

Civilizations, Empires and World Order

Professor Amitav Acharya

Introduction

The 21st century is witnessing the end of the “great divergence” between the West and the Rest, which began with the rapid ascent of Western Europe from the 17th century AD onwards and the corresponding decline of the once mighty and wealthy civilizations, such as those of China, India, and Islam. As the global power and idea shifts reshape dynamics of world politics civilizational identities are asserting themselves, creating fears of what Samuel Huntington called a “clash of civilizations”. At the same time, the relative decline of the West, the crisis in the US-led liberal hegemonic order and the increasingly global role of rising powers such as China and India in world affairs are creating new possibilities of both conflict and mutual learning and cooperation between the West and the Rest. Against this backdrop, it has become ever more important to revisit the concepts of “civilization” and “world order”, to examine them from a historical and global perspective, to analyze their interaction and inter-relationships through the ages, and to draw lessons for the present and the future.

Aside from its intellectual and analytical purpose, this course has a normative inspiration: to promote greater diversity and inclusion in international studies. According to its foundational narrative, the field of International Relations (IR) was “born” in the UK, and “raised” in the US; hence its labelling as an “American social science” (in Stanley Hoffmann’s phrase). The conventional study of international relations relies heavily on concepts and practices developed in Europe and the US. This course (due to lack of time, it has a primary focus on China, India and Islam, but brings in others) challenges the Western-centric narrative of IR and opens the door to a Global International Relations (Global IR). While conventional IR uses the nation-state as the unit of analysis, the Global IR approach takes civilizations as the basis unit to explore the multiple types of international systems or world orders, including those that predate the Westphalian system and the rise of the West.

If one approaches IR (or “world politics” or “international studies”) with the nation-state as its core unit of analysis, one has less than 400 years of history to play with. This is also the period of the rise and dominance of the West. If one studies IR and related fields from the perspective of civilizations, then one has over 4000 years of human history to reflect on and analyze. In this broad sweep of history, many civilizations have risen, fallen, and reemerged. No civilization can claim a monopoly over ideas or approaches to peace, security, diplomacy, development, human rights, environmental protection, or other related subject-matter of IR. By taking a broad historical perspective, this course aims to uncover the forgotten or marginalized agency of non-Western civilizations in the making of the modern world order, and stress the multiple, global origins of international relations and world politics. This “Global IR” approach not only helps us to better understand the contemporary dynamics of world politics, but also promotes inclusiveness in our increasingly complex, diverse and multicultural world.

Learning Objectives

In completing this course, students should have developed:

1. Broad familiarity with the history of civilizations and world orders, especially the major civilizations such as China, India, Islam and their impact on the world orders of their times;
2. Ability to analyze the key factors behind the rise of the West and the role played by non-Western civilizations in contributing to it and recognize the historical and cultural forces that have shaped the contemporary world order and will shape the future;
3. Understand and appreciate the multiple foundations of theories and concepts of the discipline of International Relations (IR) and question the present state of IR as a Eurocentric or Western-centric field of study;
4. Enhanced critical thinking, including ability to interpret and present international affairs from multiple cultural and philosophical perspectives;
5. Understand and analyze the key forces shaping world politics today, including the role of emerging powers such as China and India, trends in global governance, conflict and cooperation among nations and states;
6. Sensitivity to, and respect for, diversity and inclusion in the study international affairs.

Texts:

1. Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin, 2014)
2. Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, Polity, 2018)

Assignments:

A. Mid-Term Essay (20%): The “Great Divergence”: Causes, Consequences and Legacies (Deadline Oct 5)

The Great Divergence refers to the rise of Western Europe vis-à-vis Asia after the 15th century AD.

Your essay should answer the following three questions:

- Why did the “great divergence” occur?
- Would the West have developed its “killer apps” without imperialism and racism?
- What were the principal Eastern contributions to the rise of the West?

