

What is International Relations?

***International Relations* (a.k.a. international politics, world politics, global politics, and international affairs) concerns relations between different actors in the world, the characteristics of those relations, and their consequences.**

What is I.R.?

It has to do with the nature of those actors, how they have changed over time, and how their interactions have changed over time...



What is I.R.?



IR includes questions of international conflict (for example, why do countries and ethnic groups go to war with each other? What contributes to peaceful relations?)



What is I.R.?

Questions of international economics (why and how do states enter into trading agreements; how is wealth distributed in the world?)



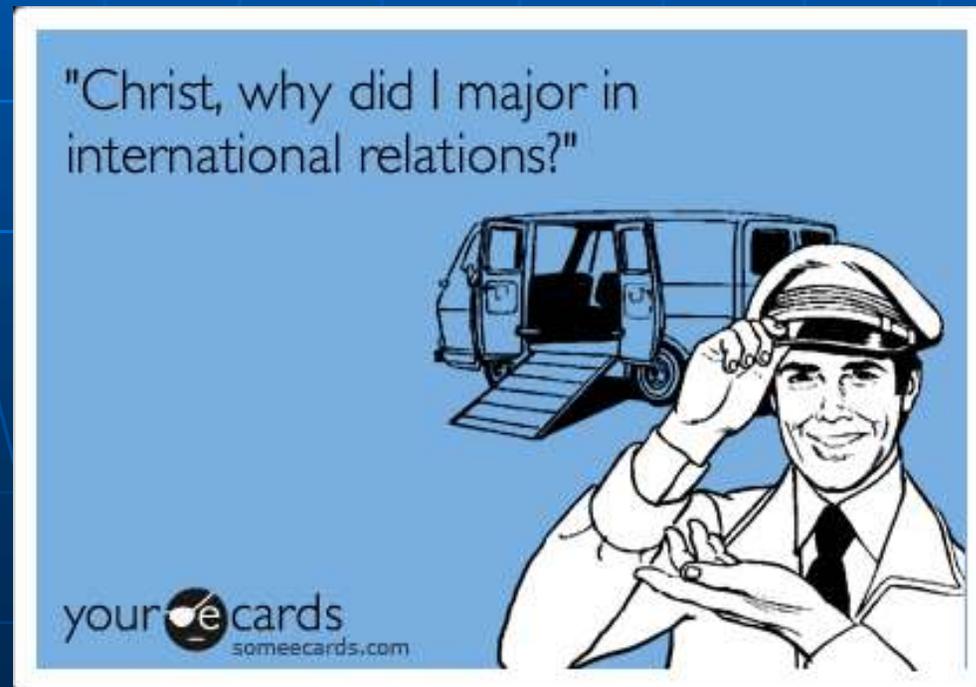
What is I.R.?

...and questions that transcend actors but confront them nonetheless (such as global environmental problems, cultural, political and economic globalization)



Key Concepts in I.R.

International Relations Theory - a set of principles and guidelines used to analyze both world events and relations between states. These theories help to assess past and present conditions, and in turn, a basis for predicting future trends.

