

# Introduction

## GLOBAL INTERACTIONS AND GLOBAL TENSIONS



Fur Pelts for Sale

Flicker user Joe Ross, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/joeross/6743972159>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>.

In rural Wisconsin, near to one of our homes, lives a middle-aged man named Jim. Jim is a trapper. He traps raccoons, beavers, and coyotes, among other animals. When working, he prefers to wear camouflage outfits bought from a local superstore that caters to farmers, a Farm and Fleet, and he drives a highly accessorized Ranger all-terrain vehicle (ATV) that is the envy of many of his neighbors.

At one level, Jim would seem cut off from the rest of the world. Rural Wisconsin is not cosmopolitan New York, Shanghai, Paris, or Rio de Janeiro. Jim's town has a few thousand residents; it is fairly isolated. The main issues of the day are local, such as whether to issue a bond for a new public school in the area. Jim lives off the land. But ask Jim about trapping, as one of us did recently, and he was quick to answer that business was really bad. Why? His answer opined on the state of the economy in

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After finishing this Introduction, you should be able to:

- Define international studies.
- Summarize the relationship between the concepts of global “interactions” and “tensions.”
- Explain why international studies uses inside-out and outside-in approaches.
- Define each of the four forces that shape global interactions.
- Identify the utility of international studies for you.

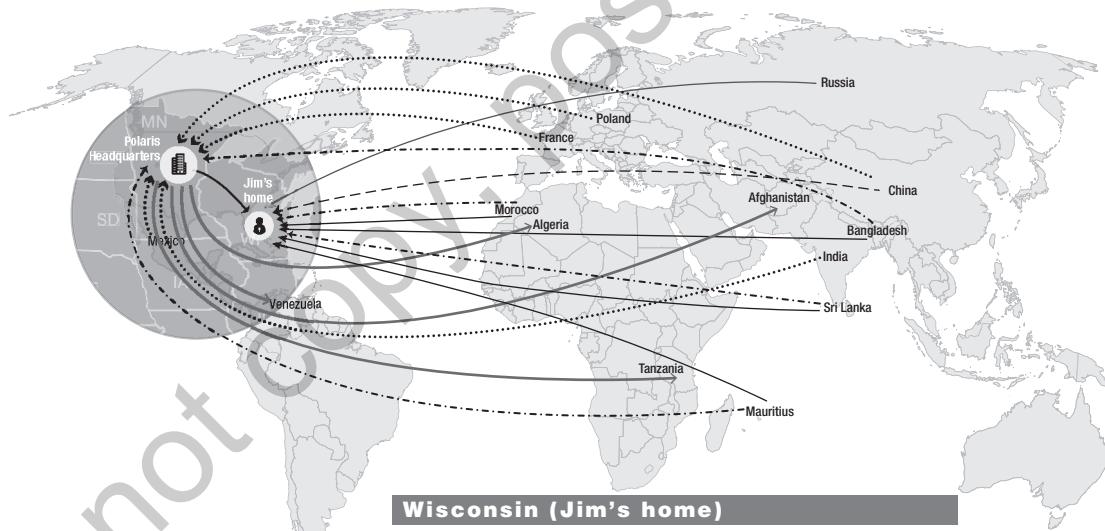
Russia and China. It turns out the price of fur pelts depends on demand in those countries, which in turn is connected to the global price of oil (in Russia) and global consumer demand (in China).

The global connections do not stop there. The company Polaris makes Jim's Ranger. Based near Minneapolis, Minnesota, Polaris is a manufacturer of snowmobiles, ATVs, motorcycles, and a variety of other motorized equipment. Polaris conducts business worldwide. The company has distributors in countries on all five continents, from Algeria and Afghanistan to Tanzania and Venezuela. Although its main manufacturing sites are in the United States, Polaris also makes vehicles in India, China, France, Mexico, and Poland. At our local Farm and Fleet, the clothing for sale—socks, T-shirts, dress shirts, hats, and boots, in addition to Jim's waders and camouflage jacket—is made in factories around the world, from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to Morocco and Mauritius.

The reality is that our lives—even the most local ones—are embedded in international networks (see Figure Intro.1). This is the case in North America and other parts of what scholars call the "Global North," which in addition to Canada and the United States loosely includes most of Europe and the most developed parts of East Asia, in particular, Japan. Not only are the vehicles we drive, the oil with which we supply them, and the clothes we wear often sourced from around the world, but so is much of the food and drink that we consume. Our colleges and universities attract students from around the world, and students in turn elect to study in many parts of the globe. Our phones instantly connect us to a global online supply of information.

**FIGURE INTRO.1**

Mapping Our International Networks



**Wisconsin (Jim's home)**

- Price for Jim's pelts determined by global price of oil
- Maker of Farm and Fleet gear
- Polaris, maker of Jim's ATV
- - - → Main importer of Jim's pelts

**Minneapolis, MN (Polaris Headquarters)**

- ..... → Polaris manufacturers
- Polaris distributors
- - - → garments manufactured to be sold at Farm and Fleet

The situation is similar in the Global South. In the most dynamic economies, such as in China, India, and Brazil, people's lives are buzzing with both global and local influences. On the one hand, their consumer goods are the same as those in the United States. Indians use cars, motorcycles, computers, refrigerators, and kettles made in India and other countries. Indians watch television with stations from around the world. Their news is both global and local, as it is for those of us in the United States.

Many citizens in these countries own cell phones or smartphones. In fact, Apple recently sold more than 60 million iPhones every three months, and more were sold in China than in any other country.<sup>1</sup> Citizens all over the Global South thus have access to content on websites like Facebook and Twitter that is generated from people and organizations around the world. Mobile phones around the world are not just for watching cats playing piano. They have become

essential tools in the management of everyday life. In Kenya, for example, mobile banking—whereby even at a stall in an open market you can pay with a mobile phone for rice or fruit—has taken the country by storm. The mobile money transfer system initially developed in East Africa now has spread to countries in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and other parts of Africa. This is just one example.

The field of international studies pays particular attention to these forms of global interconnections. They are part of our lives—and people's lives all around the world—in many visible and invisible ways. Start to ask questions about the objects, the tools, and the information around you in your daily life, and you will see very quickly how internationally embedded your everyday life is. The same is true today for people around the world. The dense, deep, and constant global interactions are at the heart of international studies.