B. Final Essay (40%) On the topic decided by you after approval from the professor. This must fall within the scope of the syllabus. (Deadline, last day of Class)

C. Participation (40%)

This will take into consideration regular, punctual attendance; active participation in discussions (asking questions to professor and presenters, commenting on their views as well as those of other students participating in discussions).

Schedule: Topics and Readings

Class 1. The End of World Order?

Video to watch before class, “Civilisation State, Multilateralism and Globalisation” <https://doc-research.org/2019/10/civilisation-state-globalisation/> Panel at the 17th Rhodes Forum, Rhodes, Greece, 11-12 October 2019. (you can watch as much as you want, but first half hour is essential and Prof Acharya’s part begins 24.00 minute- ends 30.34 minute)

Required:

- Henry Kissinger, “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-forever-alter-the-world-order-11585953005>
- Amitav Acharya, “How the Coronavirus May Reshape the World Order,” *The National Interest*, April 18, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-coronavirus-may-reshape-world-order-145972>
- Andreas Herberg-Rothe, “The End of The Liberal World Order Is Not The End Of The World,” February 29, 2020, <https://www.thepeninsula.org.in/2020/02/29/the-end-of-the-liberal-world-order-is-not-the-end-of-the-world-we-just-need-to-fight-for-freedom-and-equality/>

Class 2. Concepts, Approaches and Foundations

Required Reading:

- Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Ch.1: “The Question of World Order” (entire chapter)
- Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, Ch.1 (“A Multiplex World”-entire chapter)

Class 3. The Chinese World Order

Required:

- John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations* (Harvard University Press, 1968), Chapter 1: “A Preliminary Framework”
- Kissinger, *World Order*, Ch.6, “Towards an Asian Order” (entire chapter)
- Suisheng Zhao, “Reconstruction of Chinese History for a Peaceful Rise,” *YaleGlobal*, June 13, 2017. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/reconstruction-chinese-history-peaceful-rise>
- Tingyang Zhao, “Redefining the Concept of Politics via “tianxia”: The Problems, Conditions and Methodology,” *World Economics and Politics* (Beijing), No.6 (2015): 4-22.
- William Callahan, “Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony?,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10 (2008), 749–761. <http://williamacallahan.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Callahan-TX-ISR-08.pdf>
- Zhang Feng, “The Tianxia System: World Order in a Chinese Utopia,” http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tienhsia.php?searchterm=021_utopia.inc&issue=021

Further Reading:

- “How Does China’s Imperial Past Shape Its Foreign Policy Today?”, A ChinaFile Conversation, March 15, 2017. <http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/how-does-chinas-imperial-past-shape-its-foreign-policy-today>
- Suisheng Zhao, “Rethinking the Chinese World Order: the imperial cycle and the rise of China,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol 24, No.96 (2015): 961-982.

Class 4. Indian World Order

(One presentation, covering Albinski and Boesche readings only)

Required:

- Kissinger, *World Order*, Ch. 5 “The Multiplicity of Asia”, pp. 192-208 (hardcover pages, If soft cover or e-book, then read the section dealing with India)
- Henry S. Albinski, “The Place of the Emperor Asoka in Ancient Indian Political Thought,” *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Feb., 1958), pp. 62-75.
- Roger Boesche, “Kautilya's "Arthaśāstra" on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India,” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan., 2003), pp. 9-37, <http://www.defencejournal.com/2003/mar/kautilya.htm>

Further Reading:

- Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Ch.5 {“India: Multiple Interdependencies and the Mauryan Empire”}
- Upinder Singh (2012) *Governing the State and the Self: Political Philosophy and Practice in the Edicts of Aśoka*, *South Asian Studies*, 28:2, 131-145.
- Gerald Draper, “The Contribution of the Emperor Asoka Maurya to the Development of the Humanitarian Ideal in Warfare,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, No.305 April 30, 1995. <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/article/other/57jmf2.htm>

Class 5. The Islamic World Order

Required:

- Cemil Aydin, “What is the Muslim World,” *Aeon*, 1 August 2018, https://aeon.co/amp/essays/the-idea-of-a-muslim-world-is-both-modern-and-misleading?__twitter_impression=true
- Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations* (New York: Penguin, 1993), “The Greatness and Decline of Islam”.
- Kissinger, *World Order*, Ch.3 “Islamism and the Middle East: A World in Disorder”.
- John Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, Ch. 2 (“Islamic and African Pioneers”).

