Introduction to International Relations

Chapter Notes: Chapter 6
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Chapter Six:
After the Cold War

Chapter Overview

Focusing on the post-Cold War world, chapter 6 examines the roots and consequences of global terrorism through the lens of the three perspectives. Liberal accounts, which are concentrated at the systemic level, attribute terrorism to the failure of diplomacy, particularly in the Middle East. This chapter explores liberals' emphasis on institutions and multilateralism to combat terrorism. Realists, on the other hand, view terrorism as an asymmetric threat; smaller powers, leveraging modern technology, seek to balance against American unipolarity in the world. For realists, the fight against terrorism is a global war. The identity perspective examines the role of ideologies in the occurrence of terrorism, paying particular attention to Islamic fundamentalism. Some identity arguments focus on the spread of democracy as the best solution to this global conflict.

The World since 1990: Liberal

- Rise and fall of collective security: Reached apex during the Persian Gulf War but quickly demised following 1993 efforts in Somalia.

- Israel and PLO in Oslo in 1993 reached several agreements, but failed negotiations in 2000 led to a new *intifada*.

- Failure of negotiations led to vacuum, which was filled by terrorist organizations. The threat of terrorism was further increased by new information technology, states that supported terrorist organizations, and the spread of WMD.

- Although international institutions had been growing stronger, America's unilateralism in Iraq and Afghanistan substantially weakened them.

The World since 1990: Realist

- Realists recognize the unique feature of the post-Cold War world as American unipolarity.

- Focus on terrorism as a global war, not merely a criminal act.

- Realist perspectives look to growing powers that need to be balanced, such as China.

- Also look at possibility of clash of civilizations—perhaps future struggles for power will occur not between states but along civilization fault lines.

The World since 1990: Identity

- Is democracy the "end of history?" According to Francis Fukuyama, democracy ends the struggle between dominance and revolution, making war unnecessary between democratic nations.
- Fukuyama's thesis fell on fertile ground, causing some to blame terrorism on the lack of democracy in certain regions.
- Social constructivists argue that state behavior is a consequence of common constructed norms and identities.
- In terms of basic human rights, normative change has shifted emphasis from rights of states to rights of groups and individuals. These humanitarian norms explain the world's reaction to terrorism.
- Identity perspectives also emphasize the political ideas of fundamentalist Islam.
- Contemporary Islamic fundamentalism pioneered by Sayyid Qutb, who trained Osama bin Laden.
- Radical Islam has become a pretext for a wider campaign against American hegemony and influence.

Thought Questions

1. Is democracy, as Francis Fukuyama suggests, the "end of history"? Discuss.

2. Do you think that Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis is a good way of examining conflict in the world today? Are there dangers associated with viewing the world according to civilizations?

3. Is the recent wave of terrorism rooted in fundamentalist Islam, as one identity argument suggests, or are other factors more important? Support your position with examples.

4. According to the liberal perspective, legitimacy is derived by UN authorization. Do you agree with this, or can legitimacy be derived from another source?

5. Which is the more useful manner of looking at terrorists—as criminals, like liberals see them, or as enemy combatants, like they are viewed by realists? What are the ramifications of each approach?