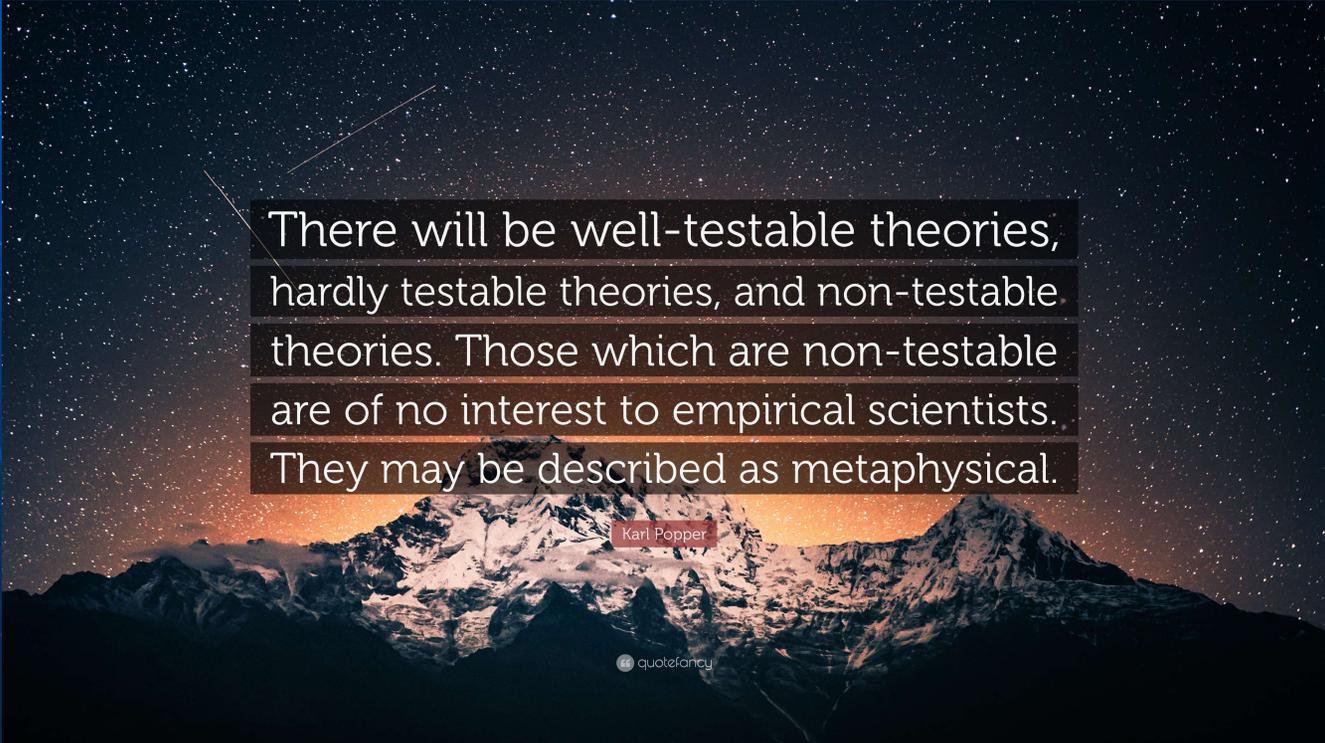


Key Concepts

1. **Hypothesis** – an educated guess or proposition about how or why something, an event or specific set of conditions, occurred.
2. **Concept** – an idea, thought, or notion. A universal descriptive word.
3. **Generalization** – a set of concepts that are related.
4. **Theory** – a set of generalizations that try to analyze, explain, or predict something.

Key Concepts

Descriptive “Empirical” Theories – try to explain events and circumstances. They are based on description and evaluation of past events, conditions, and patterns of behavior.



There will be well-testable theories, hardly testable theories, and non-testable theories. Those which are non-testable are of no interest to empirical scientists. They may be described as metaphysical.

Karl Popper

quote fancy

Key Concepts

Prescriptive “Normative” Theories – a set of principles and guidelines that contain value judgments about how the world ought to be, rather than who the world really is. Also known as “normative” theories.



Levels of Analysis

A method for examining international relations theory based on three different perspectives or levels.

Where Do We Focus Our Study of Foreign Policy?

Three levels of analysis:

Individual-level: People make policy

State-level: States make policy

System-level: International Arena encourages/discourages certain types of behavior



(Waltz, 1959: Chapter 6).

Levels of Analysis



Individual – an approach that focuses on the role and impact of particular individuals, or looks for explanations based on “human nature” or common characteristics of all individuals.

Levels of Analysis

State – an analytical approach that focuses on the domestic or internal causes of state actions. An attempt to explain IR by emphasizing the internal workings of the state or civilization itself.



Levels of Analysis

System – an approach that focuses on the manner in which the *structure* of the international system shapes and constrains the actions of states.



However, are we describing a system of “nation-states”?

Levels of Analysis

**...a system of
global
cooperation (for
increasing
prosperity and
rule of law?**



Levels of Analysis



**...a system of
accumulation of
wealth for
capitalists?**

Levels of Analysis

...or a system of global patriarchy in which women's voices are absent?

