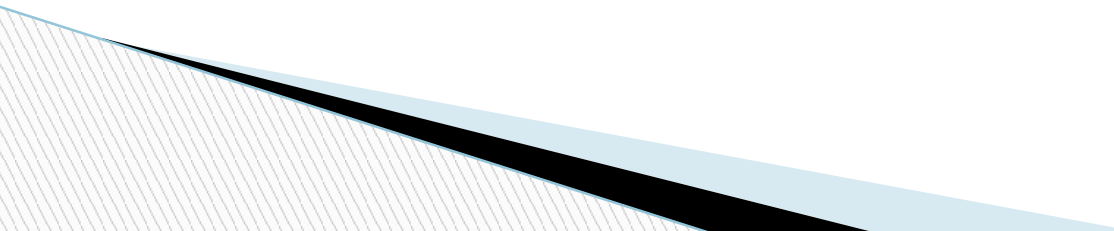# Theory of International Relations

Anastasiia TSYBULIAK
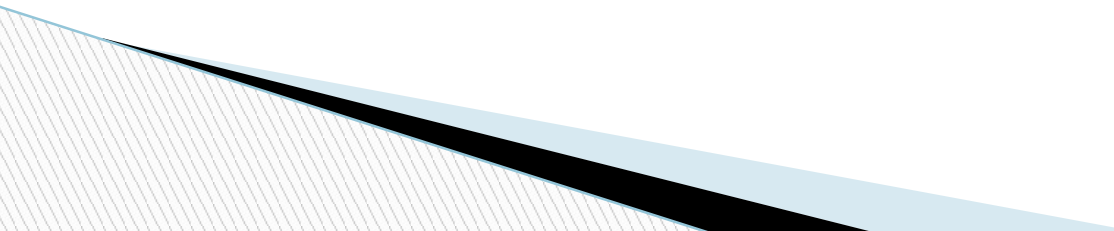
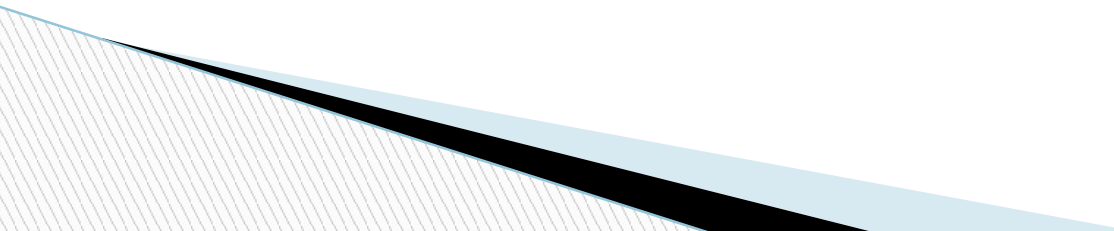# Session 4

Major Concepts in International Relations

- Systemic level concepts
- Unit-level concepts
- Individual or sub-unit level concepts