International studies, however, does not consider our world and the interactions that structure it as uniformly positive. Our interconnections also produce tension, conflict, and new forms of domination. Consider information technology. The power and reach of information technology provide governments with a newfound ability to surveil, control, and censor. While mobile banking has taken off in Kenya, in nearby Ethiopia, the government has purchased technology that allows it to spy on opposition political forces. The international connections run deeper. An Italian company, Hacking Team, sold it to Ethiopia, and we know this because other global actors, in this case Wikileaks, published a record of the relationship between the private Italian technology company and the Ethiopian government.<sup>2</sup>

International studies recognizes that global interactions can be fraught with tension and bad outcomes. The power of states to exploit information technology to control and spy is one example. Another is employment dislocation. As global economic interdependence deepens, companies find it easier to relocate factories to places where production is cheaper. That might lower costs for consumers, but factory relocation often puts people out of work. In our globally connected world, migration has become easier. Yet migrants who look different and have different customs from the majority population in a country can become targets of resentment and hatred. Our interconnected



M-Pesa

Flickr user Rosenfeld Media, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/rosenfeldmedia/7171804334>. Licensed under CC BY 2.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>.

world creates many new possibilities, but it also creates many new tensions and problems, often in invisible and complex ways.

These examples point to the interconnected and complicated world in which we live. It is a world marked by **globalization**, which through markets and information shrinks the space that separates people and connects them through products and ideas. It is a world with tremendous possibility and opportunity, in which technological advances and the flows of information, people, and material can improve and even transform lives. But it is also a world with winners and losers, where global markets and other global forces can negatively impact lives and reinforce inequality.

As a body of thought and teaching, international studies invites students to learn about and, in particular, to analyze and make sense of our complex world. At the same time, international studies can seem vague. What is international studies? What is an international studies approach? In this book, we develop a new approach, one that we hope will help you understand your world better and provide you with the analytic foundations for a lifetime of learning. It is that framework and the core ideas in international studies that we detail in the remainder of the chapter.

---

## A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

---

**International studies** is the study of global interactions, the tensions those interactions produce, and the forces and actors that play a role in them. **Global interactions** are the myriad ways in which people, things, information, and ideas intersect in our world. Global interactions are the raw material of international studies. By focusing on global interactions, we can start asking a specific set of questions about issues or events taking place in the world. Who and what is interacting? From where do those interactions come? What are the policies and institutions that facilitate and govern those interactions?

International studies is concerned with the **global tensions** that result from these interactions. Our world and the interactions that structure it are not only a source of commonality and community but also rife with tension and conflict. Inequality is baked into our world order. Millions suffer who need not. Billions live on a dollar a day while others jet around the world on private planes. Many of the global challenges we discuss in this textbook are actually *tensions*, such as climate change or civil war, that have resulted from *interactions*.

We describe international studies as providing an **inside-out and outside-in perspective**. This means that we consider actors and events at the global level—such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, or human trafficking—to be no more or no less important than actors and events that occur within states—such as domestic politics, ethnic groups, labor unions, or life in slums. It is important to understand how “the local” affects “the global” as well as how “the global” affects “the local.”

Last, international studies is primarily interested in contemporary issues and challenges. International studies is not a single scholarly discipline, such as sociology or history. Rather, we are primarily concerned with the global challenges of the day, and we draw from across established scholarly disciplines for the analytical tools to help understand them. See Figure Intro.2 for an illustration of how all of these pieces of the framework fit together.

In the sections that follow, we will further explore these concepts by illustrating what we mean by interactions leading to tensions, and we will explain the necessity for taking both “inside-out” and “outside-in” views of global issues and challenges—an exploration that will take us back to Wisconsin, and Jim.

### **globalization:**

multidimensional and transnational ways in which people, things, information, and ideas interact and are interconnected across space and time.

### **international studies:**

study of global interactions, the tensions those interactions produce, and the forces and actors that play a role in them.

### **global interactions:**

ways in which people, things, information, and ideas intersect across and within borders.

### **global tensions:**

resentments, frustrations, and conflicts that arise from global interactions.

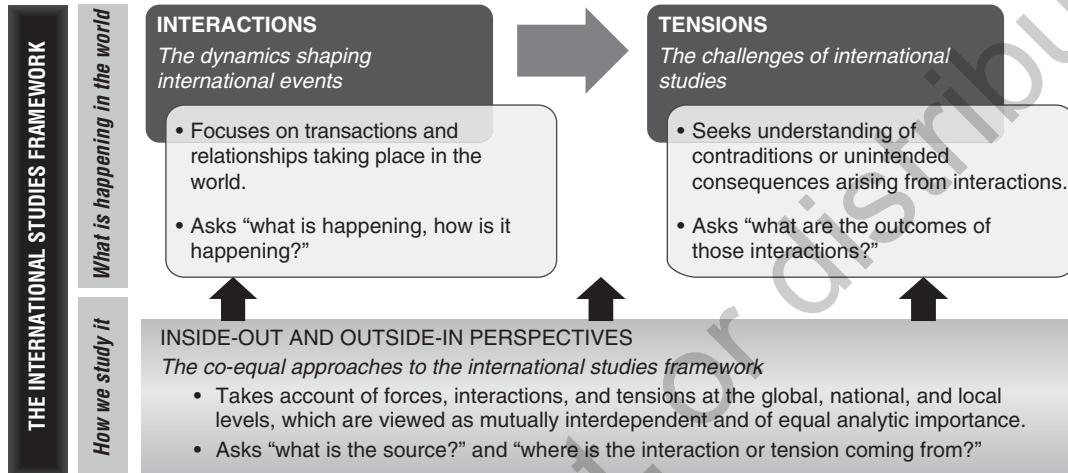
### **inside-out and outside-in perspective:**

approach that emphasizes looking at bottom-up, within-country processes and looking at top-down, international processes that cut across national borders.

**FIGURE INTRO.2**

International Studies Framework

*International studies* is the study of global interactions, the tensions those interactions produce, and the forces and actors that shape them. It seeks to explain those interactions and tensions by analyzing them from both “outside-in” and “inside-out” perspectives.



**GLOBAL INTERACTIONS**

Interactions occur whenever people come into contact, whenever they share ideas, or whenever they exchange objects with others. So, for instance, interactions can be about the movement of people across borders—as economic migrants, as refugees, as tourists, or as students. Interactions can be about the movement of goods and services across borders—from the food we eat, to the clothing we wear, to the music we hear, to the movies we watch, to the cars that we drive. Interactions can be about the movement of ideas across borders—ideas about gender equality, about the value of free markets, or about religion. Interactions can be about the movement of money across borders—from huge sums of currency or stock market trades, to small remittances of migrants in one country to their families back home. Interactions can also be social and political. They include the ways in which activists in one country may lobby on behalf of people in another country or the way in which intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations may deploy troops from many countries to help stabilize another country. In sum, by focusing on interactions, international studies allows us to study the multiple, overlapping types of exchanges that take place across and within national borders.

To return to the earlier examples, international studies illuminates the web of international relationships that influence Jim’s life. One perspective might see Jim as someone who lives a life shorn of international interactions. He does not travel internationally. He rarely uses e-mail. But an international studies perspective draws our attention to the ways that his life is nonetheless entwined in international webs of interactions.

---

## GLOBAL TENSIONS

---

As noted, global interactions are not always benign. Connecting people through migration, goods, information, and ideas creates tension and friction alongside possibility and opportunity. Ignoring the tensions provides a one-sided and misleading view of our contemporary world and the dynamics that drive it.