Further Reading:

- Islam and the West', A speech by HRH The Prince of Wales at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies , The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, Published on 27th October 1993 <http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/media/speeches/speech-hrh-the-prince-of-wales-titled-islam-and-the-west-the-oxford-centre-islamic> Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, “International Relations Theory and the Islamic Worldview,” in Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, ed.,

Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia (London: Routledge 2010).

- Arun Bala, *The Dialogue of Civilizations and the Birth of Modern Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): Ch. 6, “What Made the Renaissance in Europe?” 53-62.

Class 6. The Rise of the West

Required:

- Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), Introduction (“Rasselas’s Question”); Ch. 1 (“Competition”), Ch.3 (“Science”)
- John Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Ch.1 (“Countering the Eurocentric Myth of the Pristine West”); Ch.3 (“Chinese Pioneers”); Ch.6 (“The Myth of the Italian Pioneer”).

Further Reading:

- Pankaj Mishra, “Watch this Man,” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 33 No. 21, November 2011, pp.10-12 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n21/pankaj-mishra/watch-this-man>
- Charles C. Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (Vintage, 2012)
- Peter Gordon and Juan Jose Morales, “How China played a part in the birth of globalisation in the 16th century,” *South China Morning Post*, 12 January 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2061588/how-china-played-part-birth-globalisation-16th>

Class 7. The Death of Civilization: the “New World” and Africa

Required:

- Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Chapter 3 (“Property”); Chapter 4 (“Medicine”)
- “How Slavery Helped Build a World Economy”, an excerpt from *Jubilee: The Emergence of African-American Culture*, a publication of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library (National Geographic Books 2003), 3 January 2003, <https://api.nationalgeographic.com/distribution/public/amp/news/2003/1/how-slavery-helped-build-a-world-economy>
- Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, 2nd edn (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), pp. 71-109;127-151; 304-318
- John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations*. (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), Ch. 9.
- Nonso Obikili, “The trans-Atlantic slave trade and local political fragmentation in Africa”, AEHN: African Economic History Network, 12 September 2016, <https://www.aehnetwork.org/blog/the-trans-atlantic-slave-trade-and-local-political-fragmentation-in-africa/>

Further Reading:

- Charles C. Mann, “1491,” *The Atlantic* (March 2002). <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/302445/>

- Barry Buzan, “The 'Standard of Civilisation as an English School Concept,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, vol. 42, no3 (2014): 576–594

Class 8. The Rise and Decline of the American World Order

Required:

- Kissinger, *World Order*, Ch.7 and 8.
- Yuen Foong Khong, “The American Tributary System,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol.6, No.1 (March 2013): 1–47.
<https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/6/1/1/457227>
- Robert N. Clinton, “Code of Indian Offenses,” 24 February 2008, <http://tribal-law.blogspot.com/2008/02/code-of-indian-offenses.html>
- “Iroquois Constitution: A Forerunner to Colonists’ Democratic Principles”, *New York Times*, 28 June 1997 <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/06/28/us/iroquois-constitution-a-forerunner-to-colonists-democratic-principles.html>
- Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, Ch.11 (“The Great Law of Peace”)
- Neta C. Crawford, “A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois Nations,” *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 3. (Summer, 1994), pp. 345-385
- Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, Ch. 2 (“The Rise and Fall of the Unipolar Moment”-entire chapter); Ch.3 (“The Myth of Liberal Hegemony”-entire chapter)

