical theories challenge mainstream approaches by focusing on inequality, justice, and emancipation. They include Marxist perspectives, feminist theories, and postcolonial critiques, all of which question the structures of power and domination in global politics.

Fill in the blank: Constructivism emphasises the role of _____, norms, and identities in shaping international politics.

Box 1.2 Selectnative perspectives in International Relations

1. **Constructivism:** ideas, norms, identities
2. **Marxsim:** economic inequality and class struggle
3. **Feminism:** gender and power relations
4. **Postcolonialism:** legacies of colonial domination

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 1.2 Selected alternative perspectives in International

Pilot questions 1.3



Which theory emphasises the anarchic nature of the international system and the centrality of state power?

What is the main focus of neorealism compared to classical realism?

According to liberalism, what role do institutions play in global politics?

Which theory highlights the importance of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping international relations?

Name one critical theory that challenges mainstream approaches to International Relations.

1.4 Tools And Methods Of Studying International Relations

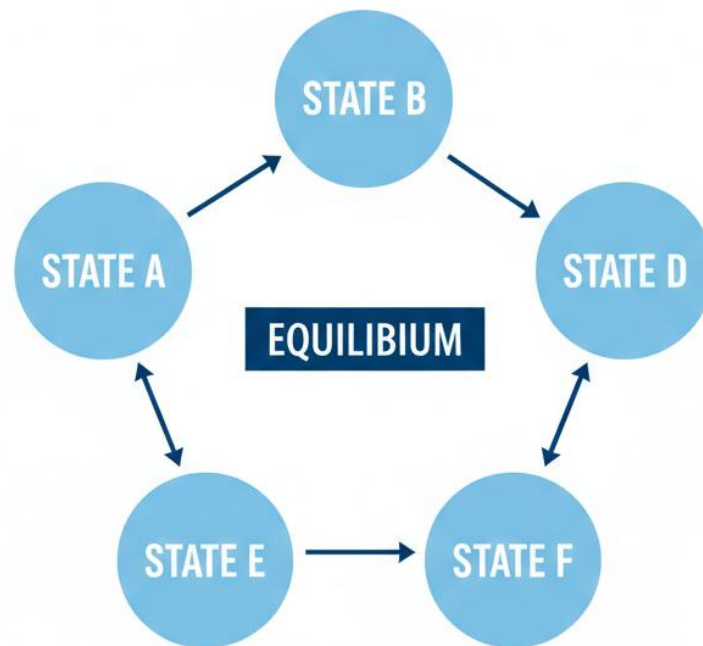
1.4.1 Models and conceptual frameworks

Models in International Relations are simplified representations of complex realities. They help scholars and practitioners to explain, predict, and analyse interactions among actors. A **conceptual framework** refers to a structured way of organising ideas to understand relationships between variables. For example, the balance of power model illustrates how states maintain stability by preventing any one actor from becoming dominant.

Fill in the blank: A simplified representation of complex realities in International Relations is called a _____.



Figure 1.4 Balance of Power Model in International Relations



Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing balance of power model with multiple states maintaining equilibrium
Caption: Figure 1.4 Balance of power model in International Relations

1.4.2 Simulation and game approaches

Simulation refers to the use of role-play or computer-based exercises to mimic real-world international scenarios. It allows learners to practise decision-making in situations such as negotiations or crises. **Game theory** is a mathematical approach that analyses strategic interactions among actors, where the outcome depends on the choices of all participants. For instance, the prisoner's dilemma illustrates how rational actors may fail to cooperate even when cooperation would benefit them.



Fill in the blank: The mathematical approach that analyses strategic interactions among actors is called _____ theory.

Box 1.3 Example of the Prisoner's Dilemma in International Relations

1. Two states face a choice: cooperate or defect.
2. If both cooperate, they gain moderate benefits.
3. If one defects while the other cooperates, the defector gains more while the cooperator loses.
4. If both defect, both suffer losses.

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 1.3 Example of the prisoner's dilemma in International Relations

1.4.3 Comparative and systems analysis

Comparative analysis involves examining similarities and differences across cases, such as comparing foreign policies of different states. It helps identify patterns and generalisations. **Systems analysis** views International Relations as a whole, focusing on how parts interact within the global system. For example, the world system can be studied



in terms of core, semi-periphery, and periphery states, each with distinct roles in global economics and politics.

Fill in the blank: The method that examines similarities and differences across cases in International Relations is called _____ analysis.

Table 1.2 Comparative and Systems Approaches in International Relations

Method	Focus	Example
Comparative analysis	Similarities and differences across cases	Comparing US and China foreign policies
Systems analysis	Interactions within the global system	Core, semi-periphery, and periphery states

Source: OER International Relations Methodology. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 1.2 Comparative and systems approaches in International Relations

Pilot questions 1.4

What term refers to simplified representations of complex realities in International Relations?



Which model explains how states maintain stability by preventing dominance of one actor?

What is the mathematical approach used to analyse strategic interactions among actors?

In the prisoner's dilemma, what happens if both actors defect?

Which method focuses on similarities and differences across cases in International Relations?

Series Summary

This Series introduced you to the foundations of International Relations, highlighting its purpose and relevance in understanding global politics. We began by defining the basic concepts and scope of International Relations, then examined its historical evolution from classical traditions through post-war developments to contemporary globalisation. Following that, we explored the core theoretical perspectives including realism, liberalism, and alternative approaches such as constructivism and critical theories. Finally, we considered the tools and methods used to study International Relations, including models, simulations, and systems analysis.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to define key concepts, explain the role of actors, trace the historical development of the discipline, analyse major theoretical perspectives, and demonstrate how different tools and methods are applied. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a strong foundation for the subsequent Series in this course.

Glossary of Terms

Accommodation: The process of compromise and adjustment among actors in International Relations.

Actors: Entities that participate in International Relations, including states, non-state actors, and international organisations.

Anarchy: The absence of an overarching authority above states in the international system.

Balance of power: A model in which states maintain stability by preventing any one actor from becoming dominant.

Conflict: Disagreements or clashes of interest among actors in International Relations.

Constructivism: A theory that emphasises the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping international politics.

Globalisation: The increasing interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures across the world.



Idealism: A perspective that stresses international cooperation and institutions as means of securing peace.

International Relations (IR): The study of interactions among states, organisations, and individuals across national boundaries.

Liberalism: A theory that highlights cooperation, institutions, and interdependence among states.

Models: Simplified representations of complex realities used to explain and analyse interactions in International Relations.

Power: The capacity of an actor to influence others in International Relations.

Realism: A theory that emphasises the centrality of states, power, and security in an anarchic international system.

Simulation: The use of role-play or computer-based exercises to mimic real-world international scenarios.

Systems analysis: A method that views International Relations as a whole, focusing on interactions within the global system.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

Which theory emphasises the anarchic nature of the international system? (Linked to SLO 1.4)

What term describes the increasing interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures? (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Which model explains how states maintain stability by preventing dominance of one actor? (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Short-answer questions

Define International Relations and explain its scope. (Linked to SLO 1.1)

Identify one example each of a state, a non-state actor, and an international organisation. (Linked to SLO 1.2)

Briefly explain the difference between classical realism and neorealism. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the historical evolution of International Relations from classical traditions to contemporary globalisation. (Linked to SLO 1.3)



Basic response: Trace the contributions of early thinkers, post-war developments including idealism and realism, and modern issues such as globalisation.

Value-added response: Provide examples of how these historical shifts influenced specific international events or institutions.

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of liberalism compared to realism in explaining international politics. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Basic response: Contrast realism's focus on power and security with liberalism's emphasis on cooperation and institutions.

Value-added response: Illustrate with case studies such as the United Nations or Cold War alliances.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Realism

Globalisation

Balance of power model

International Relations is the study of interactions among states, organisations, and individuals across national boundaries. Its scope includes diplomacy, security, trade, human rights, and global governance.

State: Nigeria; Non-state actor: Amnesty International; International organisation: United Nations.

Classical realism focuses on human nature as the cause of conflict, while neorealism stresses the structure of the international system.

Basic response: Early thinkers like Thucydides and Machiavelli emphasised power politics. After the First World War, idealism stressed cooperation, but the Second World War shifted focus to realism. The Cold War highlighted nuclear deterrence and ideological rivalry. Contemporary IR addresses globalisation, terrorism, and climate change. **Value-added response:** For example, the League of Nations embodied idealist principles, while NATO reflected realist concerns during the Cold War. Globalisation has led to institutions such as the World Trade Organization.

Basic response: Realism stresses state power and conflict, while liberalism highlights cooperation and institutions. **Value-added response:** Realism explains Cold War rivalry, while liberalism accounts for the success of organisations like the European Union in promoting peace.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Pilot questions 1.1



International Relations

Power

Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

Compromise and adjustment

United Nations

Pilot questions 1.2

Thucydides

Idealism

Second World War

Nuclear deterrence or ideological rivalry

Globalisation

Pilot questions 1.3

Realism

Structure of the international system

Promote cooperation

Constructivism

Marxism, feminism, or postcolonialism

Pilot questions 1.4

Models

Balance of power model

Game theory

Both actors suffer losses

Comparative analysis



Series 2: Power, Conflict, And Accommodation

2.1 Concept of Power in International Relations

- 2.1.1 Definition and dimensions of power
- 2.1.2 Sources of power (military, economic, ideological, diplomatic)
- 2.1.3 Distribution of power in the international system

2.2 Nature and Dynamics of Conflict

- 2.2.1 Causes of conflict among states and actors
- 2.2.2 Types of conflict (armed, economic, ideological, diplomatic)
- 2.2.3 Consequences of conflict in global politics

2.3 Processes of Accommodation

- 2.3.1 Meaning and forms of accommodation
- 2.3.2 Negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy as tools of accommodation
- 2.3.3 Case illustrations of accommodation in international politics

2.4 Interplay of Power, Conflict, and Accommodation

- 2.4.1 How power influences conflict and accommodation
- 2.4.2 Balancing strategies: deterrence, compromise, and cooperation
- 2.4.3 Contemporary examples of power–conflict–accommodation dynamics

Introduction

Power, conflict, and accommodation are central themes in International Relations because they explain how states and other actors interact in the global arena. Power determines influence, conflict arises when interests clash, and accommodation provides pathways for compromise and cooperation. This Series is designed to help you explore these interconnected concepts and understand their significance in shaping international politics.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to define and analyse the concepts of power, conflict, and accommodation, and to demonstrate how they interact to influence global outcomes.

We shall commence this Series by examining the concept of power in International Relations, including its definition, dimensions, sources, and distribution. Next, we will explore the nature and dynamics of conflict, considering its causes, types, and



consequences. Following that, we will study the processes of accommodation, focusing on negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy. Finally, we will bring the Series to a close by analysing the interplay of power, conflict, and accommodation, with examples of how these dynamics operate in contemporary global politics.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 2.1** define and explain the concept and dimensions of power in International Relations,
- SLO 2.2** identify and analyse the sources and distribution of power in the international system,
- SLO 2.3** explain the causes, types, and consequences of conflict among states and actors,
- SLO 2.4** describe the meaning and forms of accommodation and demonstrate how negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy function as tools of accommodation, and
- SLO 2.5** evaluate the interplay of power, conflict, and accommodation with reference to contemporary examples in global politics.

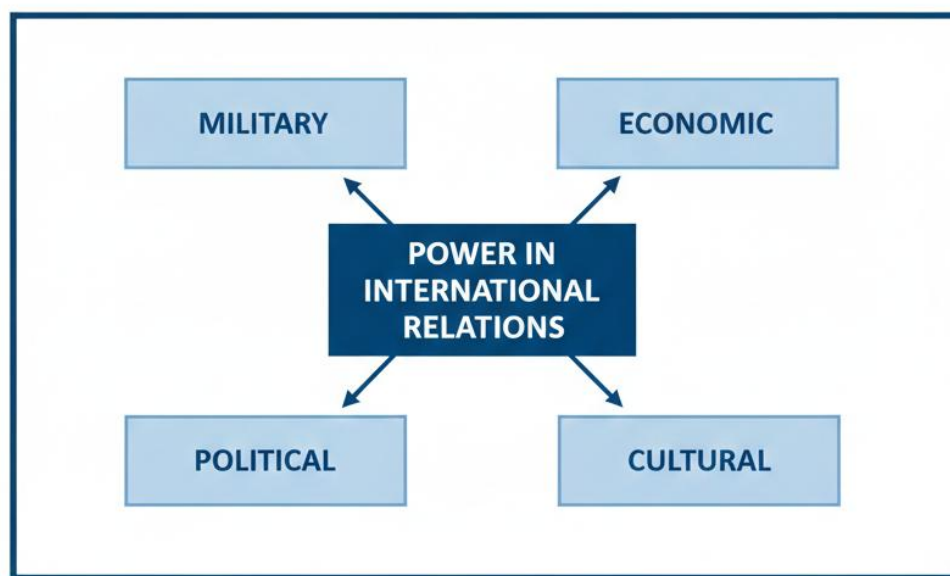
2.1 Concept Of Power In International Relations

2.1.1 Definition and dimensions of power

Power in International Relations refers to the capacity of an actor, such as a state or organisation, to influence the behaviour of others and shape outcomes in global politics. Power is multidimensional, encompassing military strength, economic capacity, political influence, and cultural appeal. Scholars often distinguish between **hard power**, defined as coercive force such as military and economic sanctions, and **soft power**, defined as the ability to attract and persuade through culture, values, and diplomacy.

