

The Contemporary Transformation of the International System

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Lecture 6

**Culture, human rights and
justice in the contemporary
international system**

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- *THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE 'INTERNATIONAL'*

1. the States-system
2. historical perspective
3. the U.S.A. and Russia
4. developing and underdeveloped states
5. culture, rights, justice (and power)

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Questions and issues prominent in the contemporary international system

- a) the idea of an international system based on common rules, institutions, and values associated with a liberal capitalist order;
- b) recent attempts to expand the geographical and moral boundaries of that liberal capitalist international order;
- c) criticisms and challenges to those ideas and processes

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- *'social basis'* of cultural identity - creates *'collective identity'* – produces *'sense of belonging'* + *'rights of belonging'*
 - *power* of States reinforced through appeals to *image of the nation*, and nationalism
 - = link between culture, rights, justice, and power domestically and within international system
- Social constructivists* – *'narrative of the nation'* shapes national culture and identities

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- inside States the *dominant culture* – values, beliefs, customs – influences and *shapes rights*
 - i.e. dominant culture = ‘collective’ = ‘collective rights’
 - dominant culture = individualistic = ‘individual rights’

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United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

- established moral claim for individual rights
- asserted that each individual human being matters, deserves to be heard, and must not be silenced
- asserted that each individual deserves respect, and is entitled to be treated with dignity regardless of race, gender, creed, colour, or mental capacity

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Communitarianism

- (- rights and justice are culturally specific
- key principles = self-determination, and State sovereignty)

or

Cosmopolitanism

(rights and justice linked to human capacity to reason, and rationality = universal process = basis for universal moral principles on which human rights and justice should be based)

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THE 'INTERNATIONAL'

