

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LIBRARY · VOLUME 1

International Event Analysis Pack

Chronology, actors, reactions, mechanisms, rivals, and uncertainty.

Companion to The World Between States
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Use one dossier per bounded outcome. Preserve source roles and dates. An actor claim belongs in the record as a claim; it becomes a fact only through appropriate evidence. Keep the conclusion proportionate to what another reader can inspect.

Contents

1	Core Concepts Without the Jargon	3
2	Theory Comparison Matrix	4
3	Case Reconstruction Worksheet	5
3.1	Outcome	5
3.2	Chronology	5
3.3	Actor Map	5
3.4	Reaction Chain	5
3.5	Explanation	6
4	Reading Official Statements and Data Carefully	7
4.1	Official Statement Card	7
4.2	Data Card	7
4.3	Map Card	7
5	An Annotated Path Into the Discipline	8
5.1	Foundations and theory	8
5.2	Power and security	8
5.3	Institutions and law	8
5.4	Political economy and inequality	8
5.5	Methods and evidence	8

Core Concepts Without the Jargon

Anarchy

A system without a final common sovereign above states. It does not mean constant chaos or absence of rules.

Sovereignty

A cluster of claims about domestic authority, external independence, international legal status, practical control, and non-intervention.

Power

Capacity to produce a specified effect through relationships, rules, structures, or meaning. Resources require conversion.

Security dilemma

A condition in which defensive measures can reduce another actor's security and generate a mutually costly spiral.

Deterrence

Preventing an action by convincing an actor that it will fail or cost too much.

Compellence

Making an actor begin, stop, or reverse action through conditional pressure and assurance.

Institution

A durable rule, practice, or organization that structures expectations and interaction.

Interdependence

A relationship in which actors impose consequential effects on each other; its politics depends on asymmetry and alternatives.

Norm

A shared expectation about appropriate conduct for an actor with a given identity.

Order

A sufficiently stable pattern of rules, expectations, institutions, and power relationships.

Mechanism

The actors and steps connecting a proposed cause to an outcome.

Level of analysis

The location of a cause or process: individual, domestic, dyadic, regional, systemic, or transnational.

For every concept, add a verb, actor, and case. A definition becomes useful only when it helps you distinguish one mechanism from another.

Theory Comparison Matrix

Realist lenses

Ask how anarchy, power, threat, uncertainty, and survival shape behavior. Strong for security competition and position. Blind spot when domestic institutions, ideas, or non-state authority carry the variation.

Liberal lenses

Ask how domestic preferences, institutions, information, exchange, and repeated cooperation shape outcomes. Strong for variation in cooperation and state preferences. Blind spot when hierarchy and coercion are treated as correctable transaction costs.

Constructivist lenses

Ask how identity, norms, categories, and interaction construct interests and appropriate action. Strong for change in meaning and legitimacy. Blind spot when discourse is shown without the pathway into behavior.

Critical and postcolonial lenses

Ask how hierarchy, empire, class, race, gender, knowledge, and exclusion produce the system and its categories. Strong for hidden distribution and historical structure. Blind spot when critique does not distinguish causal mechanisms or variation.

For the event under study, write the question, mechanism, required evidence, strongest contribution, and blind spot for each lens. Do not award points for mentioning every theory.

Case Reconstruction Worksheet

3.1 Outcome

Actor, action or change, date, place, and comparison:

3.2 Chronology

For each entry record event date, publication date, actor, source, confidence, and status as verified event, actor claim, report, inference, or unresolved.

3.3 Actor Map

For each consequential actor: objective, capability, dependency, constraint, audience, arena.

3.4 Reaction Chain

Action → observed signal → interpretation → response → unintended effect.

3.5 Explanation

Primary mechanism, observable evidence, strongest rival, fact, inference, unresolved question, confidence, and manuscript date.

Reading Official Statements and Data Carefully

4.1 Official Statement Card

1. Who spoke, under which institutional authority?
2. What act is this: law, decision, policy, allegation, explanation, or advocacy?
3. Which audience and decision does it seek to affect?
4. Which facts are supported independently?
5. Which terms are undefined or contested?
6. What omission would change the interpretation?
7. What later behavior supports or contradicts it?

An official source is primary evidence of the official act. It is not automatically independent verification of every factual claim inside it.

4.2 Data Card

Record publisher, mandate, definition, unit, population, geography, reference date, release date, stock or flow, missingness, revision status, uncertainty, and comparison compatibility.

Never copy a moving number without its date and category.

4.3 Map Card

Record producer, projection, boundary status, data date, control versus claim, scale, omitted routes or populations, and the political work the map performs. A clean line can hide a disputed or administered boundary.

An Annotated Path Into the Discipline

Begin with the question you need to answer rather than a universal reading list.

5.1 Foundations and theory

Use a current university-level International Relations textbook for disciplinary breadth, then read primary theoretical works in context. Compare realism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism, feminist IR, Marxist and critical political economy, postcolonial IR, and English School approaches without treating one text as a whole tradition.

5.2 Power and security

Read Robert Jervis on the security dilemma, Thomas Schelling on coercion and bargaining, James Fearon on rationalist explanations for war, and Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall on forms of power. Pair theory with historical work that tests decision records and scope conditions.

5.3 Institutions and law

Read the constitutive instrument before commentary: the UN Charter, treaty text, court judgment, or institutional rules. Then use scholarship to explain compliance, delegation, legalization, and power. International law primers should be current and written by qualified specialists.

5.4 Political economy and inequality

Study trade and finance through both efficiency and distribution. Add work on interdependence, structural power, development, empire, race, gender, labor, and environmental politics. Official reports supply data and institutional positions, not the only interpretation.

5.5 Methods and evidence

Learn case selection, process tracing, comparison, causal inference, archival research, and interpretive methods. The right method follows the question and evidence. No source count substitutes for a causal design.

Maintain a reading ledger: question, mechanism, evidence, strength, limit, and next source. Reading becomes disciplinary when texts enter relation instead of forming a pile of summaries.

Explain the mechanism. Preserve the uncertainty.