What counts as a tension? When the price of subsistence food or even water is subjected to global markets (an interaction), that can lead to real hardship and ultimately to protest, as it has in places such as Mexico and Bolivia. Those economic outcomes and the political protests are examples of tensions. The airing of certain movies and television shows in which women dress in short sleeves and skirts (an interaction) can unintentionally offend the tastes of traditionalists (a tension). To some observers, the rise of *jihadist* organizations such as the Islamic State (a tension) points to a backlash against the forces of globalization (an interaction). Islamic State leaders proclaim an aversion to Western values and power as domineering and dangerous, via global interactions, to Islamic values. At the same time, to communicate and recruit, the Islamic State employs the tools of international interactions: YouTube, Internet chat rooms, and texting connect an Islamic State partisan in Syria to a resident in Minneapolis, while global transportation networks enable the movement of would-be militants from England to Yemen. As you can see, interactions give rise to tensions, which give rise to other interactions, and so on.

Let's consider another example of how tensions—in both positive and negative forms—can flow from interactions: the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC is at one level a pinnacle for human rights on a global scale. Based in the Hague (Netherlands), the ICC tries individuals for crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes when domestic courts are unable or unwilling to prosecute such crimes. The premise is that these are global crimes, crimes that offend a universal sense of humanity. The ICC is one of the most potent symbols of the global reach of intergovernmental organizations. States around the world become members of the ICC, and the court's jurisdiction in turn extends to those states and in some cases beyond. The court itself is a site of multiple interactions—of lawyers and investigators from around the world, of members state from around the world, and of ideas of international human rights that in theory apply to all people everywhere. In some cases, the court has taken bold measures. For example, the court issued an arrest warrant for Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan, on charges of committing genocide and crimes against humanity. Think about that for a moment: An international court based in the Netherlands indicted a sitting president of Sudan for massive crimes against civilians. For some, such a move is the epitome of the promise of human rights: to declare some crimes so horrible that they shock humanity and should be punishable in an international court.

When considered from another perspective, however, how would you feel if the president of your country were indicted by an international court? Perhaps not surprisingly, the court has aroused significant opposition among leaders in Africa and the Philippines, where to date the court has focused most of its cases. As a result, although some human rights activists see the ICC as the institution that can finally hold the perpetrators of the worst human rights crimes accountable for the worst human rights crimes, others in Africa and elsewhere see the court as an example of colonial-style power of the powerful over the weak. They see the court as imposing values on African states and disallowing Africans to solve their own problems—even if many African states had previously endorsed the court. In short, the ICC inspires tension and friction even while for some advocates it is the realization of a dream of universal punishment for the worst crimes. The examples are many. An international studies perspective brings these possible tensions into focus.

# International Studies and Globalization

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Is international studies any different from the study of globalization? They certainly overlap. In general, we are relaxed about using the two terms throughout the book, but we argue that they are not the same. The first problem with the term “globalization” is that it has come to mean many things to many people. To some, globalization represents Americanization or McDonaldization, which means it is a process by which American actors, especially U.S. corporations and the U.S. military, and American ideas, including consumerism and individualism, extend their domination across the world at the expense of non-U.S. societies. But to others, globalization is a new age of reason, in which oppressive governments and poverty are becoming things of

the past, and the fruits of which are globally minded citizens connected online and feeling unbound by national borders. For our purposes, however, a term that can mean such different things, while being so provocative, is not useful.

Second, globalization usually refers to a specific historical period. Our current global era is probably only a few decades old. Societies go through phases of lesser or greater connectivity and interaction. International studies focuses on big global issues, but it is not tied to a specific historical period. So, globalization is a period in time, while international studies is an approach to studying the world at any time.

To make this point highlights the ways in which the history of the world is not marching progressively forward in some linear fashion. Our interconnected world also creates tension and conflict, sometimes in unpredictable ways, between actors within and across states.

---

## AN INSIDE-OUT/OUTSIDE-IN APPROACH

---

International studies has a predominant focus on global issues. In that, international studies shares much with other fields of study, such as the international relations subfield of political science. Whereas international relations focuses mostly on what states are doing internationally and how that affects people within borders (i.e., from the outside-in), an international studies approach looks *also* at global processes from the inside-out, where “inside” means within a country. In other words, international studies takes seriously domestic, grassroots actors and bottom-up interactions in particular places, and the international studies approach seeks to adopt their perspectives on global problems as well.

International studies pays close attention to local context and to local meanings with the understanding that global processes and globalization occur in particular places. For example, human trafficking is global, yet each instance of a trafficked human does not take place “in a globe,” but in a specific location, and that specific location has a specific history and culture. If the topic is climate change, global health, or global poverty, an international studies approach will take seriously not only the global forces at work in shaping these issues but also how livelihoods and attitudes in particular places are fundamentally important.

To return to the examples at the start of the chapter, one aspect of the spread of global markets is the spread of information technology. One approach to understanding that phenomenon would be to examine the global supply chains, the global flow of goods and services across borders, and the global financial markets that contribute to the production of an iPhone and that allow it to be sold all over the world. Indeed, different parts of the iPhone are made in different parts of the world, even if designed in California, and sold in almost every country of the world. These are outside-in perspectives: to look at how global markets shape consumer choices around the world and are embedded in global supply chains, underpinned by economic policy that allows capital and goods to move easily across borders. International studies examines these processes, as we do later in the book.

But international studies also takes much more domestic, locally rooted processes into account. For example, on the question of iPhones, how do people in different countries use their technology? How do they inflect their own values, ideas, and priorities into their uses of smartphones? To Indians in New Delhi, are iPhones used in the same ways that New Yorkers in the United States use their iPhones? Are they used for social purposes, like connecting with friends or finding dates? Are they used for economic purposes, like selling in online marketplaces or checking market information like crop prices? Or are they used for purposes of identity, such as the desire to be seen with a smartphone? Moreover, an inside-out perspective might disaggregate the category of “Indians” to look at differences among economic classes, among religions, among language groups, or among gender groups. Those bottom-up, micro-level considerations that ground disciplines such as anthropology and sociology are as important as the top-down, macro-level concerns that often ground international relations or international political economy. This focus on *both* outside-in and inside-out processes *defines* international studies.

---

## GLOBAL FORCES

---

As you know by now, international studies is all about global interactions and the tensions that result. But what is driving these interactions? We focus on four specific global forces, which we argue are major influences on the contemporary world and matter for every global problem described throughout the book. These **global forces** structure interactions that drive change in the world. The four forces are as follows:

**global forces:**

particularly powerful, cross-cutting drivers of global interactions and tensions. Global forces matter on almost any global issue.

They are specific to our present global age.

