Transnational Issues

The films in this section—*Lord of War, The International, Blood Diamond, The Interpreter,* and *The Whistleblower*— all connect by addressing transnational security issues. Transnational issues do not recognize political borders. Instead, these issues cross borders, challenging countries' abilities to resolve issues like illegal weapons sales, drug trafficking, the sex trade, trade in endangered species, environmental concerns, and so on. Thus, transnational issues challenge the state's ability to maintain its sovereign grasp over its territory, people, resources, and security. Addressing transnational issues, therefore, requires international cooperation.

As transnational issues are not contained within states, they are *intermestic* issues. This term was coined to describe how most issues in today's interconnected world are neither solely '*inter*'national nor do'*mestic*', but issues that impact and are affected by both international and domestic factors. Take, for instance, the weapons trade in *Lord of War*. The domestic demand by Andre Baptiste to maintain control created a market for the illegal weapons that Yuri Orlov obtained in post-Soviet Ukraine and Liberia. Not only were the weapons from a different country, but the international events resulting in a huge supply of weapons from the arms build-up during the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union were global factors. Thus, the civil war in Liberia was driven by intermestic factors.

In countries' attempts to address these issues, the extent to which sovereign states can cooperate with one another most often determines whether a transnational issue can be addressed. Addressing an intermestic issue is complex, requiring countries to not only adopt a policy, but implement and enforce it as well. Even though countries may have an incentive to back a policy and really want to effectively institute it, they may lack the resources, as is often the case in developing countries, which are collectively described as the Global South (GS). Policy effectiveness relies on institutional support (i.e., agencies/people in government positions willing and able to implement and enforce policy), money in the budget for incurred costs, trained personnel, and infrastructure, which includes the physical and institutional structures necessary to facilitate adoption and enforcement. Many GS countries lack even the basic infrastructure of paved roads beyond a few key cities, making it difficult to efficiently reach to outlying parts of the country to deal with domestic situations.

Consider this scenario: Guinea Bissau, a poor West African country, wants to stop drug smuggling, an intermestic issue. But as the 170th poorest country in the world, it struggles to find the resources to curb smuggling. In fact, the country is entrenched in the drug trade because so many people are poor and have few alternatives for supporting themselves. This conduit for cocaine trafficking to Europe from Latin America, via this coastal African country, has given Guinea-Bissau the status of 'narco-state'. The government wants to draw in foreign investment to try to take advantage of its few natural resources, but with drug-traffickers operating freely in the country, businesses are reluctant to invest. Since the country is so poor, those in government posts charged with enforcing the laws –from pencil pushers to border guards—are easily bought off because taking money from one bribe can be as much as a month's–or even a year's–salary in a country where the average person earns about $672 a year.

Guinea-Bissau, or any other country that wants to address an intermestic issue, is necessarily reliant cooperating with other countries. In additional to treaties or aid between countries, states also form organizations that have some autonomy to address issues. The need to collaborate on transnational issues has resulted in the exponential growth of intergovernmental (IGO) and nongovernmental (NGO) organizations to address intermestic issues. IGOs are created by states, with states as the only members that make up these organizations. The United Nations U.N.) is the largest IGO in the world, as it has more members than any other IGO. 193 of the 194 recognized sovereign countries in the world are members.[1] Countries use IGOs like the U.N. to promote their self-interests, which may involve cooperating over an issue, such as creating Interpol to track criminal activity, or participation may involve using these IGOs to prevent intervention into their affairs, such as China's relationship with the U.N. regarding the South China Sea.

NGOs are formed by private citizens; states are not members. These come in a variety of forms, from global to local. It is not uncommon for NGOs to have a central, international office, and have state 'chapters'. For instance, Greenpeace, an environmental NGO, is based in Canada, but has offices in over 40 countries, in an attempt to draw more attention and garner support at the country-level. The self-interested nature of actors (in the form of individuals, organizations, states, and corporations), however, regularly makes addressing intermestic issues difficult.

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[1] Vatican City is the only other recognized sovereign state, but it chooses to not be a member of the U.N. In the modern global system, a nation of people, such as the Palestinians or the Kurds, who aspires to be a globally-recognized sovereign state needs U.N. approval.

