

Fourth Stage

Lecture No (1).

Subject/International Relations Concept

This feature is for the new student interested in becoming familiar with the study of International Relations (IR) and also for students struggling to grasp how IR fits together as a whole. The aim is to show how the different parts of IR fit together as an intellectual whole in such a way that it enables the student's intellectual participation in the study. As an intellectual whole, IR is based in questions. One of my best teachers once suggested that we academic students of IR might do well to think of ourselves as 'children of Vattel'. How we think about IR finds an intellectual wellspring in Emmerich de Vattel's questions about the law of nations. It comes out of his distinction between 'necessary' and 'voluntary' laws, those that all nations abide, necessarily, involuntarily, vs. those that nations construct and agreed to.[1] In this distinction we find an early expression of the kinds of questions we as academic IR

students ask: What goes on amongst nations necessarily, and what does not? What goes on amongst nations voluntarily, and what cannot? Today we study more than nations, but it is these kinds of questions that bring parts of our intellectual study together – what, why, and how we study IR.

For example, it is a finding of our study that wars have not occurred amongst democratic nations. Is this necessarily so? And, can a democratic peace be made amongst all nations? It is these kinds of questions about what does, can, and cannot go on in international relations that give academic students of IR an intellectual footing. The student thinks about IR in an academic way by posing these kinds of questions. IR is a specialist study. Like in Medicine or Law, each student finds their special expertise, and the student reader should begin to find what their expertise might be, via the IR questions they are concerned with. In this respect, some of this brief general introduction is an exploration of how the

specialist parts form a whole, but it is also about how the whole forms the

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