- **Global markets.** This is the reach and depth of supply and demand across borders. Through changes in communication, transportation, government policy, and computer technology, global markets are deep and powerful and they play a major role in all of our lives, as the examples of Jim and smartphone users in New Delhi make clear.
- **Information and communications technology.** Whereas much of the world was once cut off and limited from communication outside their home areas, today cell phone penetration is nearly universal. Information and communications technology power global online interactions, reshape the spread of information, and even impact security and elections around the world. These developments intersect with global markets, but information and communications technology are a distinct force shaping the world today.
- **Shifting centers of power in the world.** In the past, the highly industrialized states of the global north—in western Europe, North America, and Japan—dominated world politics and global economics. That is no longer the case. Now global affairs are affected by the rise

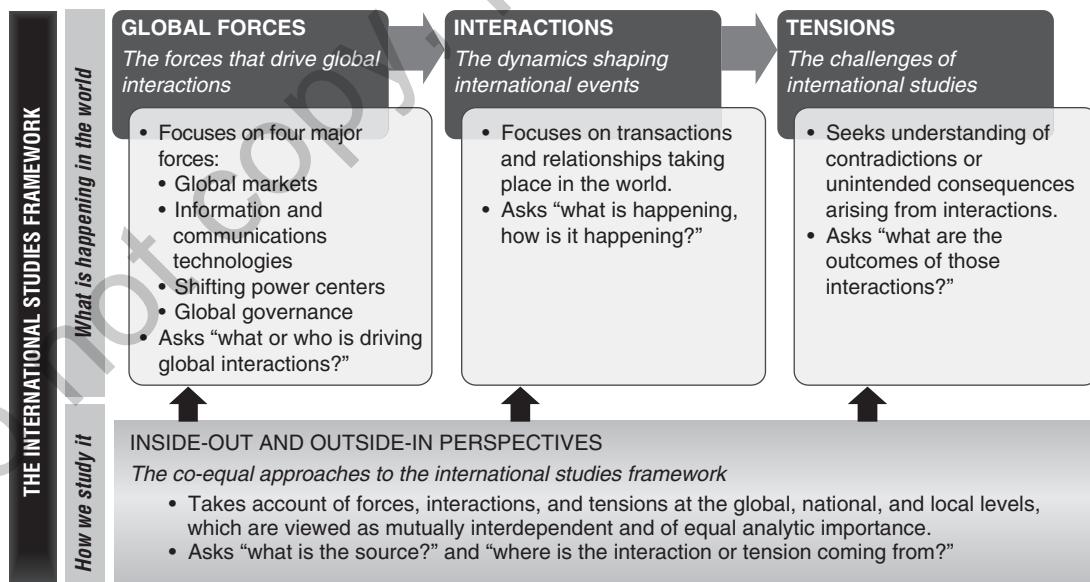
of large, developing countries, such as China, Russia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, Mexico, Vietnam, Nigeria, and South Africa. While the advanced industrialized countries remain influential, to be sure, several countries with immense populations are growing economically and asserting their power on a global stage in new and significant ways.

- **Global governance.** This is the way in which multiple institutions and actors seek to manage complex international issues by making and enforcing rules. Global governance includes creating institutions to make rules as well as to monitor and enforce those rules across borders. We make two observations. First, global governance is *crowded*. Rule-making, rule enforcement, and rule management for global issues is no longer the unique purview of states. Today, a large range of actors enter into that process of governance—intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy networks, businesses, and even citizens are shaping public discourse about how to manage global issues. Second, global governance is *uneven*: There are major global issues where global governance is present, such as trade and nuclear weapons, as well as areas where there is no global agreement or governing authority, such as climate change or global finance.

Let's look at these global forces in greater detail. Figure Intro.3 also shows how our global forces fit into the overall framework.

**FIGURE INTRO.3**  
Global Forces

*International studies* is the study of global interactions, the tensions those interactions produce, and the forces and actors that shape them. It seeks to explain those interactions and tensions by analyzing them from both "outside-in" and "inside-out" perspectives.



## Global Markets

**global markets:** arena in which goods and services are traded across borders.

**global trade:** buying and selling of goods and services across borders.

**distributional effects:** how distinct people or places are differentially affected by an event, such as a change in taxation or import of a product.

**financial globalization:** how people and places are linked through the cross-border flow of finance, such as foreign direct investment or the trading of stocks and bonds.

Our first global force driving interactions is **global markets** or what some people call “economic globalization.” Several elements of global markets—trade, finance, and production—each drive interactions between societies, and each can produce tensions.

*Growth of Trade.* The first way economic globalization constitutes a global force that drives interactions is the enormity of **global trade**, which we can think of as the cross-border movement of commercial goods (i.e., physical things for sale). The volume of that trade has exploded over time. In 1953, world merchandise trade was worth \$84 billion in U.S. dollars, but in 2008, it was worth \$15.7 *trillion*.<sup>3</sup> Because economies are so interconnected, and because of the speed with which goods, money, and information can flow, economic events in one corner of the globe have ripple effects that are felt far away.

For example, when China made its currency cheaper in 2015, it raised unemployment in Zambia. Why? Because investors knew that China devaluing its currency meant China was worried about its future economic growth. Investors then speculated that China’s trading partners, like Zambia, would suffer as a result, so they sold their investments in copper, which is Zambia’s major export. Lower prices for copper meant lower profitability for copper mining companies in Zambia, which responded by laying off workers. This all happened in the space of one month. While China represented an export market for Zambia, it also increased Zambia’s sensitivity (or vulnerability) to developments in China.

Trade also acts as a global force because of what are called **distributional effects** within countries, meaning that there are winners and losers from trade. For example, many of western Europe’s manufacturing industries moved to Southeast Asia over the past decades. Although some people have moved from factories to office jobs in things like finance or insurance, it also led to unemployment and political agitation by working-class voters who were harmed. In some countries, unions that represented the workers became staunch opponents of trade liberalization, including the free movement of migrant workers. Today, many industrialized countries have strong anti-immigrant and xenophobic political parties. So, when boats carrying Arab or African refugees capsize off the Italian coast, we should see the connection between a decline in European manufacturing decades ago, the decline in public support for immigration that resulted, and reluctance in Europe today to help even the most desperate migrants.

*Growth of Finance.* The growth of global finance or what some call **financial globalization** refers to flows of money around the world. This activity is centered on the world’s major stock markets, where one can buy shares in a Chinese company through the Shanghai stock market, where a Costa Rican can buy shares in Germany’s heavy industries, or where a German can buy and sell the currencies of Canada or Japan. Up until a few decades ago, however, one could not simply invest in whichever country one pleased. Many countries, including developed economies, placed limits on how much money could come in and out of their economy. But today about 75% of countries have stock markets.<sup>4</sup> The value of all the shares traded is in the tens of trillions of dollars. This does not even include bond markets, in which investors trade in loans to governments or corporations, which itself involves tens of billions in annual transactions. Although most countries, rich or poor, seek investment, not all money flowing into an economy is good. Let’s look at two examples of how money floating about in the international economy can produce tensions when it moves in and out of a state’s borders.

