International Organisations and Development

Foundations of the International Organisation:
Introduction to the Course
Lesson I

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What is the meaning of 'International'?

Everything that goes under:

- Interstate or intergovernmental relations (between governments)
- Transnational relations (not only involving activities between governments)
- Transgovernmental relations (between branches of government in different countries not going under foreign policy-making channels)

What is an 'International organisation'?

Basic definition:

One form of organisation of international (either interstate, transnational or transgovernmental) relations with

- a formal system of rules and objectives
- a formal technical and material organisation

**International organisation can be seen as *process*
and international organisations can be seen as the *representative aspect* (mainly, institutions) generated by that process**

Origins

- The origins of the IO date back to the creation of a relatively stable system of sovereign states in Europe, with the end of medevial Europe and the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

- Westphalia marks the recognition to the state of the right to sovereignty (i.e. have defined geographical boundaries, a settled population, own government, own religion) and for states to conduct their mutual relations on an equal basis.

- However, it took until the nineteenth century before an awareness of the problems arising from state co-existence developed into recognition of the need for creation of rules and institutional devices for regulating state relations (including issues such as trade, naval warfare etc.).

- Before, Europe was just a battlefield (with some seventy significant wars fought between 1650 and 1800)!

The Congress of Vienna (1814-1815)

- It was a meeting of ambassadors of European states chaired by Austrian statesman von Metternich. It was the first occasion in history where, on a continental scale, national representatives came together to agree on treaties instead of relying mainly on messages among capitals. The Congress of Vienna was at the origin of the framework for international politics.

- The objective of the Congress was to provide a long-term peace plan for Europe by settling critical issues (revolutions, republicanism, war) arising from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The goal was not simply to restore old boundaries but to resize the main powers so they could balance each other and remain at peace.

- Although it was essentially a conservative Congress with an aim to restore the old order, it contributed to standardization and codification of rules for diplomacy and also established the idea for the main powers (the so called *Concert of Europe*) to meet in times of peace to prevent war, a real improvement compared to the bilateral relations of the past.

A long way to peace

- In real fact, most of the discussions at the Congress of Vienna occurred in face-to-face sessions among the Great Powers (Austria, Britain, France, Russia and Prussia) with limited or no participation by other delegates

- Although the system implemented after the Congress of Vienna was based on laws and procedures (i.e. arbitration), in real fact for almost one century the diplomacy and institutions resulting from a long series of meetings (e.g. the Hague Conventions of 1899 end 1907 on disarmament, laws of war and war crimes) were not mature enough for real collective action and for overcoming pure state interest.

- At the same time, however, the idea of having a group of experts and administrators performing particular functions on behalf of states - in response to challenges such as technological advancement, industrial revolution, internationalisation of trade and the patent need to co-ordinate national developments in these areas - was taken further (e.g. establishment in 1868 of the International Telegraphic Bureau and in 1874 of the General Postal Union)

The League of Nations (1919-1946)

- The participants at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 had the dual task of making a settlement in favor of victors of WWI and of establishing a functioning international system after the disturbances created by the war.

- As the League of Nations – the first worldwide intergovernmental organisation with maintaining peace as its main mission – had as its aim the promotion of international co-operation and security, it required the form of relations between states to be open, lawful, just and peaceable.

- President Wilson – a founder of the League – prioritized 'open covenants, openly arrived at' in the framework of the League system, as opposed to the secret agreements which had contributed to the outbreak of WWI.

- According to the League system, states resorting to war in disregard of how they should conduct their relations (the stress in Articles 12-15 was on arbitration, conciliation and mediation) were deemed 'to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to severance of all trade or financial relations'.

- In real fact, during the 1920s, the League provided a useful but modest addition to international diplomacy. Its abandonment by countries (including US) unwilling to involve themselves made the League of Nations an empty nutshell, unable to prevent the outbreak of WWII.