Parties often not only put their self-interest first, over that of the whole, but concerns for short-term gains over long-term benefits tend to prevail, particularly in situations involving people in GS countries, who are necessarily concerned about making enough money to meet their basic needs.

International law is the product of coordination between states both by treaties between them as well as policies passed through IGOs. The key thing to keep in mind when considering the effectiveness of international law is this: International law will only ever be as effective as the sovereign states in the world want it to be. As you can relate from the first set of films, the self-interests of any variety of actors can undermine carrying out international law.

Like the previous section, these films also address security issues. Individual states cannot individually resolve these issues that challenge their physical and economic security. This obstacle should sound familiar from the issues raised in The Enemy & Security section.

As mentioned and discussed in Part I, people tend to think of security only in terms of military protection and as a country's ability to secure its citizens from attacks by state and non-state actors (such rebels or terrorists—sometimes considered the same thing). Security, however, also involves promoting the welfare of humans for development. The World Bank (WB), in its development efforts, adopted a strategy that considers not only economic factors, but also potential human contributions and natural resources. The WB's strategy is one of sustainable development which is an attempt to achieve economic development without destroying the environment. Moreover, achieving sustainable development necessarily involves promoting human security through promoting development projects that help to improve the quality of peoples' lives. If people cannot have a decent quality of life, they will be less likely and able to progress while protecting the environment. This objective applies to both development in the GS as well as further development in the Global North (GN), where demand for goods and services also threaten the environment.

Developing countries particularly struggle to build infrastructure throughout their countries to help to alleviate poverty and provide opportunities, and thus, human security. Since Global South countries account for about 80% of the world's countries, but are not self-sufficient, they rely on foreign aid, IGOs, and NGOs to help meet the human security needs of their citizens. This dependence undermines their sovereign ability of most GS countries to have any real leverage in the international system.

Human security focuses on development that helps people to meet their basic needs. For the poorest countries in the world, this may involve helping to give people access to clean water, housing, and nutrition. For developing countries where most peoples' very basic needs are met, achieving human security may instead focus on providing education, healthcare, and job training. Human security in the GS is regularly challenged by the lack of money for developing the infrastructure and institutions of the country, leaving people to find ways to support themselves and their families. GS countries are thus more susceptible to corruption and illegal activities. As described above, Guinea-Bissau exemplifies the challenges facing many GS countries.

The fact that Guinea-Bissau is a transit country for drugs is the result of capitalist consumerism in the international economic system with the expectation that someone will supply whatever goods and services are in demand. Much consumer demand comes from the GN or the more highly developed GS countries, referred to as emerging economies (EEs), such as China, India, and South Africa. These same countries, however, are also significant suppliers of goods and services to GN countries. As you review the films and articles relating to transnational issues, consider how consumerism affects the supply of goods and services, as well as the intermestic implications on human beings and the planet in filling these demands.

As a particular consequence of insecurity in the GS, but also the competitive nature of all actors in the world, addressing transnational issues is challenging. Self-interests regularly collide between individuals (especially as consumers), corporations, various levels of governments, various levels of organizations, terrorist groups, religious affiliates, and prominent individuals. Yet whether they are aware of it or not, everyone is affected by illegal weapons sales, drug trafficking, the sex trade, trade in endangered species, and climate change. Because the effects are more often indirect, most people do not realize just how deeply they are affected by these activities. Countries attempt to deal with the issues–with a greater or lesser degree of commitment–through both unilateral and cooperative efforts. For instance, countries adopt domestic policies to combat trafficking of illegal goods/money/humans, while also networking globally through INTERPOL. Yet the pursuit of their self-interests tempers the extent to which countries, and those who represent them, are willing to create and comply with international law.

As you review the next set of films/articles, consider the difficulties in promoting human security and the responsibilities governments and the IGOs they form have in addressing transnational issues, creating policies to address injustices, implementing policies, and enforcing

them. Also think about how the issues raised in the films/articles are intermestic in terms of the interconnectedness of the GN and GS. Finally, consider what responsibilities GN countries have to the rest of the world with their economic advantage, as well as their own involvement in transnational issues.