

# Introduction

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## Chapter Summary

The world has seen significant change in the past five decades, from ideological shift (the collapse of communism and “triumph” of economic liberalism and democratic governance) and geopolitical transformation (the end of the Cold War) to new challenges such as climate change and new opportunities such as the revolution in information communication technologies. International studies approaches the subject matter of world issues in an *interdisciplinary* manner, seeking to explain the complexity of the world through a multitude of viewpoints. To this end, the primary objective of this textbook is to provide students with a core literacy in international studies. Specifically, this entails (a) the basic terms for, and facts about, the various subjects within international studies; (b) the historical and contemporary context surrounding them; (c) the leading theories about these subjects, which help illuminate key concepts and contexts; and (d) how all of the various subjects interconnect and influence one another.

This textbook is comprised of 12 chapters, divided into four parts. Part I sets the world stage, discussing the core concepts and historical context that guide the subsequent analysis (Chapter 1); population growth and related pressures on the natural environment (Chapter 2); and the impact different cultures have on world affairs (Chapter 3). Part II tackles the fundamental tension of nation versus world, represented by the clashing ideas of realism and idealism, respectively. Chapter 4 takes the realist perspective and its ethos of national egoism, while Chapter 5 adopts the idealist position and its ethos of universal improvements. Parts III and IV both analyze power, with the former looking at hard power (wealth and strength) and the latter at soft power (the overall well-being of one’s people, focused on human security). To this end, Chapter 6 deals with economic wealth and Chapters 7 and 8 explore military strength (Part III); then Chapter 9 examines human rights, Chapter 10 addresses global public health, and Chapter 11 discusses aid and development (Part IV). The concluding chapter offers some thoughts on the future trajectory of global issues.

Each chapter follows the same general format: a set of learning objectives to be attained by the end of the chapter; a brief introduction; the main body; a concise conclusion; ten questions for summary and review; a list of websites useful for further research; and endnotes illustrating the sources of research. Furthermore, each chapter also contains two highlighted feature boxes: “Studies in Technology” and “Canadian Insights.” These offer more in-depth investigation of new technology and Canada’s role, respectively, in relation to each chapter’s subject matter.

## Key Terms

**Discipline:** a unique way of approaching and achieving (or categorizing) the advance of human knowledge, and each discipline comes with its own particular set of theories and methods; while this focus and rigor is useful, it can also lead to insularity and narrow-mindedness. (pp. xi–xii)

**Interdisciplinary:** using the tools and insights of various disciplines, both (a) to eliminate narrow-mindedness of adhering to a single disciplinary approach, and (b) to arrive at a more thorough appreciation of the subject matter. (p. xii)

## Weblinks

CIA World Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

- A good source of general information and facts about different countries in the world (it is published by the CIA, an arm of the US government, so bear that in mind)

BBC (British Broadcasting Service)

<http://www.bbc.com/>

- One of the most well-respected, impartial, and objective source of news and analysis on current events; also does more in-depth journalistic investigations on a variety of relevant contemporary topics

The Economist

<https://www.economist.com/>

- Well-respected newsmagazine that explores a wide-range of subject matters; articles tend to be more comprehensive and analytical

Wikipedia

<https://www.wikipedia.org/>

- While not an academic or scholarly (e.g., rigorous) source, this can be a good starting place for basic facts and figures on any topic, make sure to check the references at the end of each article for sources of research

## Further Readings

English, John. 2008. *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Volume One: 1919–1968*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada.

- Well researched and interesting biography about one of Canada's most influential Prime Ministers. Volume One covers Trudeau's early life until his election as Prime Minister.

English, John. 2010. *Just Watch Me: The Life of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Volume Two: 1968–2000*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada.

- Volume Two looks at this political career, from “Trudeaumania” to the October Crisis, from the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 to his role after leaving office.