Further Reading

- Ta-Nehisi Coates. “Slavery Made America”, *The Atlantic*, 24 June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288/>
- Joseph S. Nye, “Is America Like Rome,” *Huffington Post*.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joseph-s-nye/america-like-rome_b_7147216.html
- “America: An empire to rival Rome?”,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3430199.stm>
- Robert D. Kaplan, “America's Darwinian Nationalism,” *The National Interest* (September-October 2017). <http://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/americas-darwinian-nationalism-21889>
- Jeanne T. Heidler and David S. Heidler, “Manifest Destiny,” Updated, Aug 3, 2018.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Manifest-Destiny>

Class 9. The Rise of the Rest

Required:

- Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. Conclusion, (“The Rivals”)
- Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of the Rest”, <http://fareedzakaria.com/2008/05/12/the-rise-of-the-rest/>

- Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, (pages 36-42 of Ch.2, section: “A Global Economic Shift”; and Chapter 4 (“Emerging Powers: Hype of the Rest”, entire chapter)

Further Reading:

- Amitav Acharya, “Idea-Shift: How Ideas From the Rest are Reshaping Global Order,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 37, no.7 (2016): 1156-1170.

Class 10. Civilizations and the Post-American World: Conflict or Cooperation?

Required:

- **Video to watch before the class**, “Civilisation State: Multilateralism and Globalisation,” Rhodes Forum 12 October 2019, <https://doc-research.org/2019/10/civilisation-state-globalisation/> (watch the whole video, or as much as you can; but Acharya presentation at 24 minute to 33.20 minute)
- Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no.3 (Summer 1993).
- Gideon Rachman, “China, India and the rise of the 'civilisation state'”, *The Financial Times*, 4 March 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/b6bc9ac2-3e5b-11e9-9bee-efab61506f44>
- Adrian Pabst, “China, Russia and the return of the civilisational state,” *New Statesman*, 8 May 2019, <https://www.newstatesman.com/2019/05/china-russia-and-return-civilisational-state>
- Amitav Acharya, “The Myth of the “Civilization State”: Rising Powers and the Cultural Challenge to World Order,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer 2020): 139-156.
- Richard Higgott, et al, *Civilizations, States, and World Order: Where are we, Where are we heading*”, (Berlin: Dialogue of Civilisations Research Institute, 2019”, https://doc-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Civilisations-states-and-world-order_PDF-slim.pdf

Further Reading:

- Liu Binyan, “Civilization Grafting: No Culture is an Island,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no.4 (September/October 1993)

Class 11: The Future of World Order

Required:

- **Video** to watch before the class, Paris Peace Forum, “Defeating the Deadlock: Towards a New Consensus for Multilateral Action,” Streamed live on Nov 12, 2019, Panel discussion featuring Mary Robinson, Amitav Acharya, Martin Tisné, Nora Müller, Thomas Paulsen, and Latha Reddy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziXVu0MHjko> (Watch whole video (Acharya appears from 20.04-26.44 minute and 47.16- 52.36 minute)
- Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Conclusion (“World Order in Our Time?” entire chapter)

- G. John Ikenberry, “Why the Liberal Order Will Survive,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2018): 17–29.
- Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, Ch. 3, 5 & 6
- Robert Blackwill and Thomas Wright, *The End of World Order and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Council On Foreign Relations, May 2020), <https://www.cfr.org/report/end-world-order-and-american-foreign-policy>

Short Comments (Required):

- Andreas Herberg-Rothe, “The End Of The Liberal World Order Is Not The End Of The World,” February 29, 2020, <https://www.thepeninsula.org.in/2020/02/29/the-end-of-the-liberal-world-order-is-not-the-end-of-the-world-we-just-need-to-fight-for-freedom-and-equality/>
- David Kang, “We all suffer if the field is parochial”, *Duck of Minerva*, 27 August 2020, <https://duckofminerva.com/2020/08/we-all-suffer-if-the-field-is-parochial.html>

Class 12.: Lecture on World Order (speaker to be confirmed)

Class 13.: Lecture on Future of Multilateralism and Global Governance, Prof Richard Higgott, Vrije Universiteit Brussels, to be confirmed)

Class 14: Wrap up: What I learnt from the course.

(All students make a short presentation about what they learnt from the course. Professor responds)