Levels of Analysis

- ***The System Level***

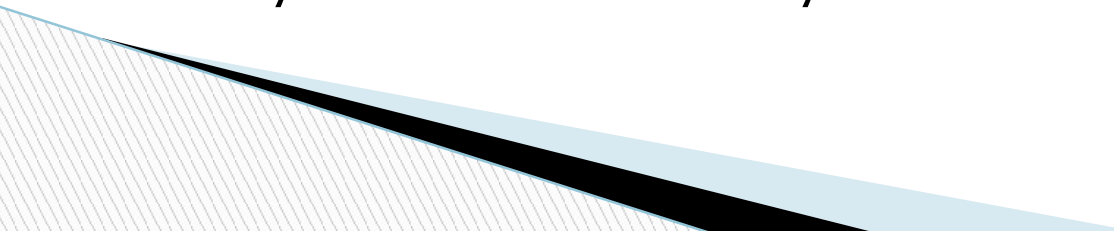- ***The Nation-State Level***

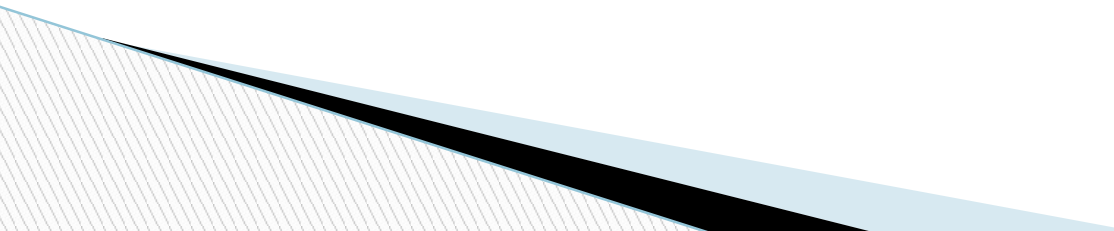- ***The Individual Level***

Systemic level concepts Sovereignty

- **Peace of Westphalia** in 1648

- Sovereign states are, in **international law**, equal, and sovereign equality is the basis upon which the **United Nations** (UN) operates.

Sovereignty

This sovereign equality has as its content the following elements:
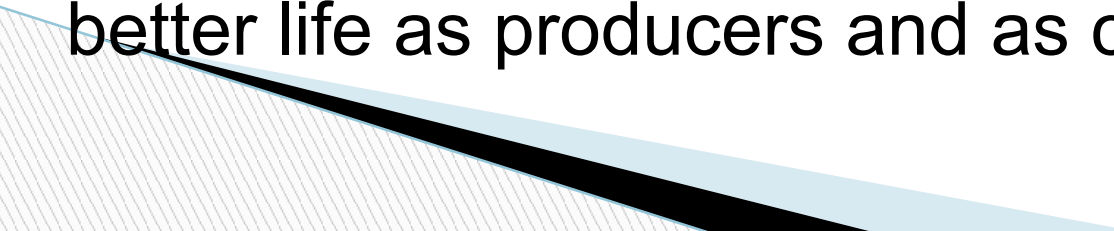
1. States are legally equal.
2. Every state enjoys the rights inherent in full sovereignty.
3. Every state is obligated to respect the fact of the legal entity of other states.
4. The territorial integrity and political independence of a state are inviolable.
5. Each state has the right to freely choose and develop its own political, social, economic, and cultural systems.
6. Each state is obligated to carry out its international obligations fully and conscientiously and to live in peace with other states.

Power

- a state's ability to control, or at least influence, other states or the outcome of events

- Two dimensions are important
  1. internal and
  2. external

Power

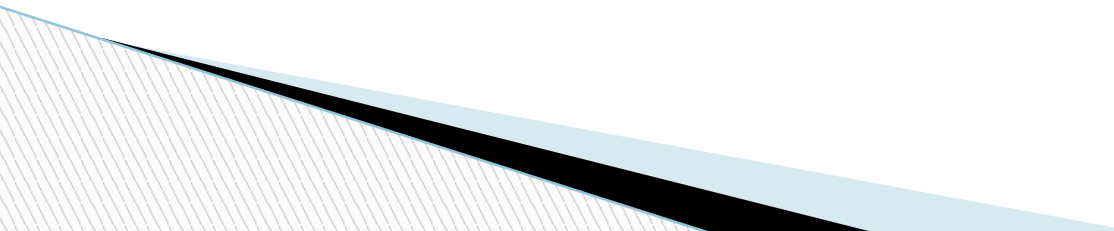Analytically, one can distinguish between four separate but related structures of power in international relations:
• the knowledge structure refers to the power to influence the ideas of others;
• the financial structure refers to the power to restrict or facilitate their access to credit;
• the security structure shapes their prospects for security;
• the production structure affects their chances of a better life as producers and as consumers.