The price of oil was high in the 2000s. This was good news for oil-exporting countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia. As they exported billions of barrels of oil, the world repaid them by pumping billions of dollars into their government bank accounts. Oil exporters then deposited the money in the world's largest private banks to earn interest. Eager to put the money to work, banks in turn loaned this money elsewhere, creating "easy money," meaning loans (credit) that were cheap for borrowers. Some of it was loaned to developing countries hungry for investment, but it was also loaned to consumers in places like Dublin and Arizona who were happy to have low interest rates on mortgages and credit cards. But once some borrowers could not repay—such as home owners in Cincinnati or the government of Greece—banks announced that they had loaned out too much money. It is tempting to think of the U.S. mortgage crisis of 2008 as being caused when people irresponsibly took out mortgages they could not afford. But there were deeper causes to be found in the growth of global finance, in which banks eager to loan their money engaged in risky lending.

The second example of tensions arising from the force of global finance comes with currency speculation. Imagine you took out a loan of just £1 from a British bank, which is \$1 in U.S. dollars. If the British pound declines in value (\$1 now buys you £2), then paying back that loan becomes slightly cheaper. You took out the loan for \$1, but repaying a £1 loan now costs you only 50 U.S. cents, since \$1 equals £2. You just made 50 cents! Now imagine you did this with \$1 *billion*. This economic activity is so large it makes the news. People know you took out the loan because you think the value of the British currency is about to go down (that is, depreciate), and you are such an enormous economic actor that your actions affect the market. This is one way a currency speculator can make money.

Scaled up, this kind of behavior can have dramatic negative consequences and generate a great deal of tension. In the late 1990s, currency speculation crashed several Asian economies. That prompted the Malaysian prime minister to complain that "society must be protected from unscrupulous profiteers. Currency traders have become rich—very, very rich—through making other people poor."<sup>5</sup> He was referring to the ability of foreigners to buy and sell bits of Malaysia—in this case, its currency—with no intention of investing but buying and selling for quick gain. This is why some describe the growth of global finance as financial *hyper* globalization because excessive global finance imperils the ability of countries to manage their own affairs.<sup>6</sup>

*Internationalization of Production.* The internationalization of production means the proliferation of business activity across the globe. When a company expands abroad by building or buying a factory in a foreign country, that activity is called **foreign direct investment (FDI)**, and the company is then a **multinational corporation (MNC)**. The world's stock of FDI—the total amount of foreign investment everywhere in the world—went from less than \$1 billion in 1980 to over \$26 *trillion* in 2008.<sup>7</sup> The MNCs engaged in these investments number in the tens of thousands, and they employ almost 100 million people worldwide. But they are overwhelmingly headquartered in industrialized countries: 92 of the largest 100 MNCs are headquartered in just the United States, western Europe, or Japan.<sup>8</sup>

Although we are aware of global U.S. companies like Coca Cola and General Electric, you might be surprised to know that some of the largest public companies in the world are Chinese, and that many products we think of as American are not: Budweiser (Belgium), 7-Eleven (Japan), Popsicle (England). So the internationalization of production is not a U.S. phenomenon. Moreover, about half of all goods imported into the United States are "intra-firm," which is when a company trades with itself. For example, when a car manufacturer in Kentucky imports tires from a rubber factory it owns in Malaysia, that is an intra-firm trade.

**foreign direct investment (FDI):**

ownership and management of a productive asset in another country, such as owning a factory or farm.

**multinational corporation (MNC):**

corporation that undertakes production in more than one country. Also known as a *transnational corporation (TNC)*.

**expropriation:** when a government seizes a privately owned company, sometimes by force and often with little or no compensation.

**race to the bottom:** theory that countries competitively lower their labor and environmental standards in order to attract foreign investment.

**information and communications technology (ICT):**

information technology plus a variety of audio and visual communications technology, such as smartphones and television networks.

**information flows:** spread of knowledge, ideas, words, and images across borders.

Over the past few decades, most FDI has gone from one developed country to another, not to developing countries. In recent years, however, this has started to change, with developing countries receiving almost half of all FDI, with most going to Asia and especially China. FDI also creates major tensions within developing countries. In return for companies investing billions to construct heavy machinery to extract these materials, and for paying the highly educated engineers to operate them, governments offer things like no taxation of company profits for several years, relocation of local people from the area, or relaxation of environmental or labor standards.

Two tensions commonly result. First, the risk of **expropriation**, meaning government seizes the MNC's assets (its mines, equipment, machines, etc.) and requires it to be publicly owned. Such nationalization was common in developing countries several decades ago, especially with utilities like electric plants and with natural resources like oil and gas. Second, some scholars are concerned about a **race to the bottom** among developing countries, who are eager to weaken labor laws and environmental protections in order to attract investment.

## Information and Communications Technology

At different points in international history, new forms of **information and communications technology (ICT)** have shrunk time and space, bringing people around the world closer together. Items such as the Morse Code, the telegraph, the radio, the printing press, a global postal system, and of course the telephone allowed people around the world to communicate with each other more efficiently and cheaply than ever before. The contemporary period, however, differs from previous ones in the scale and intensity of the effects of ICT. During the last 50 years, investment and development in these technologies have been massive, and the result has been the availability of more efficient, cheaper, faster, and more sophisticated devices.

Also crucial is the distribution of ICT. In previous periods, the global elite had the primary access to technologies such as the telegraph or the printing press. True, the Bible and the Koran reached large audiences via the printing press, and radio was a cheap means of communication with widespread adoption. But today advanced ICT touches all parts of the world. The Internet provides a remarkably cheap and instantaneous mechanism for communication within and across borders. In sum, advances in technology are having, and are likely to continue to have, significant implications on the lives of most human beings on the planet and on many global problems. Many observers consider ours the "information age" and our society a "network society."<sup>9</sup> These terms reflect the significance of ICT in the contemporary globe.

In recent decades, there has been a remarkable expansion of access to ICT, as well as an expansion of cross-border **information flows**. The parents of many students enrolled in college today did not grow up with a computer in their home or a cell phone. When they did get them, their first computers were likely clunky, slow, and heavy pieces of equipment that had primitive access to information, primarily through floppy disks. Computers then—until the mid-1990s—did not have access to the Internet and e-mail; when they did, it was through a dial-up modem.

That was only some 20 years ago. How things have changed! Today in the United States most families will have access to at least one computer—some 84% of households own at least one computer and 75% of households use the Internet.<sup>10</sup> Most high school and college students have their own personal computers as well. To be sure, these statistics are averages; they mask inequalities that often present in terms of income, as well as in terms of race and ethnicity—the lower the household income, the less likely will be computer ownership and Internet usage, and the less English spoken

at home, the less computer usage there is, to take two examples. Still, on a relative basis, these technologies have extremely wide usage and adoption.