Fill in the blank: The ability to attract and persuade through culture, values, and diplomacy is called _____ power.





Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing dimensions of power: military, economic, political, cultural
Caption: Figure 2.1 Dimensions of power in International Relations

2.1.2 Sources of power (military, economic, ideological, diplomatic)

The sources of power in International Relations are diverse. **Military power** refers to armed forces and defence capabilities. **Economic power** is derived from wealth, trade, and resources. **Ideological power** stems from the ability to shape beliefs and values, such as democracy or communism. **Diplomatic power** arises from negotiation skills, alliances, and international reputation. Each source contributes differently to a state's overall influence, and their relative importance may vary across contexts.



Fill in the blank: The ability to shape beliefs and values in International Relations is known as _____ power.

Table 2.1
Sources of Power in
International Relations

Source of Power	Description	Example
Military	Armed forces and defns capabilities	Nuclear weapons, standing armies
Economic	Wealth, trade, and resources	USA's economic dominance
Ideological	Ability to shape beliefs and values	Spread to democracy
Negotitation skills and alliances		United Nnations dimpolassy

Source: OER International Relations Methology. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 2.1 Sources of power in International Relations

2.1.3 Distribution of power in the international system

The **distribution of power** refers to how influence is spread among states in the global system. It can take different forms: **unipolarity**, where one state dominates; **bipolarity**, where two states or blocs hold power; and **multipolarity**, where several states share influence. For example, the Cold War era was characterised by bipolarity between the



United States and the Soviet Union, while today's system shows tendencies towards multipolarity with rising powers such as China, India, and the European Union.

Fill in the blank: A system where several states share influence is described as _____.

Box 2.1 Forms of Power Distribution in International Relations

- 1. Unipolarity: dominance of one state**
- 2. Bipolarity: two states or blocs hold power**
- 3. Multipolarity: several states share influence**

Source: OER International Relations Theory.
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Caption: Box 2.1 Forms of power distribution in International Relations

Pilot questions 2.1

What term refers to the ability of an actor to influence others in International Relations?

Which type of power relies on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion?

Name one example of economic power in International Relations.



What is the ability to shape beliefs and values called?

Which form of power distribution describes a system where two states or blocs dominate?

2.2 Nature And Dynamics Of Conflict

2.2.1 Causes of conflict among states and actors

Conflict in International Relations refers to situations where actors pursue incompatible goals or interests. Causes of conflict include competition for resources, territorial disputes, ideological differences, and struggles for power or influence. For example, disputes over oil-rich regions or ideological clashes during the Cold War illustrate how conflicts emerge from both material and non-material factors.

Fill in the blank: Disputes over oil-rich regions are an example of conflict caused by competition for _____.



Figure 2.2 Causes of Conflict in International Relations



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Diagram showing causes of conflict: resources, territory, ideology, power Caption: Figure 2.2 Causes of conflict in International Relations

2.2.2 Types of conflict (armed, economic, ideological, diplomatic)

Conflicts can take different forms. **Armed conflict** involves the use of military force, such as wars or insurgencies. **Economic conflict** arises from trade disputes, sanctions, or competition over markets. **Ideological conflict** occurs when actors clash over beliefs or values, such as democracy versus authoritarianism. **Diplomatic conflict** refers to disagreements in negotiations or foreign policy positions. Each type of conflict has distinct features but often overlaps with others in practice.



Fill in the blank: Trade disputes and sanctions are examples of _____ conflict.

Table 2.2 Types of Conflict in International Relations		
Type of Conflict	Description	Example
Armed	Use of military force	Second World War
Economic	Trade disputes, sanctions, market competition	US-China trade tensions
Ideological	Clash of beliefs or values	Cold War rivalry
Diplomatic	Disagreements in negotiations or foreign policy	Brexit negotiations
Source: OER International Relations Methodology. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0		

Caption: Table 2.2 Types of conflict in International Relations

2.2.3 Consequences of conflict in global politics

The consequences of conflict can be severe and long-lasting. They include loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, economic decline, displacement of populations, and strained diplomatic relations. Conflicts may also reshape alliances and alter the balance of power in the international system. For instance, the Second World War led to the creation of the United Nations and redefined global politics.



Fill in the blank: The creation of the United Nations after the Second World War was a consequence of _____.

Box 2.2 Selected consequences of conflict in International Relations

- 1. Human casualties and suffering**
- 2. Economic decline and resource depletion**
- 3. Refugee crises and displacement**
- 3. Diplomatic breakdowns and strained relations**
- 5. Reshaping of alliances and institutions**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 2.2 Selected consequences of conflict in International Relations

Pilot questions 2.2

What term refers to situations where actors pursue incompatible goals or interests?

Disputes over oil-rich regions are examples of conflict caused by competition for what?

Which type of conflict involves trade disputes and sanctions?

What type of conflict was the Cold War rivalry an example of?



Name one major consequence of conflict in global politics.

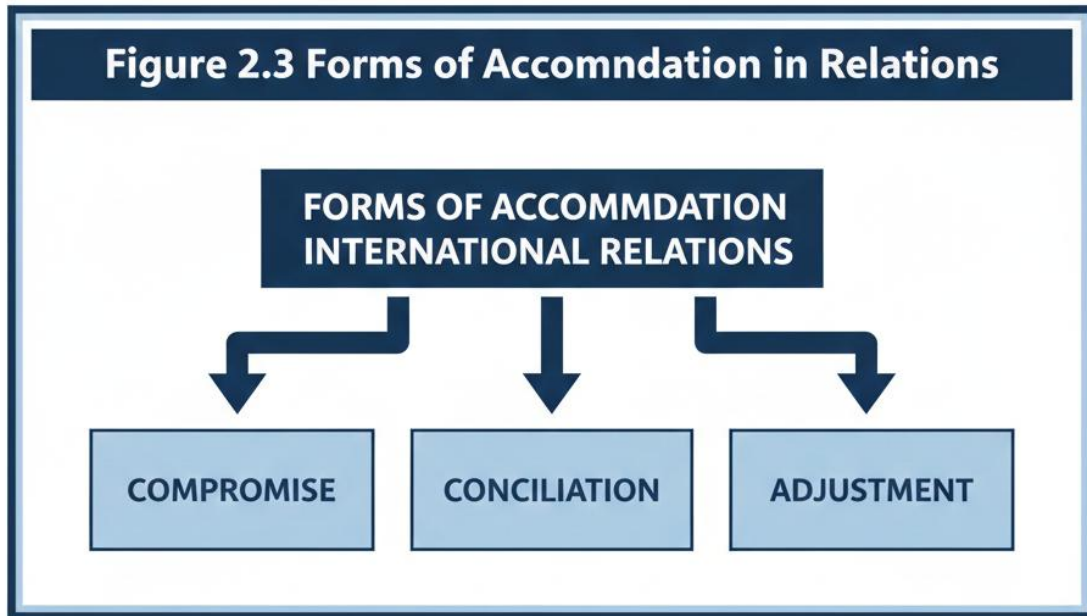
2.3 Processes Of Accommodation

2.3.1 Meaning and forms of accommodation

Accommodation in International Relations refers to the process by which actors adjust their positions to reduce tension and reach compromise. It is a way of managing conflict without resorting to violence. Forms of accommodation include compromise, conciliation, and adjustment of policies to meet mutual interests. For example, trade agreements often involve accommodation where states make concessions to achieve collective benefits.

Fill in the blank: The process by which actors adjust their positions to reduce tension and reach compromise is called _____.





Source: OER International Relations Theory, License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing forms of accommodation: compromise, conciliation, adjustment
Caption: Figure 2.3 Forms of accommodation in International Relations

2.3.2 Negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy as tools of accommodation

Negotiation is a process where actors discuss and bargain to reach agreements.

Mediation involves a neutral third party helping disputing actors to find common ground.

Diplomacy refers to the practice of managing relations between states through dialogue, representation, and agreements. These tools are essential for preventing escalation of conflicts and fostering cooperation.



Fill in the blank: When a neutral third party helps disputing actors to find common ground, the process is called _____.



Plate 2.3 Diplomacy as a tool of accommodation.
Source: OER Peace Studies Archives.
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Image of international leaders signing a peace agreement Caption: Plate 2.3 Diplomacy as a tool of accommodation

2.3.3 Case illustrations of accommodation in international politics

Accommodation can be seen in historical and contemporary examples. The Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978 illustrate how negotiation and mediation resolved long-standing conflict. Similarly, trade agreements within the World Trade Organization show how states adjust policies to achieve collective economic benefits.



These cases demonstrate that accommodation is not only theoretical but also practical in shaping international outcomes.

Fill in the blank: The Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978 are an example of _____ in practice.

Box 2.3 Selected Case Illustrations of Accommodation

- 1. Camp David Accords (1978):
Egypt–Israel peace agreement**
- 2. WTO trade agreements: economic accommodation**
- 3. Paris Climate Agreement:
environmental cooperation**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 2.3 Selected case illustrations of accommodation

Pilot questions 2.3

What term refers to the process of adjusting positions to reduce tension and reach compromise?



Which tool of accommodation involves a neutral third party assisting disputing actors?

What is the practice of managing relations between states through dialogue and agreements called?

Name one historical example of accommodation in International Relations.

Which international organisation provides a framework for economic accommodation through trade agreements?

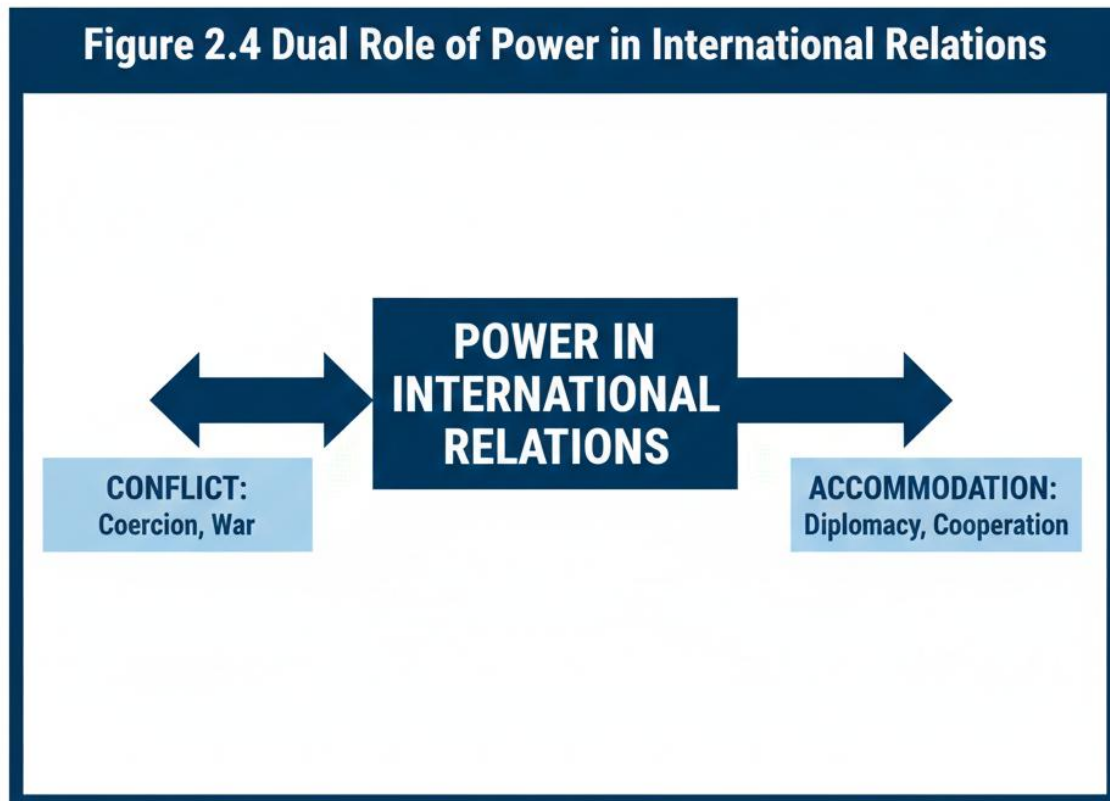
2.4 Interplay Of Power, Conflict, And Accommodation

2.4.1 How power influences conflict and accommodation

Power shapes both the emergence of conflict and the possibilities for accommodation. Strong states may use their military or economic power to assert dominance, which can trigger resistance and conflict. At the same time, power can be used constructively to facilitate accommodation, for example when influential states mediate disputes or provide incentives for cooperation. Thus, power is both a source of tension and a tool for resolution.

Fill in the blank: When influential states mediate disputes or provide incentives for cooperation, they are using their _____ constructively.





Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing power leading to conflict on one side and accommodation on the other
Caption: Figure 2.4 Dual role of power in International Relations

2.4.2 Balancing strategies: deterrence, compromise, and cooperation

States often adopt strategies to balance power, manage conflict, and encourage accommodation. **Deterrence** refers to discouraging aggression by threatening credible retaliation. **Compromise** involves making concessions to reach agreements. **Cooperation** means working together to achieve shared goals, often through institutions or alliances. These strategies illustrate how actors navigate the tension between conflict and accommodation in global politics.



Fill in the blank: The strategy of discouraging aggression by threatening credible retaliation is called _____.

Box 2.4 Strategies for Balancing Power, Conflict, and Accommodation

1. **Detrence:** discouraging aggression through credible threats
2. **Comprmise:** making consesions to reach agreements
3. **Cooperation:** working together for shared goals

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 2.4 Strategies for balancing power, conflict, and accommodation

2.4.3 Contemporary examples of power–conflict–accommodation dynamics

Contemporary global politics provides many illustrations of the interplay between power, conflict, and accommodation. The rivalry between the United States and China demonstrates how economic and military power can generate tension, while trade negotiations show attempts at accommodation. Similarly, peace processes in regions



such as the Middle East highlight how power imbalances can fuel conflict but also create opportunities for mediation and compromise.

Fill in the blank: Trade negotiations between major powers are examples of attempts at _____ in practice.

Table 2.3 Contemporary examples of power-conflict-accommodation dynamics			
Example	Power dimension	Conflict	Accommodation
US–China relations	Economic and military	Trade tensions	Negotiations and agreements
Middle East peace processes	Military and ideological	Armed conflicts	Mediation and compromise
European Union	Economic and diplomatic	Policy disagreements	Institutional cooperation

Source: OER International Relations Methodology. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 2.3 Contemporary examples of power–conflict–accommodation dynamics

Pilot questions 2.4

How can power act as both a source of conflict and a tool for accommodation?

What strategy discourages aggression by threatening credible retaliation?



Which balancing strategy involves making concessions to reach agreements?

Give one example of how power, conflict, and accommodation interact in contemporary global politics.

What role does cooperation play in managing global tensions?

Series Summary

This Series examined the central themes of power, conflict, and accommodation in International Relations. We began by defining power, exploring its dimensions, sources, and distribution across the international system. Then we analysed the nature and dynamics of conflict, considering its causes, types, and consequences. Following that, we studied the processes of accommodation, focusing on negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy, supported by case illustrations. Finally, we explored the interplay of power, conflict, and accommodation, highlighting strategies such as deterrence, compromise, and cooperation, and linking them to contemporary global examples.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to define and explain power, analyse its sources and distribution, explain the causes and types of conflict, describe the processes of accommodation, and evaluate how power, conflict, and accommodation interact in global politics. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and prepare you to apply these concepts in later Series.

Glossary of Terms

Accommodation: The process of adjusting positions to reduce tension and reach compromise in International Relations.

Anarchy: The absence of an overarching authority above states in the international system.

Bipolarity: A distribution of power where two states or blocs dominate.

Compromise: A form of accommodation where actors make concessions to reach agreements.

Conflict: Situations where actors pursue incompatible goals or interests.

Deterrence: A strategy of discouraging aggression by threatening credible retaliation.

Diplomacy: The practice of managing relations between states through dialogue, representation, and agreements.

Economic power: Influence derived from wealth, trade, and resources.

Hard power: Coercive force such as military strength or economic sanctions.

Ideological power: The ability to shape beliefs and values in International Relations.

Military power: Influence derived from armed forces and defence capabilities.



Multipolarity: A distribution of power where several states share influence.

Negotiation: A process where actors discuss and bargain to reach agreements.

Soft power: The ability to attract and persuade through culture, values, and diplomacy.

Unipolarity: A distribution of power where one state dominates.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

Which type of power relies on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion? (Linked to SLO 2.1)

What term describes a system where two states or blocs dominate? (Linked to SLO 2.2)

Which strategy discourages aggression by threatening credible retaliation? (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Short-answer questions

Define conflict in International Relations and give one example of its cause. (Linked to SLO 2.3)

Identify one tool of accommodation and explain its role. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Briefly distinguish between hard power and soft power. (Linked to SLO 2.1)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the sources of power in International Relations and explain how they contribute to state influence. (Linked to SLO 2.2)

Basic response: Describe military, economic, ideological, and diplomatic sources with examples.

Value-added response: Evaluate how these sources interact in shaping global politics, using case studies.

Evaluate the interplay of power, conflict, and accommodation with reference to contemporary examples. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Basic response: Explain how power can generate conflict but also facilitate accommodation.

Value-added response: Illustrate with examples such as US–China relations, Middle East peace processes, or EU cooperation.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Soft power

Bipolarity



Deterrence

Conflict refers to situations where actors pursue incompatible goals or interests.

Example: competition for resources such as oil.

Mediation, where a neutral third party helps disputing actors to find common ground.

Hard power relies on coercion such as military force, while soft power relies on attraction and persuasion.

Basic response: Military power comes from armed forces, economic power from wealth and trade, ideological power from shaping beliefs, and diplomatic power from negotiation and alliances. **Value-added response:** For example, US military dominance, China's economic rise, the spread of democratic ideology, and UN diplomacy all interact to shape global politics.

Basic response: Power can generate conflict, but it can also be used to mediate and encourage cooperation. **Value-added response:** US-China trade tensions show conflict driven by power, while negotiations illustrate accommodation. Middle East peace processes demonstrate how power imbalances can fuel conflict but also create opportunities for compromise.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Pilot questions 2.1

Power

Soft power

USA's economic dominance

Ideological power

Bipolarity

Pilot questions 2.2

Conflict

Resources

Economic conflict

Ideological conflict

Loss of lives, refugee crises, or creation of institutions like the UN

Pilot questions 2.3

Accommodation

Mediation



Diplomacy

Camp David Accords

World Trade Organization

Pilot questions 2.4

Power can trigger conflict but also facilitate accommodation

Deterrence

Compromise

US–China relations or Middle East peace processes

Cooperation helps manage tensions and achieve shared goals



Series 3: Systems Theories In Global Politics

3.1 Concept of Systems in International Relations

- 3.1.1 Definition of a system in global politics
- 3.1.2 Characteristics of political systems
- 3.1.3 Importance of systems approach in International Relations

3.2 Types of Systems Theories

- 3.2.1 General systems theory
- 3.2.2 World-systems theory
- 3.2.3 Structural-functional approach

3.3 Levels of Analysis in Systems Theories

- 3.3.1 Individual level analysis
- 3.3.2 State level analysis
- 3.3.3 Systemic level analysis

3.4 Applications of Systems Theories in Global Politics

- 3.4.1 Explaining power distribution and interactions
- 3.4.2 Analysing conflict and cooperation through systems lens
- 3.4.3 Case illustrations of systems theories in practice

Introduction

International Relations can be better understood when viewed through the lens of systems theories, which provide structured ways of analysing how different actors and processes interact within the global arena. A system in this context refers to a set of interconnected parts that function together, such as states, organisations, and individuals operating within the international environment. By applying systems theories, learners can grasp the complexity of global politics and appreciate how patterns of behaviour emerge from these interactions.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the concept of systems in International Relations, explain the major systems theories, and demonstrate how they are applied to analyse global politics.

We shall commence this Series by examining the concept of systems in International Relations, including their definition, characteristics, and importance. Next, we will explore different types of systems theories such as general systems theory, world-systems theory,



and the structural-functional approach. Following that, we will consider the levels of analysis in systems theories, ranging from the individual to the systemic level. Finally, we will conclude by applying systems theories to global politics, showing how they explain power distribution, conflict, cooperation, and practical case illustrations.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 3.1** define the concept of a system in International Relations and explain its characteristics,
- SLO 3.2** describe and differentiate among major systems theories including general systems theory, world-systems theory, and the structural-functional approach,
- SLO 3.3** analyse International Relations using different levels of systems analysis, namely individual, state, and systemic levels, and
- SLO 3.4** apply systems theories to explain power distribution, conflict, cooperation, and illustrate their relevance with practical examples.

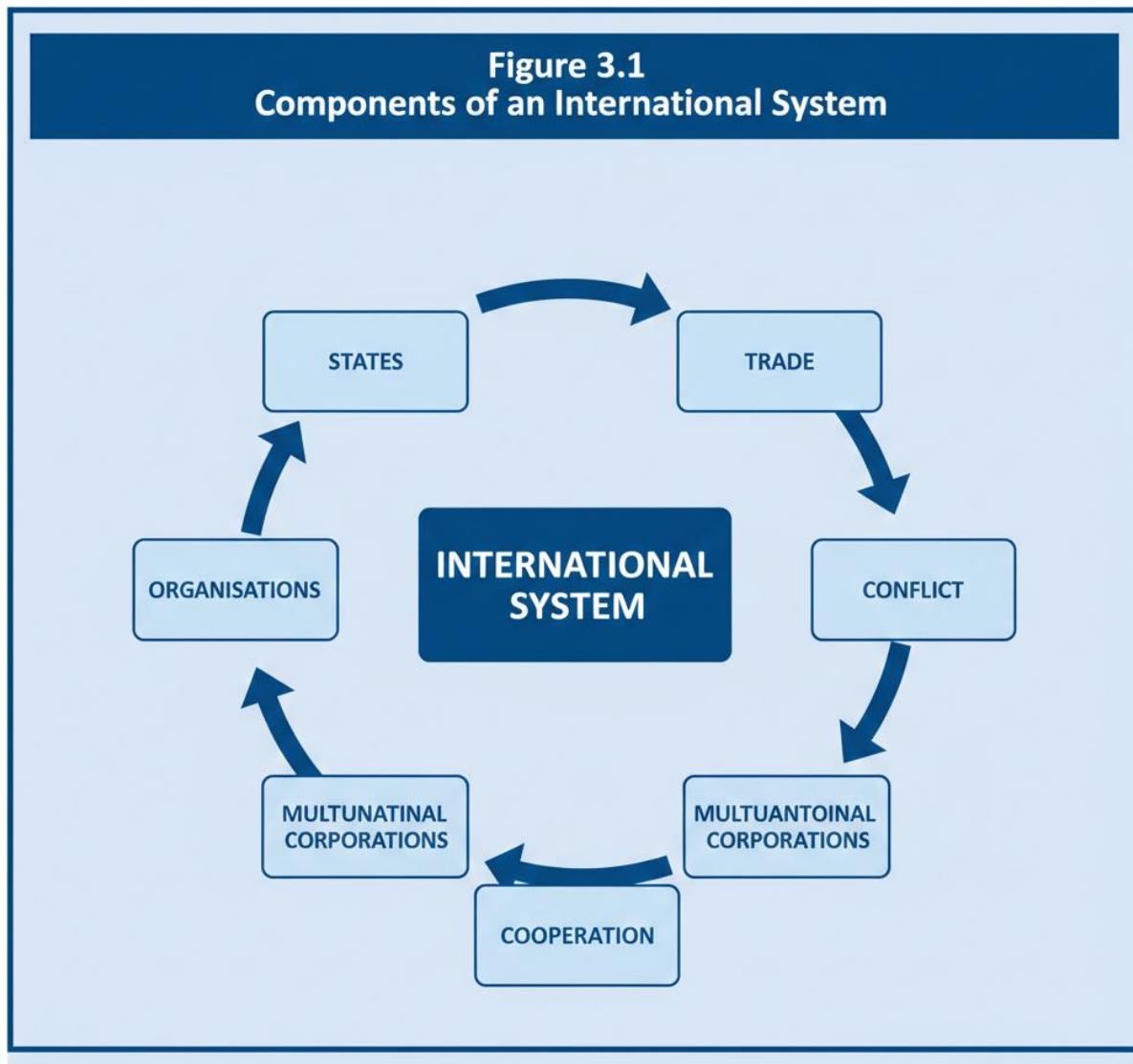
3.1 Concept Of Systems In International Relations

3.1.1 Definition of a system in global politics

A **system** in International Relations refers to a set of interconnected actors and processes that interact within a structured environment. These actors include states, organisations, and individuals, while the processes involve diplomacy, trade, conflict, and cooperation. The system is characterised by patterns of interaction that create order and predictability in global politics.

Fill in the blank: A set of interconnected actors and processes that interact within a structured environment is called a _____.





Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing actors and processes within an international system (states, organisations, individuals, diplomacy, trade, conflict, cooperation) Caption: Figure 3.1 Components of an international system

3.1.2 Characteristics of political systems

Political systems in International Relations have several defining characteristics. They are **interdependent**, meaning actions by one actor affect others. They are **dynamic**, constantly changing due to shifts in power, technology, and ideas. They are also **complex**, involving multiple actors and overlapping interests. Finally, they are **open systems**, influenced by external factors such as globalisation and environmental change.



Fill in the blank: When actions by one actor affect others in the international system, the system is described as _____.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Political Systems in International Relations		
Characteristic	Description	Example
Intereperdence	Actions by one actor affect others	Trade sanctions impacting global markets
Dynamic	Constantly changing	Shifts in alliances
Complex	Multiple actors and overlaping interests	UN negotiations
Open system	Influenced to external factors	Climate change affecting global politics
Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0		

Caption: Table 3.1 Characteristics of political systems in International Relations

3.1.3 Importance of systems approach in International Relations

The **systems approach** is important because it provides a holistic view of global politics. Instead of focusing on individual events or actors, it examines how parts interact within the whole. This helps scholars and policymakers to identify patterns, predict outcomes, and



design strategies for managing conflict and cooperation. For example, systems analysis can explain how economic crises in one region affect political stability worldwide.

