

Lecture No (4

Subject/ The Contemporary System

The Contemporary System The modern world preoccupies most of IR studies because this is the period of most relevance to today. Like all past systems, relations amongst the contemporary units are primarily through trade, diplomacy, and warfare, but today these take on modern contemporary forms of capitalism, the use of embassies, and modern industrial warfare. International diplomats refer to this contemporary system of modern nation-state as the international community, and international lawyers use the language of international society to convey a sense of the contemporary system as an “internationalist” collaboration of states. This period has seen collaborative experiments in

International Organization, with the League of Nations and United Nations. This period has also witnessed the rise of non-state units, with thousands of NGOs and IO's with worldwide mandates, like the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, and International Labour Organization. The collaboration of IOs, NGOs, MNCs, and the international community has come to be referred as "global governance". This is not global government, but governance, the attempt to govern and perform the functions a government would provide, without the formal structure of a government. The structure of this contemporary system, the extent to which IOs and NGOs matter, and which relations are of most significance, is a question of contention for students of IR. In my reading, which I think is reasonable if inevitably contentious, the

contemporary system of today is a mixed highly complex system. The modern nation-states claim sovereign independence, territorial and political, and deny it to other units. Yet, as Vattel once pointed out, some states are giants and others dwarfs. So there is also a strata of “great powers”, who in legal principle are equals, but by all practical purposes are not. Ideally, these great powers have the role of using their power to maintain the system, whilst watching one another with unease and posture. Beyond these great powers, one .state has risen above all others

The modern nation-states recognize a hegemon (a leader), the nation-state with ability, will, and power, to lead the system of nation-states.[7] The contemporary system of states has seen American ascendance, with its leadership in the creation of

international organizations. A major question for students of IR today is where this system is headed, particularly with the rise of China. Is it to be a world of regions, a reformed United Nations, or something else