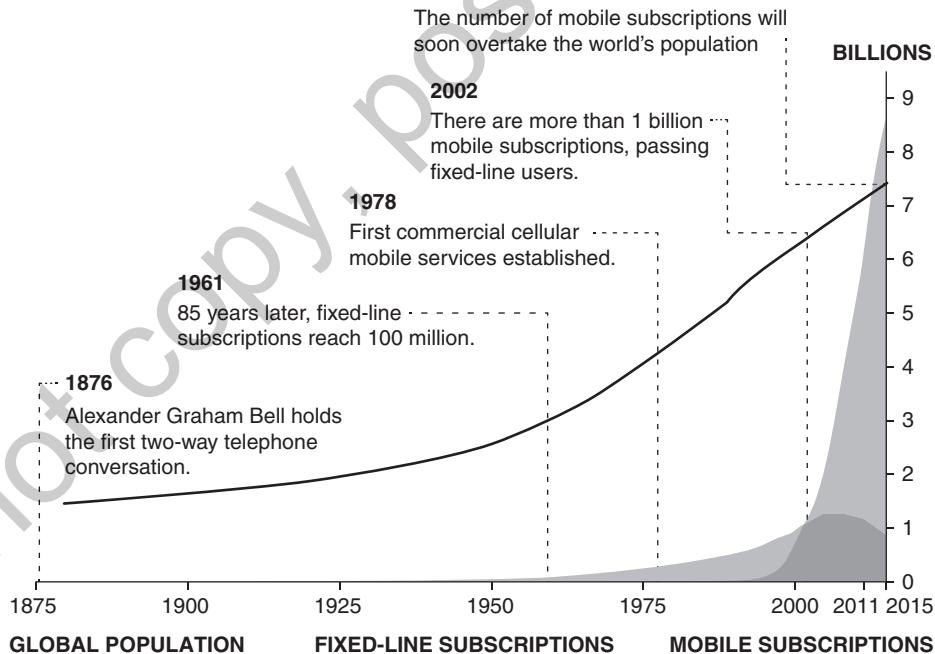
But that story is not just one that applies to the United States. The rapid expansion has been replicated on the global stage. In the contemporary world, more than one third of the adults in the world regularly access the Internet. About three quarters of adults own a cell phone or have regular access to one. These numbers represent an extraordinary pace of increase, given that mobile phone subscriptions essentially began in the mid-1990s. Some 20 years later, the World Bank estimates that there are more than 6 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide. An infographic that the World Bank produced in 2012 tells the story very well (see Figure Intro.4). The graphic plots the number of mobile and landline subscriptions globally, compared with the global population growth and the history of the telephone. The Bank says that the spread of mobile technology is “unmatched in the history of technology.”<sup>11</sup>

The global implications of this surge in access to mobile and Internet communications are huge. We are witnessing a remarkable **democratization of information**. Although Internet access is correlated to income level, the reality is that even the poorest in the lowest income countries today have access to cell phones. In contrast to centralized information systems, such as radio and television, the spread of ICT in the contemporary world is decentralized. Information is moving in literally millions of directions at any one moment in time, rather than information flowing from a central point to points of reception, which is the case with traditional forms of media. At the most basic level, people

**democratization of information:** ease and decentralized nature of how individuals may access and disseminate information using modern technology.

**FIGURE INTRO.4**

Sharp Global Increase in Mobile Phone Use



Source: World Bank, 2012. *Information and Communications for Development 2012: Maximizing Mobile*. Washington, DC: World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/ict/IC4D2012>, licensed under CC BY 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

**cost of information:** price to access and disseminate information; modern information and communications technology reduces the price drastically.

**speed of information:** rate at which information may be accessed and disseminated.

**technology optimists:** those who believe that technology will have broad and positive impacts on society, culture, and politics.

can communicate much more easily with each other, whether through texting or more sophisticated social networking sites. They can “self-communicate” as users of Facebook know well. People around the globe have the ability to access information from anywhere around the world instantaneously and cheaply. That is, the **cost of information** has decreased so remarkably that information is almost free to many Internet users around the world. With Google or some other search engine, millions of bits of information are available in a second or two. In other words, in addition to the cost, the **speed of information** flows has increased exponentially. People can “self-inform.”

Global connectivity has the potential to affect many sectors. In politics, the ability to control information has become much more difficult. When repression takes place, people know—and they can communicate it almost instantaneously. Citizens can organize more effectively. They can coordinate protests through Twitter accounts and film atrocities if the police crack down on them. ICT should democratize the world. Information is power, and many now have low-cost access to it.

We can identify these views as those of **technology optimists**. They look at the world, and they see that whole swaths of the global population—some five billion people—will now have information connectivity that they never had before. In the optimists’ view, the changes will be massive. In economics, people will be more productive than ever before. In finance, ordinary citizens and mega investors can affect trades immediately or move money around the world with great ease. In agriculture, local farmers can know through a text message what the market price of their product is. In health, consumers can research medicines and treatments without necessarily relying on physicians; they can receive text messages about when to take certain medications. Businesses can coordinate global supply chains in dozens of countries through sophisticated software. The depth of change is from politics, to finance, to agriculture, to health, to name a few. Soon computers will drive us to work and school! These are some of the key ideas that Eric Schmidt, the co-founder of Google, and Jared Cohen, a former adviser to the U.S. State Department and founder of Google Ideas, stressed in their 2013 book, *The New Digital Age: Transforming Nations, Businesses, and Our Lives*. In their words, the new age will see “every crime and atrocity caught on camera,” “pills that tell your phone what’s wrong with your body,” “digital insurgencies bring down autocratic leaders,” and “unprecedented power in the hands of people,” among other major changes.

Watch Schmidt and Cohen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK9V5APXhTY> or [www.newdigitalage.com](http://www.newdigitalage.com).

Technological advances, however, have also increased the capacity for surveillance, which can have profoundly anti-democratic effects. The same technologies that can harness people power to organize protests to challenge dictatorships also can help terrorist organizations recruit or radicalize people online. The same search engines that provide cheap access to streams of useful information also can lead to unhelpful or incorrect information. Yes, the Internet can help people self-diagnose, but it can also lead people to try crackpot therapies that will have no effectiveness.

Social networking applications allow us to know more about the lives of our friends and family; we can also be in touch with each other more quickly and cheaply. But in a major study, Sherry Turkle (2011), a professor of Science and Technology Studies at MIT, finds that humans are losing the ability to meaningfully connect with each other. We are “alone together” in the sense that we have removed ourselves and do not know how to have meaningful conversations with one another.

Compare Sherry Turkle’s TED Talk to Jared Cohen’s: [https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry\\_turkle\\_alone\\_together?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together?language=en).