Fill in the blank: The approach that examines how parts interact within the whole in International Relations is called the _____ approach.

Box 3.1 Importance of Systems Approach in International Relations

- 1. Provides a holistic view of global politics**
- 2. Identifies patterns of interaction**
- 3. Predicts outcomes of international events**
- 4. Helps design strategies for managing conflict and cooperation**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 3.1 Importance of systems approach in International Relations

Pilot questions 3.1

What term refers to a set of interconnected actors and processes in International Relations?



Which characteristic of political systems means actions by one actor affect others?

Name one external factor that influences political systems as open systems.

What is the approach that examines how parts interact within the whole in International Relations?

Give one example of interdependence in global politics.

3.2 Types Of Systems Theories

3.2.1 General systems theory

General systems theory is an approach that views the international system as a set of interrelated parts working together. It emphasises the importance of relationships and feedback mechanisms among actors. By focusing on the system as a whole, this theory helps explain how changes in one part can affect the entire system.

Fill in the blank: The theory that views the international system as a set of interrelated parts working together is called _____ systems theory.



Figure 3.2 General Systems Theory in International Relations



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Diagram showing interconnected parts of the international system with arrows indicating feedback loops Caption: Figure 3.2 General systems theory in International Relations

3.2.2 World-systems theory

World-systems theory explains global politics and economics by dividing the world into **core**, **semi-periphery**, and **periphery** states. Core states are economically dominant and technologically advanced, semi-periphery states occupy an intermediate position, and periphery states are less developed and often dependent on others. This theory highlights inequality and exploitation in the global system.



Fill in the blank: In world-systems theory, economically dominant and technologically advanced states are referred to as the _____.

Table 3.2 Categories in World-Systems Theory

Category	Description	Example
Core	Economically dominant, technologically advanced	USA, Germany, Japan
Semi-periphery	Intermediate position	Brazil, India, of South Africa
Periphery	Less developed, dependent	Many African and Asian states

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 3.2 Categories in world-systems theory

3.2.3 Structural-functional approach

The **structural-functional approach** views the international system as composed of structures (such as institutions and organisations) that perform functions to maintain stability. For example, the United Nations functions to promote peace and security, while the World Trade Organization functions to regulate trade. This approach highlights how institutions contribute to the functioning of the global system.



Fill in the blank: The United Nations functions to promote _____ and security in the international system.

Box 3.2 Examples of Structures and Functions in International Relations

- **1. United Nations:** promotes peace and security
- **2. World Trade Organization:** regulates trade
- **3. International Monetary Fund:** stabilises economies
- **4. African Union:** fosters regional cooperation

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 3.2 Examples of structures and functions in International Relations

Pilot questions 3.2

Which theory views the international system as a set of interrelated parts working together?

In world-systems theory, what term refers to economically dominant and technologically advanced states?



Name one example of a semi-periphery state in world-systems theory.

What is the structural-functional approach concerned with in International Relations?

Which international organisation functions to regulate trade globally?

3.3 Levels Of Analysis In Systems Theories

3.3.1 Individual level analysis

The **individual level of analysis** focuses on the role of leaders, decision-makers, and influential personalities in shaping international outcomes. It examines how personal beliefs, perceptions, and choices affect foreign policy and global events. For example, the leadership style of figures such as Winston Churchill or Nelson Mandela influenced the course of international politics.

Fill in the blank: The level of analysis that focuses on the role of leaders and decision-makers is called the _____ level.





Plate 3.3 Individual level analysis in practice. Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Image of a political leader addressing an international assembly
Caption: Plate 3.3
Individual level analysis in practice

3.3.2 State level analysis

The **state level of analysis** examines how domestic factors within a country influence its foreign policy. These factors include political institutions, economic conditions, public opinion, and national interests. For instance, the democratic structure of the United States shapes its foreign policy differently from authoritarian regimes.

Fill in the blank: Domestic factors such as political institutions and public opinion are considered at the _____ level of analysis.



**Table 3.3 State Level Factors
Influencing Foreign Policy**

Factor	Description	Example
Political institutions	Structures of governance	Democracy vs authoritarianism
Economic conditions	Wealth, trade, resources	US economic policy
Public opinion	Citizens' views and preferences	Anti-war protests
National interests	Security, prosperity, values	Defense policies
Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0		

Caption: Table 3.3 State level factors influencing foreign policy

3.3.3 Systemic level analysis

The **systemic level of analysis** considers the international system as a whole, focusing on how states interact within structures such as anarchy, alliances, and institutions. It explains patterns of conflict and cooperation by examining power distribution and global norms. For example, the Cold War bipolar system shaped interactions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Fill in the blank: The level of analysis that considers the international system as a whole is called the _____ level.



Box 3.3 Features of Systematic Level Analysis

- 1. Focuses on the international system as a whole**
- 2. Examines structures such as anarchy and alliances**
- 3. Explains patterns of conflict and cooperation**
- 4. Considers power distribution and global norms**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 3.3 Features of systemic level analysis

Pilot questions 3.3

Which level of analysis focuses on the role of leaders and decision-makers?

What domestic factors are considered at the state level of analysis?

Which level of analysis examines the international system as a whole?

Give one example of how public opinion can influence foreign policy.

What historical example illustrates systemic level analysis during the Cold War?



3.4 Applications Of Systems Theories In Global Politics

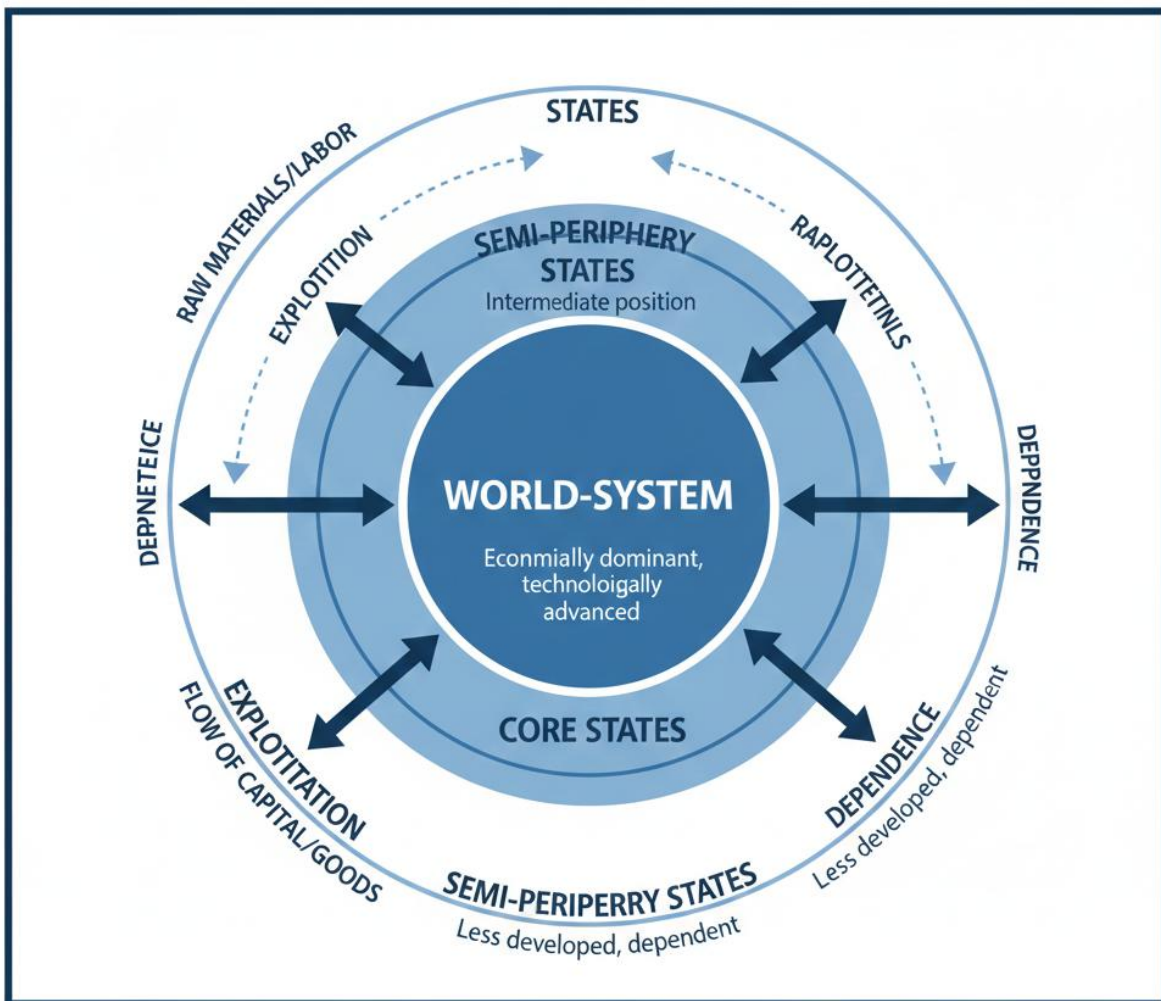
3.4.1 Explaining power distribution and interactions

Systems theories help explain how power is distributed and how states interact within the global system. For example, world-systems theory highlights inequalities between core and periphery states, while general systems theory shows how feedback loops maintain or disrupt balance. These perspectives allow us to see beyond individual actors and focus on the broader structures shaping global politics.

Fill in the blank: World-systems theory highlights inequalities between _____ and periphery states.



Figure 3.4 Power Distribution in World-Systems Theory



Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing power distribution among core, semi-periphery, and periphery states
Caption: Figure 3.4 Power distribution in world-systems theory

3.4.2 Analysing conflict and cooperation through systems lens

Systems theories provide tools for analysing both conflict and cooperation. At the systemic level, conflict may arise from structural imbalances, such as competition between great powers. Cooperation, on the other hand, can be explained through institutions and norms that stabilise interactions. For instance, the United Nations functions as a structure that facilitates cooperation, while Cold War bipolarity illustrates systemic conflict.



Fill in the blank: The United Nations functions as a structure that facilitates _____ among states.

Table 3.4 Conflict and Cooperation Through Systems Lens

Aspect	Systems Perspective	Example
Conflict	Structural imbalances	Cold War bipolar rivalry
Cooperation	Institutions and norms	United Nations peacekeeping

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 3.4 Conflict and cooperation through systems lens

3.4.3 Case illustrations of systems theories in practice

Systems theories can be applied to real-world cases. The Cold War is often analysed through systemic bipolarity, while globalisation is explained through interdependence in general systems theory. Similarly, world-systems theory helps us understand persistent inequalities between developed and developing countries. These case illustrations show the practical relevance of systems theories in explaining global politics.



Fill in the blank: Persistent inequalities between developed and developing countries can be explained using _____ systems theory.

Box 3.4 Case Illustrations of Systems Theories in Practice

- 1. Cold War: systemic bipolarity**
- 2. Globalisation: interdependence in general systems theory**
- 3. Global inequalities: world-systems theory**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 3.4 Case illustrations of systems theories in practice

Pilot questions 3.4

- Which theory highlights inequalities between core and periphery states?
- What role does the United Nations play in systems theories of cooperation?
- Which historical example illustrates systemic bipolarity?
- How does general systems theory explain globalisation?



Which theory helps explain persistent inequalities between developed and developing countries?

Series Summary

This Series introduced you to systems theories as a way of understanding the complexity of global politics. We began by defining the concept of a system in International Relations, highlighting its characteristics and importance. We then explored different types of systems theories, including general systems theory, world-systems theory, and the structural-functional approach. Following that, we examined levels of analysis—individual, state, and systemic—and how each provides unique insights into international interactions. Finally, we applied systems theories to explain power distribution, conflict, cooperation, and illustrated their relevance with practical case studies such as the Cold War, globalisation, and persistent inequalities.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to define systems in International Relations, differentiate among major systems theories, analyse global politics using different levels of analysis, and apply systems perspectives to contemporary issues. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and strengthen your capacity to interpret international events holistically.

Glossary of Terms

Core states: Economically dominant and technologically advanced countries in world-systems theory.

General systems theory: An approach that views the international system as interrelated parts working together.

Individual level analysis: Focuses on the role of leaders and decision-makers in shaping international outcomes.

Open system: A system influenced by external factors such as globalisation or environmental change.

Periphery states: Less developed and dependent countries in world-systems theory.

Semi-periphery states: Countries occupying an intermediate position between core and periphery in world-systems theory.

Structural-functional approach: A perspective that views institutions and organisations as structures performing functions to maintain stability.

Systemic level analysis: Examines the international system as a whole, focusing on structures, power distribution, and norms.

Systems approach: A holistic method of analysing how parts interact within the whole in International Relations.



