

NOTE TO STUDENTS: These are my slightly revised lecture notes on the World Order perspective. Be advised that these are notes only and are NOT meant to be comprehensive or complete. Since they are notes, moreover, they formatted informally and do NOT necessarily list any outside sources I may have used.

World Order Perspective

- Lead question: what's the basic difference between world order perspectives and radical perspectives?
 - major difference derives from understanding of capitalism ...although it's not clear in the chapter on radical worldview, Marxists and other radicals believe that meaningful change can only come about if the capitalist system itself is destroyed and remade into something better (this is why they are radicals)
 - in other words, radicals do not believe that the interests of large corporations can ever be subordinated to broader societal interests in the current framework ..
 - in the world order view, however, proponents argue that, while the current system creates all sorts of problem, it is possible to *reform* the system ...in other words, it is possible to make the global system of capitalism more democratic, more socially just, and more equitable such that the needs of all of the world's population are adequately met
 - this may sound naïve ...world order advocates recognize this; however, they argue that their view is the actually the most realistic view for the future ...they base this on the fact the world is changing and that the old strategy of pursuing national interests is no longer viable
 - why?
 - reason is simple: the world has become increasingly interdependent and inter-connected such that the narrow pursuit of national interests can only lead to global disaster; to avert disaster, it is necessary for policy makers and others to adopt a global perspective, one that puts the global interest ahead of the national interest

- **Outline of World Order argument**

- if one looks at the world today, we can clearly see serious problems, these include: overpopulation, increasing poverty and hunger, increasing pressures on the planetary ecosystem, increasing levels of destructive power (such that even small groups can threaten to destroy whole societies with nuclear or biological weapons), continued oppression and injustice, and so on
- of course, all these problems have existed for centuries; however, there is a significant difference today, namely, these problems can no longer be confined to limited areas
- in the past, for example, what was happening say, in China or India or Africa, had no real (or at least discernable) impact on the West and vice versa ...
- today, this is no longer true: interconnectedness or interdependence is far more pervasive and embedded, such the fate of every country and person on earth is tied to the actions or inactions of every other country on earth ...
- this is most apparent when we talk about global environmental problems: for example, if the ozone layer is seriously depleted or destroyed, or if global temperatures increase dramatically, we will all suffer regardless of how rich or poor we are
- important to note, too, that just as countries are interdependent or interconnected so are **issues**: e.g., the global environment is profoundly influenced by population pressures, which is profoundly influenced by economic development, which is profoundly influenced by political forces, and vice versa and so on ...
- it's from this perspective that one must evaluate and take stock of the world order perspective, for if you believe that the world has not changed significantly over the last 100 years, much less over the last few decades—and if you're right—then you can safely conclude that advocates of world order are wasting their breath
- if, however, you believe that the world *has* changed, then it behooves you to pay attention to what they say ...this is especially true for Americans since what this country does or does not do is likely to have far greater significance than the actions of any other single country ...

- But herein lies the problem, according to world order activists: it is extremely difficult for “nation-states” to address the most pressing problems facing the world today, because “nation-states” continue to base their actions on the antiquated, but still powerful notion that states must seek to protect and enhance their own security and welfare as best they can (and everyone else be damned)
- this is a problem because states acting with only their own interests in mind are apt to pursue policies and goals that may seemingly protect their own **national** interests (at least in the short run), but which damage or destroy the **global** interest in the long run...
- this represents a classic dilemma, which can best be encapsulated by the phrase: “*what is plainly everybody’s problem is nobody’s business*”
- the task facing advocates of the world order perspective, then, is to get people to understand that “what is plainly everybody’s problem is *everybody’s* business”
 - the task is not, I should stress, to replace the modern state-system ...i.e., advocates of the world order perspective are not advocates of a world government, but rather to create *institutions* and *regimes* and the international and transnational levels that can create a more stronger foundation for cooperation, negotiation, compromise and conflict resolution
- first step toward this goal: the foreign policy agenda must be fundamentally and immediately rewritten, and this rewriting must start by shifting focus from questions of *national* security or *national* interest to *human* security and the *global* interest
- the point is made clearly by one scholar quoted by Michalak: “Unless the United States ...begins to understand that its own national interest must be defined from the standpoint of what is best for the world system as a whole, that interest will not be sustained. Instead, it will crumble with the rest of the foreign policy edifice that is oblivious to its own self-destructive tendencies” (p. 250)
- concretely, world order proponents would advocate the following agenda items (all listed on pp. 250-1):