There are other, more skeptical voices in the technology debate. Like those who argue that the effects of markets will be to widen economic inequalities between populations around the globe, some claim that technology will benefit those who already have the skills and education to take advantage of such technology. Rather than leveling differences, as Cohen and Schmidt argue, information and communications technology will benefit the wealthy while doing little for the poor. The rich will get richer, and the lives of the rich will get even better, while the poor will remain in a steady state. Rather than being a source of innovation, according to some, the power of information and communications technology will allow big corporations to monitor, track, and target consumers better. In the end, big business will benefit. As with global markets, technology may undercut jobs. Where once humans did the work, now machines will. Last, in the realm of human rights, although it may be true that citizens around the world will know more and can harness that information to generate public pressure, such cyberactivism is often shallow. Will retweeting a page on atrocities in Myanmar make a difference to the human rights in that country? Does the information that recirculates make violence a show, distribute naive recommendations, and ultimately harm victims? These are the kinds of questions that some scholars have begun to ask.<sup>12</sup>

### Shifting Centers of Global Power

The third global force reshaping the world is a reorganization of power. As we proceed through the 21st century, power will essentially shift from being concentrated in the hands of old, industrialized states in western Europe, North America, and Japan to a broader array of states as well as to other types of organizations, such as intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and multinational corporations. Some authors and politicians frame the issue as “American decline.” Rather, alongside some other influential thinkers, we think the right framework is the diffusion of power rather than the decline of any one state in absolute terms. Rather than being the sole, dominant superpower, the United States will share the global stage increasingly with other states and organizations that have gained power compared with their power in the 20th century.

In the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, global power was divided between several European states and eventually the United States. Power was divided between several European states and eventually the United States. The major European powers were Britain, France, Germany, and to a lesser extent Spain and Portugal. There also were the key multinational empires: the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires, in particular. No one state dominated international relations, although Germany sought to establish worldwide domination in the two world wars, especially the second. After World War II, the world was primarily **bipolar**, or split between two major states—the United States and the Soviet Union. This period was also known as the Cold War because the two countries sought for primacy and prepared for war but never fought against each other directly. Then after the Soviet Union, we lived in a **unipolar** world in which the United States was hegemonic.

One central way that analysts express the coming global shift is the **rise of the rest**.<sup>13</sup> The main idea is that in the contemporary era, we shall witness the sustained growth and increased power of many large, developing countries. They are large both in terms of land mass but especially in terms of their population sizes. Central here is the rise of China, a country of some 1.38 billion people that has experienced a period of astonishing and consistent growth during the past three decades. Also key is the rise of India and Brazil, countries with 1.32 billion and 208 million people, respectively, where growth also has been sustained. Also in the mix are countries such as Indonesia, with 261 million people, Nigeria, Turkey, and others.

**bipolar:** idea that global power is bifurcated between two primary holders, e.g., between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

**unipolar:** idea that a single power holder is dominant globally.

**rise of the rest:** expression indicating that nontraditionally dominant powers are rising in power and status globally.

**BRIC or BRICS:**

expression to capture four or five large countries that are rising in global power and status; BRIC stands for Brazil, Russia, India, and China; the S stands for South Africa.

**next 11 or N-11:**

like BRICS, N-11 refers to rising powers globally, in this case Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, and Vietnam.

**nonpolarity:**

a world in which there is no dominant power.

A few acronyms speak to these changes. Many scholars and journalists employ the acronym **BRIC or BRICS** to shorthand the rising power of new countries. A term first introduced by an analyst from Goldman Sachs, an investment firm, BRIC stands for Brazil, Russia, India, and China. The added “S,” which some include and some do not, refers to South Africa. One estimate captures the expected change nicely. In 2010, the five largest economies in the world were the United States, China, Japan, Germany, and France. By 2050, the expected five will be China, the United States, India, Brazil, and Russia.<sup>14</sup> When these shifts will take place is uncertain, but many economists project that China will have the largest economy, measured by gross domestic product, by the mid- to late 2020s.

Goldman Sachs also has introduced the numeronym **next 11 or N-11** to refer to other developing countries that were rising in power and market share: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, and Vietnam. These countries are poised, according to the investment firm, to become the next BRICs. They have large populations, increasingly urbanized populations, macroeconomic stability, and the human capital and technology to become a major part of the world economy in the next 50 years. Despite whether these in fact will be the “next 11,” the term indicates the rising relative power of many states that a generation ago were not seen as major world players.

How to characterize the contemporary era beyond the “rise of the rest” remains a question. Fareed Zakaria coins the idea of a “Post-American World.” In his account, the United States remains dominant, especially in military terms, but the rest of the world is catching up. In another influential book, political scientist Charles Kupchan employs the term “No One’s World,” which is synonymous with **nonpolarity**. He sees a world in which no one country will dominate. Even more crucially, Kupchan argues that the coming world will not be fashioned in the image of the West, which emphasizes liberal democracy, secular nationalism, and industrial capitalism. “The Chinese ship of state will not dock in the Western harbor,” writes Kupchan. The new world is one with proliferating ideologies and value systems, new economic models, and new ways to imagine the relationship between state and society.

Kupchan’s thesis underlines one of the themes of the book: Although the rise of the rest represents an exceptional moment of change and opportunity for literally billions of people worldwide, the tectonic shift could engender conflict and tension.

## Global Governance

Our final global force is global governance. **Global governance** refers to how something is managed: which actors are involved, what the rules are, and how strong the enforcement is. Every part of life involves some governance. In a typical Western, nuclear family, the governance structure involves parents who set rules. In a typical corporation, the board of directors establish rewards systems like pay and bonuses. But even parts of life in which no one is necessarily in charge involve governance. For example, when friends go camping, there is no parent or CEO, but there is some unspoken understanding that no one person gets to call all the shots. Campers discuss who will gather firewood, who will clean dishes, and so on. While government is about authority, governance is about common management of an issue.

States engage in governance-making all the time. They meet to discuss highly specific things like how many miles out into the sea our “state” extends or how we should compensate the postal service in another country for delivering letters paid with our stamps. Any cross-border issue you can possibly conceive of, there is either some governance activity in the form of a United Nations (UN) treaty or

convention, or there is a group trying to introduce some governance. Global governance does not mean global government; in fact, a major reason we are interested in global governance is because *there is no global government*. As we will see, there is extensive global governance of some issues but not of others.

One issue in which we find extensive global governance is human rights, which we discuss in Chapter 8. The key actors are states but also intergovernmental organizations, like the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, as well as civil society organizations such as Amnesty International and Physicians for Human Rights. The key rules are established in things like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These agreements often represent the formalization of what were once norms, meaning unwritten rules about desirable behavior. One can speak of a “global human rights regime” because this issue is attended to by a multitude of actors, and a multitude of types of actors, and they together monitor, shape, and enforce formal and informal rules.