World-systems theory: A theory that divides the world into core, semi-periphery, and periphery states to explain inequality.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

Which theory views the international system as interrelated parts working together?
(Linked to SLO 3.2)

In world-systems theory, what term refers to less developed and dependent countries?
(Linked to SLO 3.2)

Which level of analysis examines the international system as a whole? (Linked to SLO 3.3)

Short-answer questions

Define a system in International Relations and give one example of its components.
(Linked to SLO 3.1)

Identify one characteristic of political systems and explain it briefly. (Linked to SLO 3.1)

Name one international organisation and describe its function in the structural-functional approach. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the three levels of analysis in systems theories and explain their relevance to International Relations. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

Basic response: Describe individual, state, and systemic levels with examples.

Value-added response: Evaluate how these levels complement each other in explaining complex global events.

Apply systems theories to contemporary global politics, illustrating with at least two case studies. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

Basic response: Explain how systems theories account for power distribution, conflict, and cooperation.

Value-added response: Use examples such as Cold War bipolarity, globalisation, and global inequalities to demonstrate practical relevance.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

General systems theory

Periphery states

Systemic level analysis



A system in International Relations is a set of interconnected actors and processes.
Example: states and organisations interacting through diplomacy.

Interdependence: actions by one actor affect others, such as trade sanctions impacting global markets.

United Nations: functions to promote peace and security.

Basic response: Individual level focuses on leaders, state level on domestic factors, systemic level on global structures. **Value-added response:** Together they explain events like the Cold War, where leadership decisions, domestic politics, and systemic bipolarity all played roles.

Basic response: Systems theories explain power distribution, conflict, and cooperation. **Value-added response:** Cold War bipolarity shows systemic conflict, globalisation illustrates interdependence, and world-systems theory explains persistent inequalities.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Pilot questions 3.1

System

Interdependence

Globalisation or climate change

Systems approach

Trade sanctions impacting global markets

Pilot questions 3.2

General systems theory

Core states

Brazil, India, or South Africa

Structures and functions maintaining stability

World Trade Organization

Pilot questions 3.3

Individual level

Political institutions, economic conditions, public opinion, national interests

Systemic level

Anti-war protests influencing US policy



Cold War bipolarity

Pilot questions 3.4

World-systems theory

Facilitates cooperation

Cold War

Through interdependence and feedback mechanisms

World-systems theory



Series 4: Linkage Politics And Alliance Dynamics

4.1 Concept of Linkage Politics

- 4.1.1 Definition and meaning of linkage politics
- 4.1.2 Types of linkages (domestic–foreign, economic–security, political–social)
- 4.1.3 Importance of linkage politics in International Relations

4.2 Alliance Dynamics in Global Politics

- 4.2.1 Definition and forms of alliances
- 4.2.2 Motivations for alliance formation
- 4.2.3 Alliance behaviour: cooperation, competition, and dissolution

4.3 Interplay of Linkage Politics and Alliances

- 4.3.1 How domestic politics influence alliance commitments
- 4.3.2 Linkages between economic interests and security alliances
- 4.3.3 Case illustrations of linkage politics shaping alliances

4.4 Contemporary Trends and Challenges in Alliance Dynamics

- 4.4.1 Shifts in global alliances in the post-Cold War era
- 4.4.2 Impact of globalisation and regionalism on alliances
- 4.4.3 Emerging challenges: trust deficits, burden-sharing, and multipolarity

Introduction

International Relations is shaped not only by the actions of states but also by the linkages between domestic and foreign politics, and the dynamics of alliances among actors.

Linkage politics refers to the connections between internal political processes and external relations, showing how domestic issues can influence foreign policy and vice versa. **Alliance dynamics** highlight how states cooperate, compete, and sometimes dissolve partnerships in pursuit of security, economic, or political goals.

The aim of this Series is to help you understand the concept of linkage politics, examine the motivations and behaviours of alliances, and analyse how these two dimensions interact to shape global politics.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the concept of linkage politics, its types, and importance. Next, we will study alliance dynamics in global politics, including definitions, motivations, and behaviours. Following that, we will examine the interplay of linkage politics and alliances, with case illustrations of how domestic and foreign linkages shape



alliance commitments. Finally, we will conclude with contemporary trends and challenges in alliance dynamics, focusing on globalisation, regionalism, and emerging issues such as burden-sharing and multipolarity.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 4.1 define and explain the concept of linkage politics and identify its types and importance,

SLO 4.2 describe alliance dynamics in global politics, including definitions, motivations, and behaviours,

SLO 4.3 analyse the interplay between linkage politics and alliances with reference to case illustrations, and

SLO 4.4 evaluate contemporary trends and challenges in alliance dynamics in the context of globalisation and multipolarity.

4.1 Concept Of Linkage Politics

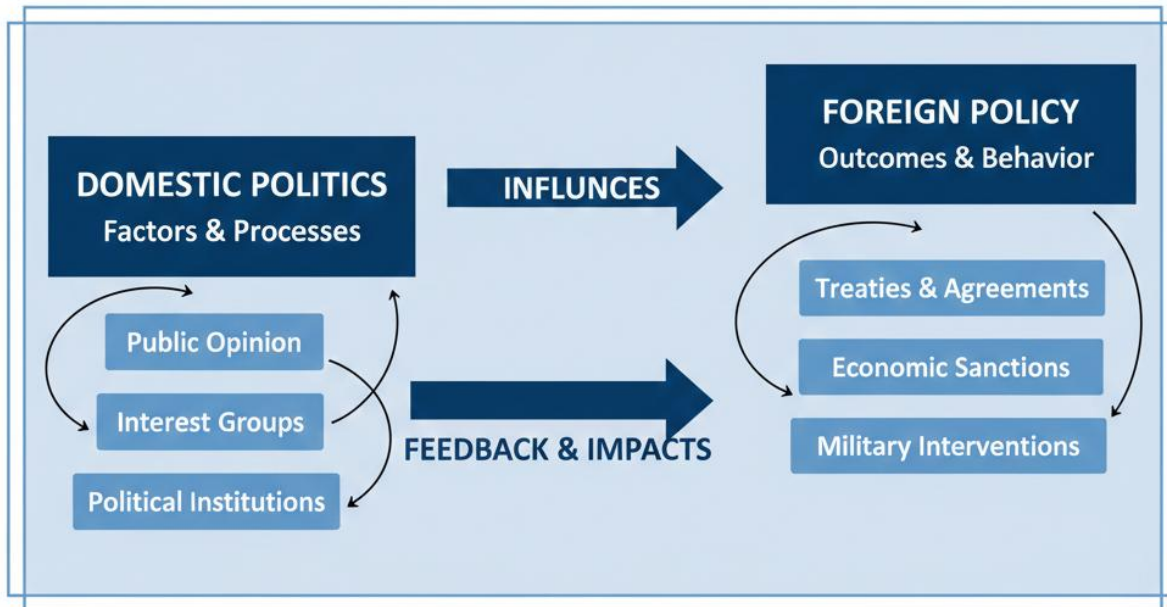
4.1.1 Definition and meaning of linkage politics

Linkage politics refers to the connections between domestic political processes and foreign policy decisions. It highlights how internal issues such as economic conditions, public opinion, or political struggles influence external relations, and how international pressures can in turn shape domestic politics. For example, a government facing economic crisis at home may adjust its foreign policy to secure international aid or trade agreements.

Fill in the blank: The connections between domestic political processes and foreign policy decisions are referred to as _____ politics.



Figure 4.1 Linkage Politics in International Relations



Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing domestic politics linked to foreign policy outcomes Caption: Figure 4.1 Linkage politics in International Relations

4.1.2 Types of linkages (domestic–foreign, economic–security, political–social)

Linkages can take different forms:

Domestic–foreign linkages: Internal political struggles influencing foreign policy, e.g., elections shaping international commitments.

Economic–security linkages: Economic interests tied to security concerns, e.g., oil trade linked to military alliances.



Political-social linkages: Social movements affecting political decisions, e.g., human rights campaigns influencing foreign relations.

Fill in the blank: When elections shape international commitments, this is an example of a _____-foreign linkage.

Table 4.1 Types of Linkages in International Relations		
Type of linkage	Description	Example
Domestic-foreign	Internal politics influencing external relations	Elections shaping foreign policy
Economic-security	Economic interests tied of security concerns	Oil trade linked to military alliances
Political-social	Social movements affecting political decisions	Human rights campaigns influencing diplomacy

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Table 4.1 Types of linkages in International Relations

4.1.3 Importance of linkage politics in International Relations

Linkage politics is important because it demonstrates that foreign policy is not made in isolation. It shows how domestic and international spheres are interconnected, helping us understand why states behave the way they do. Recognising these linkages allows



policymakers to anticipate pressures, manage conflicts, and design strategies that balance internal and external demands.

Fill in the blank: Linkage politics demonstrates that foreign policy is not made in _____.

Box 4.1 Importance of Linkage Politics in International Relations

1. Connects domestic and international spheres
2. Explains state behaviour in global politics
3. Helps anticipate pressures and manage conflicts
4. Guides policy strategies balancing internal and external demands

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 4.1 Importance of linkage politics in International Relations

Pilot questions 4.1

What term refers to the connections between domestic political processes and foreign policy decisions?

When elections shape international commitments, what type of linkage is this?

Give one example of an economic–security linkage.



Why is linkage politics important in International Relations?

Name one way social movements can influence foreign policy.

4.2 Alliance Dynamics In Global Politics

4.2.1 Definition and forms of alliances

An **alliance** in International Relations refers to a formal or informal agreement between states to cooperate for mutual benefit, often in areas of security, economics, or politics. Alliances can take different forms:

Military alliances, such as NATO, focused on collective defence.

Economic alliances, such as the European Union, centred on trade and development.

Political alliances, which involve cooperation on governance or ideological grounds.

Fill in the blank: NATO is an example of a _____ alliance.



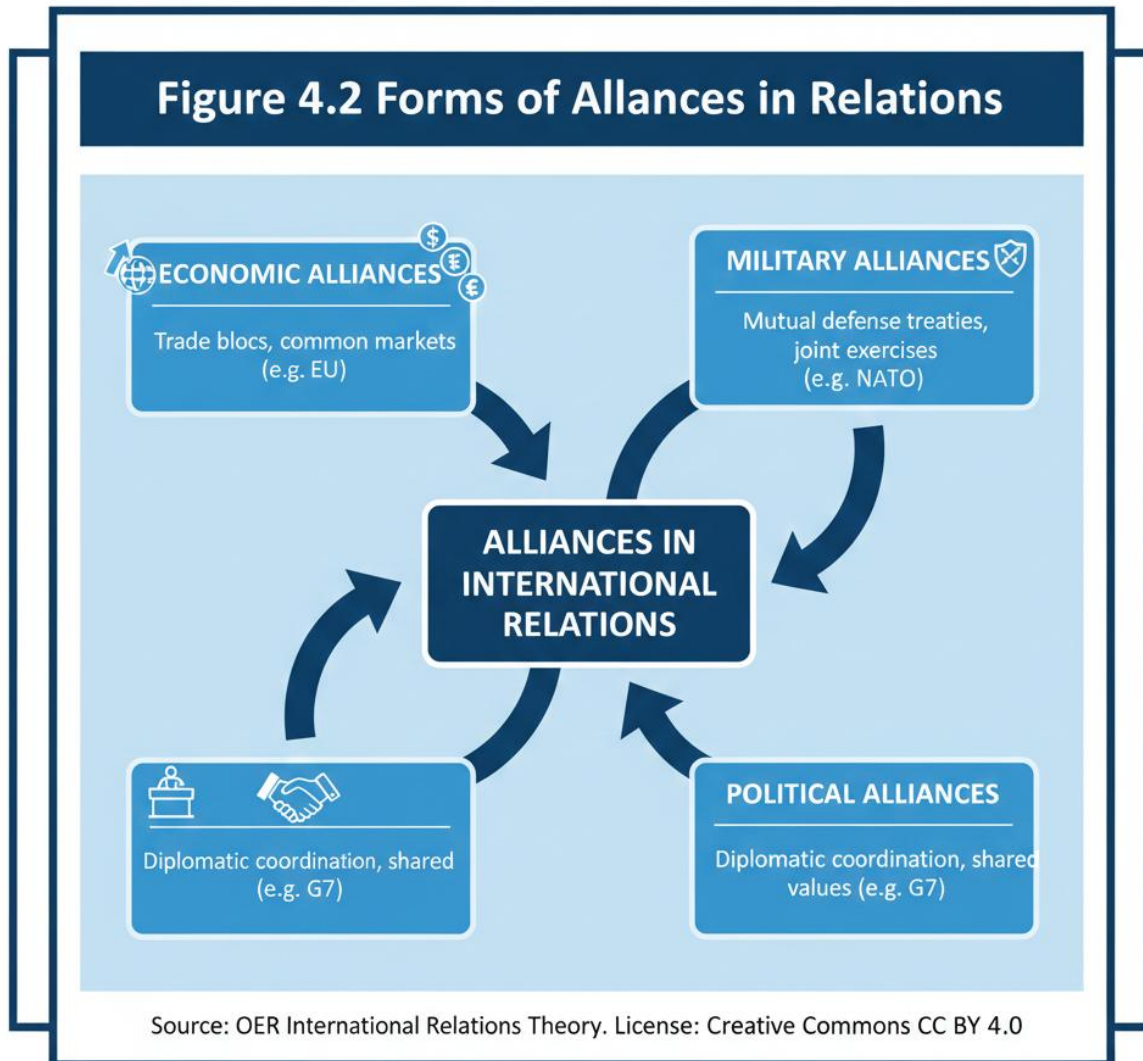


Diagram showing forms of alliances: military, economic, political
Caption: Figure 4.2
Forms of alliances in International Relations

4.2.2 Motivations for alliance formation

States form alliances for several reasons:

Security: To deter aggression and enhance defence capabilities.

