

**Summary**

**Chapter 1: Understanding International Relations**

* International relations are an important part of everyday life, impacting everything from the phone in your pocket to wars between countries.
* Levels-of-analysis are an important framework for understanding international relations.
  + At the individual level are leaders. Scholars focusing at this level emphasize individual decision makers, their psychological capacity, and their effect on international relations.
  + At the state level, scholars focus on the political or economic characteristics of states.
  + At the international level, scholars focus on characteristics of the international system. For example, since states have sovereignty there is no formal international government. Thus, they exist in anarchy, an important component of the international level-of-analysis.
* International relations is characterized by recurring, unresolved, consequential questions that have persisted for centuries, including the questions relating to the causes of war and peace, the effect of non-state actors on international relations, the role of the environment in international relations, and the best ways to conduct foreign policy, among others.
* In international relations, it is important to make connections between theory and practice, past and present, and aspiration and reality.
* It is also important in IR to examine ideas from different perspectives and to understand the effect that different perspectives have on crucial situations in international relations.