1. *drastic disarmament (or at least a drastic reduction in current and future military spending)*
 2. *massive programs to create full employment and sustainable development in the Third World*
 3. *Concentration on meeting basic human needs for all—food, water, housing, literacy, and basic health care*
 4. *genuine promotion of democracy and human rights*
 5. *ensuring a livable environment*
 6. *conservation of non-renewable resources*
- simply listing such items, however, probably creates an immediate attitude of cynicism, skepticism or disbelief; how can anybody be so naïve as to propose a drastic shift from a nation-centric to a global-centric foreign policy? ...it defies logic and credulity, does it not?
 - of course, world order proponents have heard all the criticisms—especially of their utopianism—leveled against them, and as M. notes, they frankly acknowledge the challenges they face; they know that change will not come easily, if at all: but the alternative is to accept the status quo, which to their minds will almost certainly lead to a bleaker future for all, if not the total destruction of the planet
 - moreover, advocates of the world order perspective will point out that, if one looks clearly at history, one thing is clear: *dramatic change is possible*, while not all the change is necessarily progressive—far from it—there have been some extremely important and generally beneficial changes ...indeed, just the fact that democracy exists—no matter how imperfect it may be—marks a fundamental change in human history
 - certainly, the original advocates of democracy were considered no less utopian than the advocates of the world order perspective today
 - even more, before the industrial revolution, no one could have conceived of the general standard of living achieved by all but the poorest Americans today ...on this point consider the sorts of protections most American (and Western Europeans) enjoy today: 40-hour work weeks, vacation time, medical leave, unemployment insurance, social security, health care, wages well above subsistence, free primary and secondary education (and subsidized university

- education); 100 years ago all of these would have been considered utopian luxuries, but not today
- in short, progressive change not only can occur, but *has* occurred
 - once one accepts this premise, it becomes possible to understand the world order perspective, even if one does not embrace it
 - one last point on this issue, which is really a reiteration of the first point I made: important to understand that, despite the seemingly Utopian nature of the world order argument, it is also based, in no small measure, on self-interest: if the United States and other powerful nations do not act to change the basis of their foreign policies, the problems facing the world will only get worse ...
 - as they worsen, the US *could* attempt to isolate or insulate itself from these problems —this is certainly an option, but in the long-run, it's not a viable option ...the reason, again, is clear: **interdependence**: a country cannot isolate itself from the damaging impact of global warming or the depletion of the ozone layer; it can't isolate itself from nuclear fallout, should a few lesser powers engage in a nuclear war; it can't isolate itself from the destruction of the international systems of trade and finance, should other countries find it in their interests to close their borders
 - any of these events would be disastrous for the United States, but no amount of military power—no second strike capability—can stop them ...this is a key point in the world order perspective
 - in short, it's no longer “realistic” for the United States to pursue a nation-oriented foreign policy ...as one of the authors in the chapter puts it, “The impersonal logic of possessive individualism is at odds with the imperatives of national and international life”
 - one way to see this, as scholar points out, is to use the metaphor of a common pasture: in a common pasture, it makes a certain amount of sense of individual herdsmen (states) to increase the size of their respective herds; the larger their individual herd, the more money they can make ...however, this thinking ignores cumulative effect of their actions: as each herdsman increases his herd, the commons becomes overgrazed and eventually destroyed ...in the end, everyone is ruined

- there is, it is important to note, already recognition of this principle: international environmental negotiations clearly indicate that most states now recognize the need for broad-based cooperation ... moreover, states recognize that other non-state actors can and must play a role in these negotiations (these non-state actors include NGOs, scientists, and scientific communities) ... even here, however, cooperation is often short-circuited by narrowly focused politicians, who are more beholden to their corporate sponsors than they are to the needs of the people they represent ...
- still, the negotiations on the environment show promise ... one can also see tentative steps in other areas, most significantly the issue of global poverty and inequality ...
- there still remains a need, however, for a major and sustained push ... which is one reason why the role of the US is so important: as the only superpower, if the US acts in a unilateral manner, it is certainly possible that other states will join in ... but even if they don't, the net effect would still, as Beres puts it, "still be gainful, since nothing could be more futile than continuing on the present collision course"