Economic interests: To expand trade, access resources, and promote development.

Political and ideological alignment: To strengthen shared values or governance models.



Strategic influence: To increase bargaining power in global politics.

Fill in the blank: States often form alliances to deter aggression and enhance _____ capabilities.

Table 4.2 Motivations for Alliance Formation		
Motivation	Description	Example
Security	Enhance defense and deter aggression	NATO collective defence
Economic	Expand trade and access resources	EU single market
Political/ideological	Strengthen shared values	Democratic alliances
Strategic influence	Increase bargaining power	G7 cooperation

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Caption: Table 4.2 Motivations for alliance formation

4.2.3 Alliance behaviour: cooperation, competition, and dissolution

Alliance behaviour is dynamic and can change over time. Alliances may foster **cooperation**, as seen in joint military exercises or trade agreements. They may also experience **competition**, when members pursue conflicting interests. In some cases,



alliances undergo **dissolution**, either formally or informally, when they no longer serve members' needs. For example, the Warsaw Pact dissolved after the Cold War.

Fill in the blank: The Warsaw Pact dissolved after the _____ War.

Box 4.2 Alliance Behaviours in International Relations

- **Cooperation:** joint military exercises, trade agreements
- **Competition:** conflicting interests within alliances
- **Dssolution:** formal or informal end of alliances

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 4.2 Alliance behaviours in International Relations

Pilot questions 4.2

What term refers to a formal or informal agreement between states to cooperate for mutual benefit?

NATO is an example of what type of alliance?



Name one motivation for alliance formation.

What term describes when alliances undergo a formal or informal end?

Which alliance dissolved after the Cold War?

4.3 Interplay Of Linkage Politics And Alliances

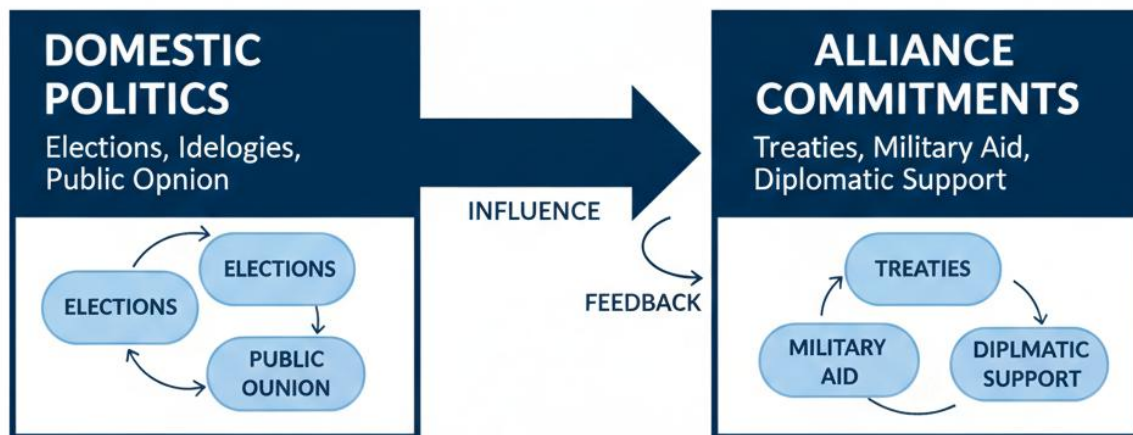
4.3.1 How domestic politics influence alliance commitments

Domestic politics often shape the way states engage in alliances. Electoral outcomes, party ideologies, and public opinion can determine whether governments honour, renegotiate, or withdraw from alliance commitments. For example, changes in leadership may lead to shifts in foreign policy priorities, affecting alliance stability.

Fill in the blank: Electoral outcomes, party ideologies, and public opinion can determine whether governments honour or _____ alliance commitments.



Figure 4.3 Domestic Politics and Alliance Commitments



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Diagram showing domestic politics (elections, ideologies, public opinion) influencing alliance commitments Caption: Figure 4.3 Domestic politics and alliance commitments

4.3.2 Linkages between economic interests and security alliances

Economic interests are often linked to security alliances. States may form or sustain alliances to protect trade routes, secure access to resources, or ensure economic stability. For instance, oil trade agreements can reinforce military alliances, while economic sanctions may weaken alliance cohesion.

Fill in the blank: Oil trade agreements can reinforce _____ alliances.



Table 4.3 Linkages Between Economic Interests and Security Alliances		
	Description	Example
Trade protection	Alliances formed to secure trade routes	Naval alliances securing sea lanes
Resource access	Alliances ensuring access of vital resources	Oil trade agreements reinforcing military ties
Economic sanctions	Measures that strain alliances	Sanctions weakening alliance cohesion
Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0		

Caption: Table 4.3 Linkages between economic interests and security alliances

4.3.3 Case illustrations of linkage politics shaping alliances

Historical and contemporary cases illustrate how linkage politics shape alliances. During the Cold War, domestic ideological commitments in the US and USSR influenced alliance structures such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. More recently, domestic economic concerns in the European Union have shaped debates over burden-sharing in NATO. These examples show how internal pressures and external commitments are interconnected.

Fill in the blank: Domestic ideological commitments during the Cold War influenced alliance structures such as NATO and the _____ Pact.



Box 4.3 Case Illustrations of Linkage Politics Shaping Alliances

- 1. Cold War: ideological commitments shaping NATO and Warsaw Pact
- 2. EU economic concerns: debates over NATO burden-sharing
- 3. US domestic politics: shifts in alliance priorities under different administrations

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 4.3 Case illustrations of linkage politics shaping alliances

Pilot questions 4.3

How can domestic politics influence alliance commitments?

Oil trade agreements can reinforce what type of alliances?

Which two alliances were shaped by ideological commitments during the Cold War?

Give one example of how economic sanctions can affect alliances.

How have EU domestic economic concerns influenced NATO debates?

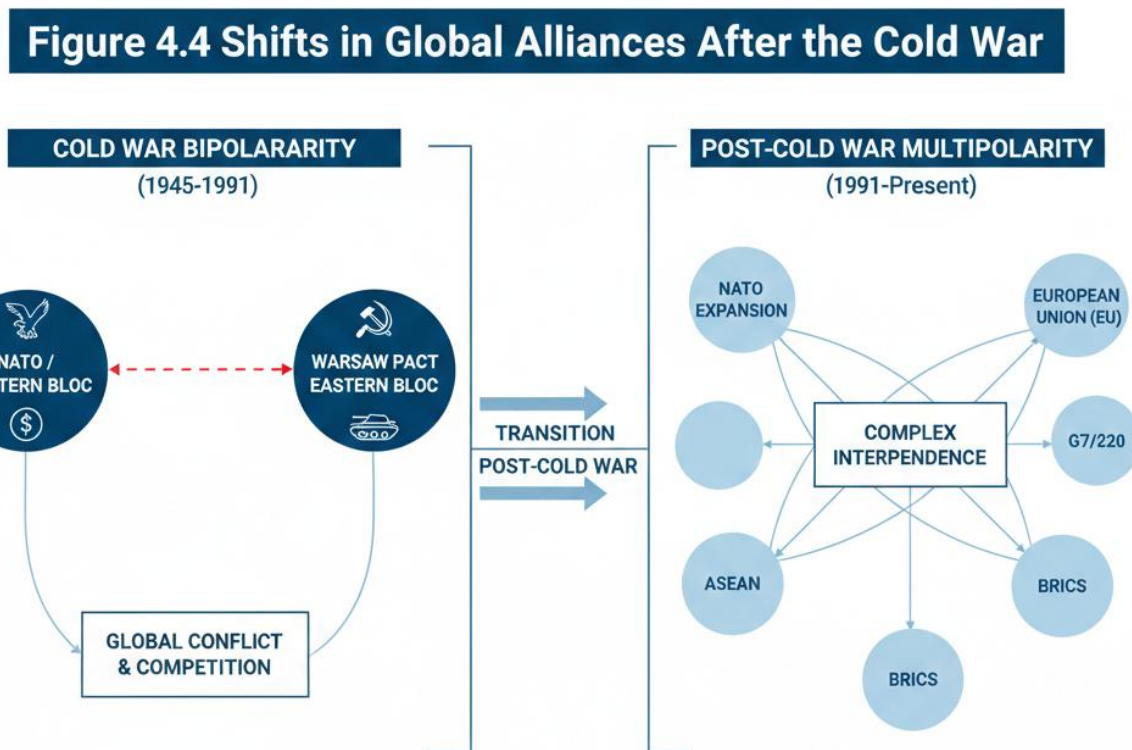


4.4 Contemporary Trends And Challenges In Alliance Dynamics

4.4.1 Shifts in global alliances in the post-Cold War era

After the Cold War, alliances shifted from rigid bipolar structures to more flexible and diverse arrangements. NATO expanded to include Eastern European states, while new regional alliances emerged in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These shifts reflect the changing balance of power and the rise of multipolarity in global politics.

Fill in the blank: After the Cold War, NATO expanded to include _____ European states.



Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Diagram showing alliance shifts from Cold War bipolarity to post-Cold War multipolarity
Caption: Figure 4.4 Shifts in global alliances after the Cold War



4.4.2 Impact of globalisation and regionalism on alliances

Globalisation has increased interdependence, making alliances more complex and multi-dimensional. Economic integration, technological change, and transnational issues like climate change have reshaped alliance priorities. At the same time, regionalism has strengthened alliances within specific regions, such as the African Union or ASEAN, which focus on collective development and security.

Fill in the blank: Regional organisations such as ASEAN and the African Union are examples of _____ in alliance dynamics.

Table 4.4 Impact of Globalisation and Regionalism on Alliances		
Trend	Description	Example
Globalisation	Increased interdependence and multi-dimensional alliances	Climate change cooperation
Regionalism within regions	Strengthened alliances within regions	ASEAN, African Union

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Caption: Table 4.4 Impact of globalisation and regionalism on alliances



4.4.3 Emerging challenges: trust deficits, burden-sharing, and multipolarity

Contemporary alliances face several challenges. **Trust deficits** arise when members doubt each other's commitment. **Burden-sharing** debates occur when some members feel they contribute more than others, as seen in NATO. **Multipolarity** complicates alliances because multiple centres of power create overlapping and sometimes conflicting commitments. These challenges test the resilience and adaptability of alliances in the 21st century.

Fill in the blank: Debates over unequal contributions among alliance members are referred to as _____-sharing issues.

Box 4.4 Emerging Challenges in Alliance Dynamics

1. **Trust deficits: doubts about commitment**
2. **Burden-sharing: unequal contributions among members**
3. **Multipolarity: overlapping and conflicting commitments**

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Caption: Box 4.4 Emerging challenges in alliance dynamics

Pilot questions 4.4

After the Cold War, NATO expanded to include which region?



What trend has increased interdependence and made alliances more complex?

Name one regional organisation that exemplifies regionalism in alliance dynamics.

What term describes debates over unequal contributions among alliance members?

How does multipolarity complicate alliance commitments?

Series Summary

This Series explored how domestic politics and international alliances interact to shape global outcomes. We began by defining **linkage politics**, examining its types—domestic–foreign, economic–security, and political–social—and highlighting its importance in connecting internal and external spheres. We then studied **alliance dynamics**, including definitions, forms, motivations, and behaviours such as cooperation, competition, and dissolution. Following that, we analysed the **interplay of linkage politics and alliances**, showing how domestic politics and economic interests influence alliance commitments, supported by case illustrations from the Cold War, EU burden-sharing debates, and US domestic politics. Finally, we examined **contemporary trends and challenges**, including post-Cold War shifts, the impact of globalisation and regionalism, and emerging issues such as trust deficits, burden-sharing, and multipolarity.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to define linkage politics, explain alliance dynamics, analyse their interplay, and evaluate contemporary challenges in alliance behaviour. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and prepare you to interpret how domestic and international factors jointly shape global politics.

Glossary of Terms

Alliance: A formal or informal agreement between states to cooperate for mutual benefit.

Alliance dissolution: The formal or informal end of an alliance when it no longer serves members' needs.

Burden-sharing: Debates over unequal contributions among alliance members.

Domestic–foreign linkage: Internal political processes influencing external relations.

Economic–security linkage: Economic interests tied to security concerns.

Linkage politics: Connections between domestic political processes and foreign policy decisions.

Multipolarity: A global system with multiple centres of power.

NATO: A military alliance focused on collective defence.



Regionalism: Strengthening alliances within specific regions for collective development and security.