An issue with weak global governance is climate change. There are international civil society actors in the form of NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. These nongovernmental organizations are on the ground doing research, and making environmentally destructive behavior by states and companies known to the world. They have been effective in disseminating norms about environmentally sustainable behavior, but they have no legal power to punish bad behavior. Corporations are also involved in the area through the UN Global Compact, which allows corporations to publicly commit themselves to certain labor and environmental practices. But participation is voluntary, and the “only” punishment is public shaming. As we detail in Chapter 13, however, fashioning a global treaty to which all states of the world adhere has been difficult. There is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but some key states, including the United States, Russia, and China, at various times have refused to ratify it.

These examples show us that global governance is a patchwork. On issues such as human rights there is significant activity by states, IGOs, NGOs, and even MNCs. Yet on issues such as climate change and the global environment, there is limited governance. The examples also reveal there are more levels of governance than just states and IGOs. Indeed, some speak of “multilevel” governance that simultaneously takes place at subnational (think megacities like Los Angeles or Lagos), state, regional (think European Union), or global levels (think UN).

Last, global governance does not have to be state-led. For example, on the issue of climate change, in the face of weak state action, nongovernmental groups, including NGOs and corporations, formed the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to ensure the sustainable management of forests. The nonprofit’s membership comprises approximately 800 civil society actors from around the world, including NGOs and individuals, with thousands of corporations holding FSC certificates.<sup>15</sup> Outlets like Home Depot display the FSC stamp, which certifies that their materials were responsibly sourced. No states or intergovernmental organizations are involved in any of this. There are no fines, invasions, or jail time for violating the code, but a company could lose certification, suffer public shaming, and lose market share as a result. Even in the face of weak governance at a global level, actors across multiple levels are jointly managing an issue of common concern.

These four global forces are dominant in our world today. They are the forces that are making and remaking our globe; they are driving the interactions and the tensions that are at the heart of this book. Highlighting them will help you understand the world around you and the forces that impact the issues about which you care.

---

## WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL STUDIES GOOD FOR?

---

This book provides an introduction to the field of international studies, and as we've explored, our goal in this Introduction has been to outline a framework that will allow you to understand better today's critical global challenges as you work your way through the book. But many students may rightfully ask what the practical purpose of such a course is.

First, our reality for today and the foreseeable future is global. The international intrudes on our daily lives in all kinds of ways. As students, teachers, and citizens, it is incumbent on us to understand those processes—to understand the forces that influence our lives. A course such as this provides you with an intellectual foundation by which to understand global forces that shape our world.

Second, this book should help you develop a global awareness. Although much of the book is about how the global affects us, the book also should help you understand that which is unfamiliar. That might mean coral reefs in Australia, human rights in Eritrea, protests in Bolivia, or AIDS in Botswana. In other words, the book should help you to understand the world in which you live and provide you with the tools to make sense of it. We hope that stimulates a lifetime of learning and curiosity about our world.

Last, in ways that may be of immediate concern to many, international issues shape many careers. The labor pool is increasingly a global one. From manufacturing, to service, to sports, music, and academics, the people who compete for positions often come from all parts of the world. Most businesses today—should they look to expand their markets—often play or aim to play on the international scene. The market for entertainment may be largest in the United States, but anyone in the business—from cinema, to gaming, to basketball—will tell you how global the market is. International studies is a fantastic gateway for a student interested in a globally engaged career, such as in international finance, humanitarian relief, or global health. And it is also useful for students who may not want a globally engaged career but wish to nonetheless understand how global affairs will relate to their lives. Whether you wish to be an organic potato farmer in Idaho, a ceramicist in New York City, a real estate agent in Chicago, a chef in New Orleans, a Lyft driver in Arizona, or a tech entrepreneur in San Francisco, your professional development will be strengthened with an appreciation for how you affect and will be affected by oil prices, climate change, free trade, or global food production.

In sum, understanding the international in as holistic a way as possible is an essential part of your education today, and this course will give you a core training in that subject from an interdisciplinary perspective.

---

### KEY TERMS

bipolar 15	foreign direct investment (FDI) 11	global governance 16
BRIC or BRICS 16	global markets 10	information and communications
cost of information 14	global forces 8	technology (ICT) 12
democratization of information 13	global interactions 4	information flows 12
distributional effects 10	global tensions 4	inside-out and outside-in
expropriation 12	global trade 10	perspective 4
financial globalization 10	globalization 4	international studies 4

multinational corporation (MNC) 11	race to the bottom 12	technology optimists 14
next 11 or N-11 16	rise of the rest 15	unipolar 15
nonpolarity 16	speed of information 14	

---

## QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are three ways in which global interactions affect your life?
2. Have you or anyone in your family experienced a negative outcome from a global interaction?
3. What is an outside-in and inside-out framework? What are some examples of each?
4. What are the four major global forces outlined in this chapter? Consider an issue you care most about (e.g., global health or climate change). Which forces matter and how for that issue?

---

## LEARN MORE

Charles Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Deborah D. Avant et al. (eds.), *Who Governs the Globe?* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities," in *The Encyclopedia of Global Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).

Global Policy, an interdisciplinary academic journal analyzing global problems and solutions. <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com>.

Council on Foreign Relations, Explainers, series focused on explaining issues of concern to U.S. foreign policy. <https://www.cfr.org/explainers>.

Textbook Notes, Carnegie Council, provides videos and podcasts on issues of interest to international studies. <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/education/006>.

---

## NOTES

1. Tim Higgins, "Apple iPhone Sales in China Outsell the U.S. for the First Time," *Bloomberg Technology*, April 27, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-27/apple-s-iphones-sales-in-china-outsell-the-u-s-for-first-time>.
2. Andrea Peterson, "What It Took for Ethiopia to Lose Access to Hacking Tools It Used Against Journalists in the US," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2015/07/12/what-it-took-for->

- ethiopia-to-lose-access-to-hacking-tools-it-used-against-journalists-in-the-u-s/.
3. Thomas Oatley, *International Political Economy*, 5th edition (Boston, MA: Routledge, 2015), 21.
  4. Shalifay, "List of Countries Without Stock Exchanges," *Investment Frontier* (blog), July 28, 2014. <http://www.investmentfrontier.com/2014/07/28/list-countries-without-stock-exchanges/>.
  5. *Manila Standard*, September 22, 1997.
  6. Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2011).
  7. UNCTAD, "World Investment Report 2015," 2015.
  8. Oatley, *International Political Economy*, 162.
  9. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); M. Castells, *End of Millennium* (New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).
  10. Based on U.S. Census data from 2013: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/computer/>.
  11. The World Bank, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINFORMATIONANDCOMMUNICATIONANDTECHNOLOGIES/Resources/IC4D\\_Infographic-1.png](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINFORMATIONANDCOMMUNICATIONANDTECHNOLOGIES/Resources/IC4D_Infographic-1.png).
  12. Fuyuki Kurasawa, "The Aporias of New Technologies for Human Rights Activism," in Steve Stern and Scott Straus, eds., *The Human Rights Paradox: Universality and Its Discontents* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 177–203.
  13. Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2008).
  14. Charles Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).
  15. FSC member search database, <http://memberportal.fsc.org>.