Trust deficit: Doubts among alliance members about each other's commitment.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

What term refers to the connections between domestic political processes and foreign policy decisions? (Linked to SLO 4.1)

NATO is an example of what type of alliance? (Linked to SLO 4.2)

What term describes debates over unequal contributions among alliance members? (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Short-answer questions

Define linkage politics and give one example. (Linked to SLO 4.1)

Identify one motivation for alliance formation and explain it briefly. (Linked to SLO 4.2)

Give one example of how domestic politics can influence alliance commitments. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the interplay of linkage politics and alliances with reference to case illustrations. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Basic response: Explain how domestic politics and economic interests shape alliances.

Value-added response: Use examples such as Cold War ideological commitments, EU burden-sharing debates, and US domestic politics.

Evaluate contemporary trends and challenges in alliance dynamics. (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Basic response: Describe shifts in alliances, globalisation, and regionalism.

Value-added response: Assess emerging challenges such as trust deficits, burden-sharing, and multipolarity with examples.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Linkage politics

Military alliance

Burden-sharing

Linkage politics refers to connections between domestic politics and foreign policy.

Example: elections shaping international commitments.



Security: states form alliances to deter aggression and enhance defence capabilities.

Electoral outcomes may lead governments to renegotiate or withdraw from alliances.

Basic response: Domestic politics and economic interests shape alliances. **Value-added response:** Cold War ideological commitments shaped NATO and Warsaw Pact; EU economic concerns influenced NATO burden-sharing; US domestic politics shifted alliance priorities.

Basic response: Alliances shifted after the Cold War, globalisation increased interdependence, and regionalism strengthened local alliances. **Value-added response:** Trust deficits, burden-sharing debates in NATO, and multipolarity complicating commitments illustrate contemporary challenges.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

Pilot questions 4.1

Linkage politics

Domestic–foreign linkage

Oil trade linked to military alliances

It shows foreign policy is not made in isolation

Human rights campaigns influencing diplomacy

Pilot questions 4.2

Alliance

Military alliance

Security, economic, political, or strategic influence

Dissolution

Warsaw Pact

Pilot questions 4.3

Domestic politics can honour, renegotiate, or withdraw from commitments

Military alliances

NATO and Warsaw Pact

Sanctions weakening alliance cohesion

EU economic concerns shaped NATO burden-sharing debates

Pilot questions 4.4

Eastern European states



Globalisation

ASEAN or African Union

Burden-sharing

Multipolarity creates overlapping and conflicting commitments



Series 5: Models, Games, And Simulation In International Relations

5.1 Concept of Models in International Relations

- 5.1.1 Definition and purpose of models
- 5.1.2 Types of models (descriptive, explanatory, predictive, normative)
- 5.1.3 Importance of models in analysing global politics

5.2 Game Theory and Strategic Interaction

- 5.2.1 Meaning and principles of game theory
- 5.2.2 Types of games (zero-sum, non-zero-sum, cooperative, non-cooperative)
- 5.2.3 Applications of game theory in International Relations (arms races, trade negotiations, conflict resolution)

5.3 Simulation in International Relations

- 5.3.1 Definition and role of simulation
- 5.3.2 Types of simulations (role-play, computer-based, scenario-building)
- 5.3.3 Benefits and limitations of simulation in teaching and research

5.4 Case Illustrations of Models, Games, and Simulation in Practice

- 5.4.1 Use of models in predicting foreign policy outcomes
- 5.4.2 Game theory applied to Cold War nuclear deterrence
- 5.4.3 Simulation exercises in diplomacy and conflict management

Introduction

International Relations often involves complex decision-making where states and other actors must anticipate the actions of others. To better understand these dynamics, scholars and practitioners use **models, games, and simulations**. Models provide simplified representations of reality to explain or predict outcomes. Game theory offers tools to analyse strategic interactions where actors' choices depend on expectations of others. Simulation exercises allow participants to role-play scenarios, test strategies, and explore possible futures in a controlled environment.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the use of models, games, and simulations in International Relations, explain their theoretical foundations, and demonstrate their practical applications in analysing global politics.



We shall commence this Series by examining the concept of models in International Relations, including their definition, types, and importance. Next, we will explore game theory and strategic interaction, focusing on types of games and their applications. Following that, we will study simulation in International Relations, including its types, benefits, and limitations. Finally, we will conclude with case illustrations of how models, games, and simulations have been applied in practice, such as predicting foreign policy outcomes, analysing Cold War nuclear deterrence, and conducting diplomatic simulations.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 5.1 define and explain the concept of models in International Relations and identify their types and importance,

SLO 5.2 describe the principles of game theory, differentiate types of games, and analyse their applications in global politics,

SLO 5.3 explain the role of simulation in International Relations, identify its types, and evaluate its benefits and limitations, and

SLO 5.4 apply models, games, and simulations to practical case illustrations in diplomacy, conflict management, and foreign policy analysis.

5.1 Concept Of Models In International Relations

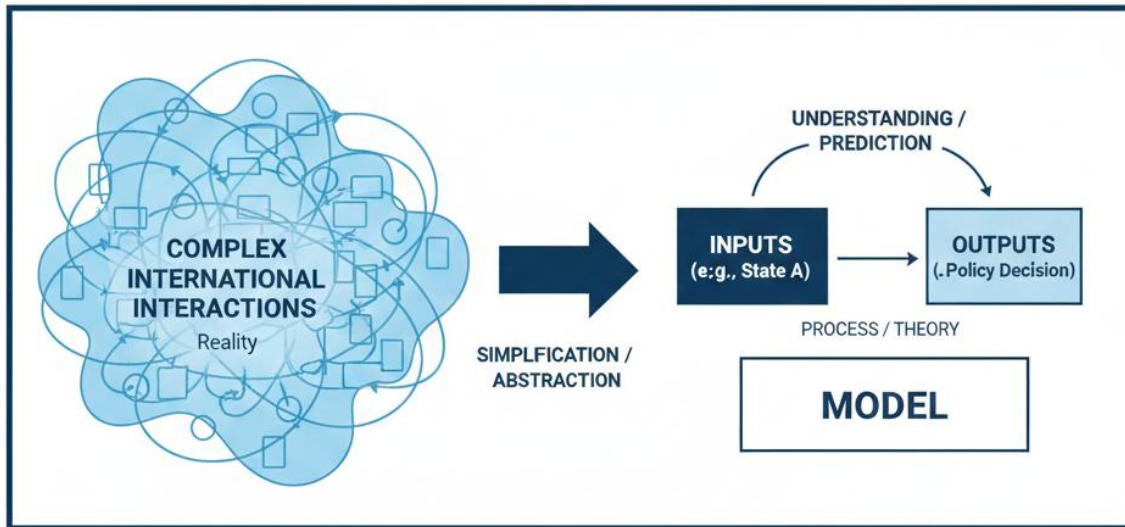
5.1.1 Definition and purpose of models

A **model** in International Relations is a simplified representation of reality used to explain, predict, or evaluate global political phenomena. Models help scholars and policymakers understand complex interactions by focusing on key variables and relationships. For example, balance-of-power models explain how states align to prevent dominance by any single actor.

Fill in the blank: A simplified representation of reality used to explain or predict global political phenomena is called a _____.



Figure 5.1 Models as Simplified Representations in International Relations



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Diagram showing a model as a simplified representation of complex international interactions Caption: Figure 5.1 Models as simplified representations in International Relations

5.1.2 Types of models (descriptive, explanatory, predictive, normative)

Models can be classified into different types:

Descriptive models: Provide a picture of how things are, e.g., mapping alliances.

Explanatory models: Clarify why events occur, e.g., explaining causes of war.



Predictive models: Forecast future outcomes, e.g., predicting election impacts on foreign policy.

Normative models: Suggest how things ought to be, e.g., proposing fair trade systems.

Fill in the blank: Models that forecast future outcomes are called _____ models.

Table 5.1 Types of Models in International Relations			
Type		Description	Example
Descriptive	Provide a picture of how things are		Mapping alliances
Explanatory	Clarify why events occur	Causes of war	Election impacts on foreign policy
Normative	Suggest how things ought to be	Election impacts on foreign policy	Fair trade systems

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Caption: Table 5.1 Types of models in International Relations

5.1.3 Importance of models in analysing global politics

Models are important because they simplify complexity, highlight relationships, and provide tools for analysis. They help scholars test theories, policymakers design strategies,



and students understand global politics. For instance, predictive models can assist governments in preparing for potential conflicts or economic crises.

Fill in the blank: Models are important because they simplify _____ and highlight relationships in International Relations.

Box 5.1 Importance of Models in International Relations

- **1. Simplify complexity in global politics**
- **2. Highlight relationships among actors and processes**
- **3. Provide tools for analysis and theory testing**
- **4. Assist policymakers in designing strategies**

Source: OER International Relations Theory. License: Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

Caption: Box 5.1 Importance of models in International Relations

Pilot questions 5.1

What term refers to a simplified representation of reality used to explain or predict global phenomena?

Which type of model clarifies why events occur?



What type of model forecasts future outcomes?

Give one example of a descriptive model in International Relations.

Why are models important in analysing global politics?

5.2 Game Theory And Strategic Interaction

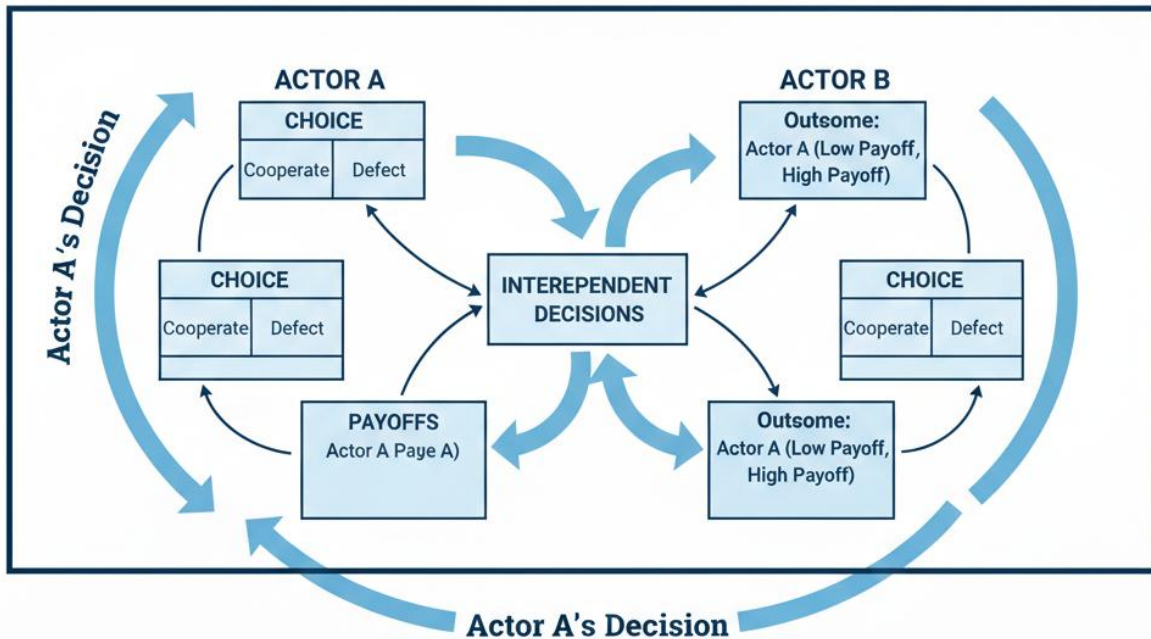
5.2.1 Meaning and principles of game theory

Game theory is a mathematical and analytical framework used to study strategic interactions among actors, where the outcome for each participant depends on the choices of others. In International Relations, it helps explain how states anticipate rivals' actions and adjust their strategies accordingly. Key principles include rationality, interdependence of choices, and the pursuit of optimal outcomes.

Fill in the blank: A mathematical framework used to study strategic interactions among actors is called _____ theory.



Figure 5.2 Principles of Game Theory in International Relations



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Diagram showing two actors making choices with outcomes depending on each other's decisions Caption: Figure 5.2 Principles of game theory in International Relations

5.2.2 Types of games (zero-sum, non-zero-sum, cooperative, non-cooperative)

Game theory distinguishes between different types of games:

Zero-sum games: One actor's gain is another's loss (e.g., territorial disputes).

Non-zero-sum games: Both actors can gain or lose together (e.g., trade agreements).

Cooperative games: Actors coordinate strategies for mutual benefit (e.g., climate accords).



Non-cooperative games: Actors pursue individual interests without binding agreements (e.g., arms races).

Fill in the blank: In a _____-sum game, one actor's gain is another's loss.

Table 5.2 Types of Games in International Relations

Type of Game	Description	Example
Zero-sum	One actor's gain of another's loss	Territorial disputes
Non-zero-sum	Both actors can gain or lose together	Trade agreements
Cooperative	Actors coordinate strategies for mutual benefit	Climate accords
Non-cooperative	Actors pursue individual interests	Arms races

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Caption: Table 5.2 Types of games in International Relations

5.2.3 Applications of game theory in International Relations (arms races, trade negotiations, conflict resolution)

Game theory is applied to various scenarios in global politics:

Arms races: Explains how states escalate military spending to avoid vulnerability.



Trade negotiations: Shows how bargaining strategies affect agreements.

Conflict resolution: Helps design strategies where cooperation yields better outcomes than conflict.

Fill in the blank: Game theory explains how states escalate military spending to avoid vulnerability in _____ races.

Box 5.2 Applications of Game Theory in International Relations

1. **Arms races: escalation of military spending**
2. **Trade negotiations: bargaining strategies shaping agreements**
3. **Conflict resolution: cooperation yielding better outcomes than conflict**

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Caption: Box 5.2 Applications of game theory in International Relations

Pilot questions 5.2



What term refers to the mathematical framework used to study strategic interactions among actors?

In a zero-sum game, what happens when one actor gains?

Give one example of a cooperative game in International Relations.

How does game theory explain arms races?

Name one application of game theory in conflict resolution.

5.3 Simulation In International Relations

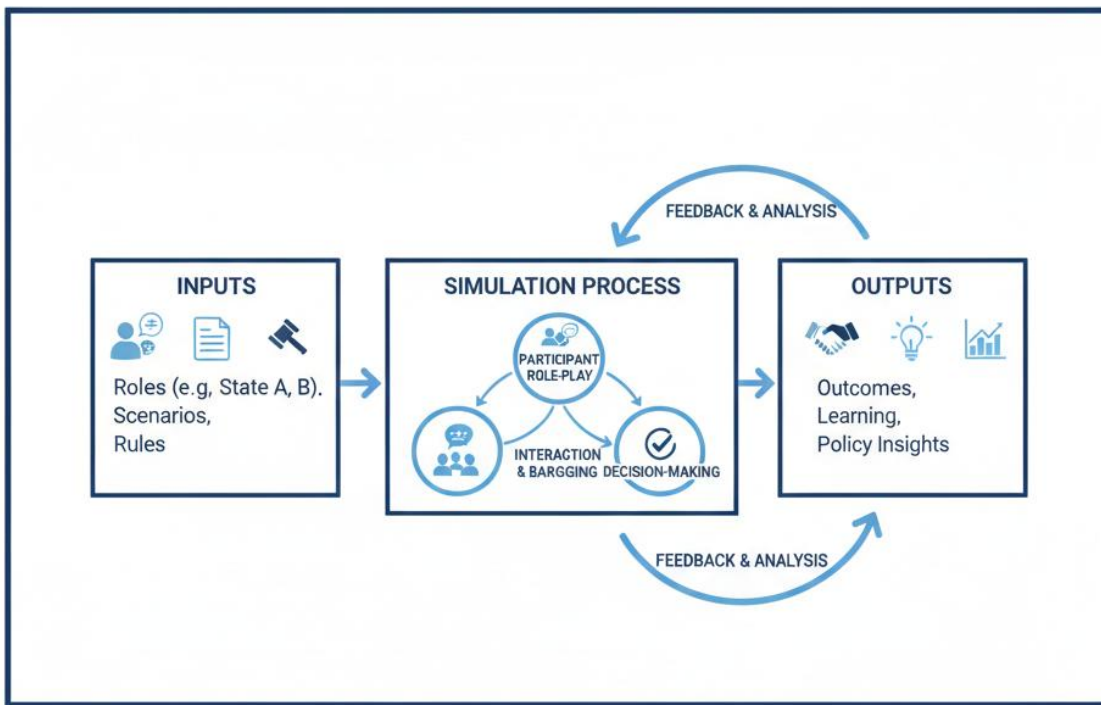
5.3.1 Definition and role of simulation

A **simulation** in International Relations is a structured exercise that imitates real-world political scenarios to help participants understand complex dynamics. It allows students, scholars, and policymakers to role-play situations, test strategies, and explore possible outcomes in a controlled environment. Simulations are widely used in teaching diplomacy, crisis management, and negotiation.

Fill in the blank: A structured exercise that imitates real-world political scenarios is called a ____.



Figure 5.3 Simulation in International Relations



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Diagram showing participants role-playing in a diplomatic negotiation simulation
Caption: Figure 5.3 Simulation in International Relations

5.3.2 Types of simulations (role-play, computer-based, scenario-building)

Simulations can take different forms:

Role-play simulations: Participants act as diplomats, leaders, or negotiators in a given scenario.

Computer-based simulations: Use software to model international systems and predict outcomes.



Scenario-building simulations: Construct hypothetical situations to explore possible futures, such as climate crisis negotiations.

Fill in the blank: When participants act as diplomats or negotiators in a given scenario, this is called a _____ simulation.

Table 5.3 Types of Simulations in International Relations		
Type	Description	Example
Role-play	Participants act as diplomats or leaders	Model UN debates
Computer-based	Software models international systems	Conflict prediction software
Scenario-building	Hypothetical situations to explore futures	Climate crisis negotiations

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Caption: Table 5.3 Types of simulations in International Relations

5.3.3 Benefits and limitations of simulation in teaching and research

Simulations offer several benefits: they make learning interactive, enhance problem-solving skills, and allow experimentation without real-world risks. However, they also have



limitations: they may oversimplify reality, depend on participant engagement, and sometimes fail to capture unpredictable human behaviour.

Fill in the blank: Simulations make learning interactive but may oversimplify _____.

Box 5.3 Benefits and Limitations of Simulation in International Relations

Benefits

- Interactive learning
- Enhanced problem-solving skills
- Safe experimentation with strategies

Limitations

- Oversimplification of reality
- Dependence on participant engagement
- Difficulty capturing unpredictable human behaviour

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Caption: Box 5.3 Benefits and limitations of simulation in International Relations

Pilot questions 5.3

What term refers to a structured exercise that imitates real-world political scenarios?

When participants act as diplomats in a given scenario, what type of simulation is this?

Name one benefit of using simulations in International Relations.



What is one limitation of simulations?

Give an example of a scenario-building simulation.

5.4 Case Illustrations Of Models, Games, And Simulation In Practice

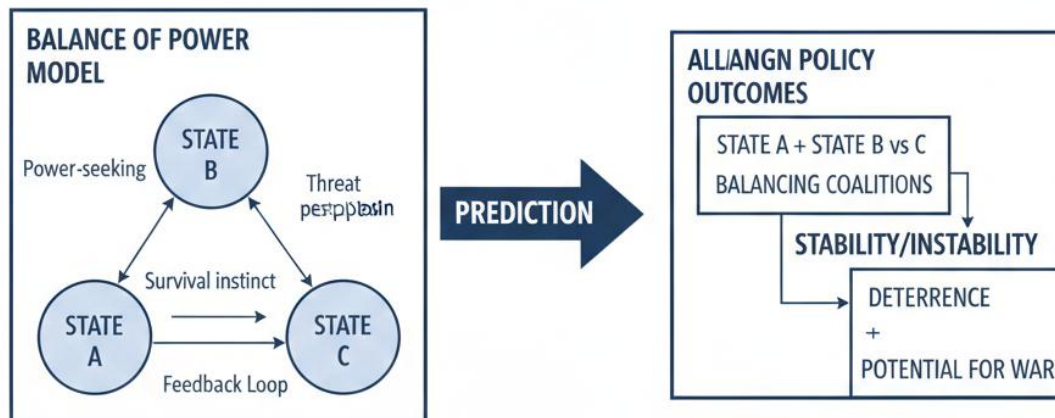
5.4.1 Use of models in predicting foreign policy outcomes

Models have been used to predict foreign policy behaviour by simplifying complex variables. For example, balance-of-power models help forecast how states align in response to rising powers. Similarly, economic models can predict how trade disputes influence diplomatic relations.

Fill in the blank: Balance-of-power models help forecast how states align in response to _____ powers.



Figure 5.4 Models Predicting Foreign Policy Outcomes



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Diagram showing balance-of-power model predicting state alignments Caption: Figure 5.4 Models predicting foreign policy outcomes

5.4.2 Game theory applied to Cold War nuclear deterrence

Game theory was famously applied to the Cold War nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. The concept of **Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)** illustrated a non-cooperative game where both sides avoided nuclear war because launching an attack would guarantee devastating retaliation.

Fill in the blank: The Cold War nuclear standoff illustrated the concept of Mutually Assured _____.



Table 5.4 Game Theory Applied to Cold War Nuclear Deterrence

Concept	Description	Example
Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)	Both sides avoid nuclear war de guaranteed retaliation	US–USSR nuclear standoff
Prisoner's Dielema	Cooperation yields better outcomes, but mirsust leads of conflict	Arms control negotiation negotiations

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Caption: Table 5.4 Game theory applied to Cold War nuclear deterrence

5.4.3 Simulation exercises in diplomacy and conflict management

Simulation exercises are widely used in diplomacy and conflict management training. For example, **Model United Nations (MUN)** allows students to role-play as diplomats, negotiating resolutions to global issues. Governments and organisations also use computer-based simulations to test crisis responses and explore negotiation strategies in peace processes.

Fill in the blank: Model United Nations (MUN) is an example of a _____ simulation exercise.



Box 5.4 Simulation Exercises in Diplomacy and Conflict Management

- **1. Model United Nations: role-play-diplomacy**
- **2. Government crisis simulations: testing responses to emergencies**
- **3. Peace process simulations: exploring negotiation strategies**

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Caption: Box 5.4 Simulation exercises in diplomacy and conflict management

Pilot questions 5.4

Balance-of-power models help forecast how states align in response to what?

What concept illustrated the Cold War nuclear standoff?

Which game theory scenario explains mistrust in arms control negotiations?

Model United Nations is an example of what type of simulation?

Give one example of how governments use simulations in conflict management.



Series Summary

This Series examined how models, games, and simulations are used to understand and analyse International Relations. We began with the concept of **models**, defining them as simplified representations of reality, exploring their types—descriptive, explanatory, predictive, and normative—and highlighting their importance in simplifying complexity and guiding analysis. Next, we studied **game theory**, focusing on its meaning, principles, types of games (zero-sum, non-zero-sum, cooperative, non-cooperative), and applications in arms races, trade negotiations, and conflict resolution. We then explored **simulation**, defining its role in imitating real-world scenarios, identifying types such as role-play, computer-based, and scenario-building, and evaluating its benefits and limitations. Finally, we illustrated practical applications of models, games, and simulations, including balance-of-power models predicting foreign policy outcomes, game theory applied to Cold War nuclear deterrence, and simulation exercises like Model United Nations and government crisis training.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to define and classify models, apply game theory to strategic interactions, evaluate the role of simulations, and connect these tools to real-world case illustrations.

Glossary of Terms

Balance-of-power model: A model predicting how states align to prevent dominance by one actor.

Game theory: A mathematical framework for studying strategic interactions among actors.

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD): Cold War concept where nuclear war was avoided due to guaranteed retaliation.

Normative model: A model suggesting how things ought to be.

Predictive model: A model forecasting future outcomes.

Prisoner's Dilemma: A game theory scenario showing mistrust leading to suboptimal outcomes.

Role-play simulation: A simulation where participants act as diplomats or leaders.

Scenario-building simulation: A simulation constructing hypothetical situations to explore possible futures.

Simulation: A structured exercise imitating real-world political scenarios.

Zero-sum game: A game where one actor's gain is another's loss.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions



What term refers to a simplified representation of reality used to explain or predict global phenomena? (Linked to SLO 5.1)

In a zero-sum game, what happens when one actor gains? (Linked to SLO 5.2)

Model United Nations is an example of what type of simulation? (Linked to SLO 5.3)

Short-answer questions

Define game theory and give one principle. (Linked to SLO 5.2)

Identify one benefit and one limitation of simulations in International Relations. (Linked to SLO 5.3)

Give one example of how models can predict foreign policy outcomes. (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the types of models in International Relations and explain their relevance. (Linked to SLO 5.1)

Basic response: Describe descriptive, explanatory, predictive, and normative models with examples.

Value-added response: Evaluate how these models complement each other in analysing global politics.

Apply game theory and simulation to case illustrations in International Relations. (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Basic response: Explain Cold War nuclear deterrence and Model UN as examples.

Value-added response: Assess how game theory and simulations provide insights into both conflict and cooperation.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Model

Another actor loses

Role-play simulation

Game theory is a mathematical framework for studying strategic interactions.

Principle: rationality.

Benefit: interactive learning. Limitation: oversimplification of reality.

Balance-of-power models predict how states align in response to rising powers.

Basic response: Descriptive models show reality, explanatory clarify causes, predictive forecast outcomes, normative suggest ideals. **Value-added response:**



Together they provide a comprehensive toolkit for analysing and guiding global politics.

Basic response: Cold War nuclear deterrence illustrates game theory; Model UN illustrates simulation. **Value-added response:** Game theory explains strategic mistrust and cooperation, while simulations train participants in negotiation and crisis management.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

Pilot questions 5.1

Model
Explanatory model
Predictive model
Mapping alliances
They simplify complexity and highlight relationships

Pilot questions 5.2

Game theory
Another actor loses
Climate accords
States escalate military spending to avoid vulnerability
Designing cooperative strategies in peace negotiations

Pilot questions 5.3

Simulation
Role-play simulation
Interactive learning
Oversimplification of reality
Climate crisis negotiations

Pilot questions 5.4

Rising powers
Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)
Prisoner's Dilemma
Role-play simulation



Crisis simulations to test emergency responses



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