National Interest

- The word *interest* implies a need that has, by some standard of justification, attained the status of an acceptable claim on behalf of the state. On the other hand, the national interest is also used to describe and support particular policies. The problem is how to determine the criteria that can establish a correspondence between the national interest expressed as a principle and the sorts of policies by which it is advanced.

Non-State Actors
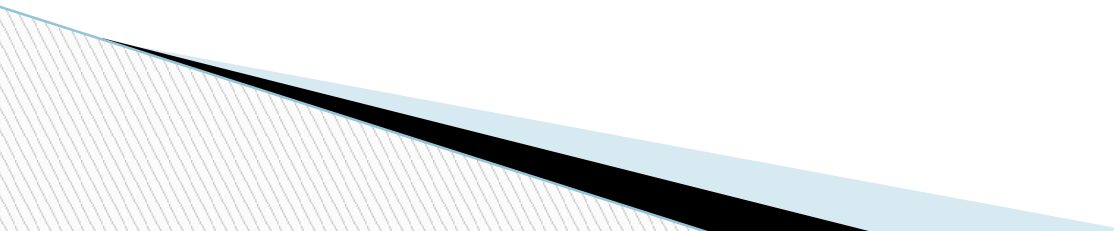
transnational corporations, liberation movements, non-governmental agencies, or international organizations, these entities have the potential to significantly influence the outcome of any international transaction
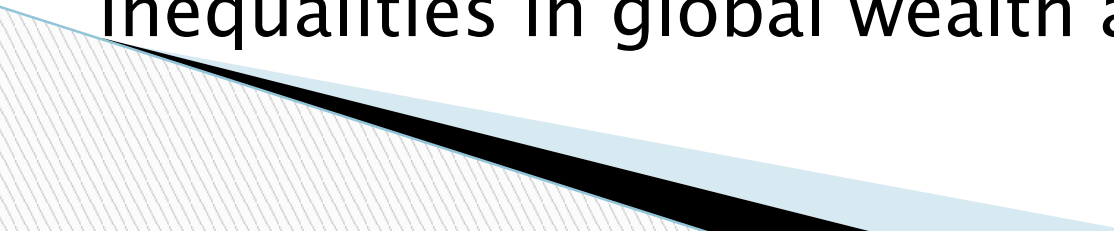
Power Blocs

- **Polarity -** in international relations refers to the arrangement of power within the international system. The concept arose from bipolarity during the Cold War, with the international system dominated by the conflict between two superpowers, and has been applied retrospectively by theorists.
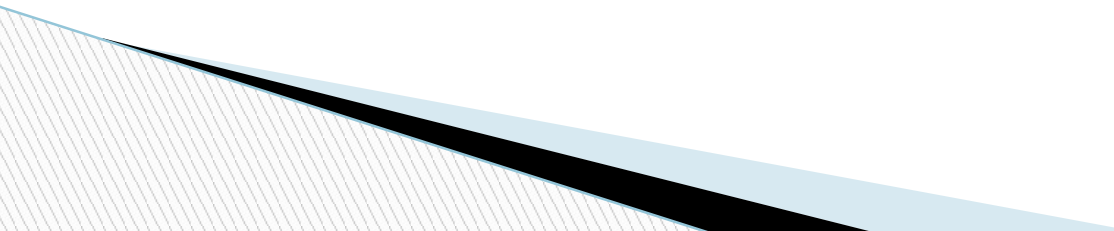
Interdependence

- The condition of a relationship between two parties in which the costs of breaking their relations or of reducing their exchanges are roughly equal for each of them. In the study of international relations, interdependence between states has two dimensions: *sensitivity* and *vulnerability*.

Dependency

- Explaining low levels of development in Latin America, Asia, and Africa has been an enduring concern for scholars and policymakers. In very broad terms, two types of explanation have been put forward. The first type – encapsulated in modernisation theory – focuses on factors internal to countries in the Third World.

- The concept of dependency was developed in the 1960s and 1970s to account for these structural inequalities in global wealth and power.

Unit-level concepts in international relations
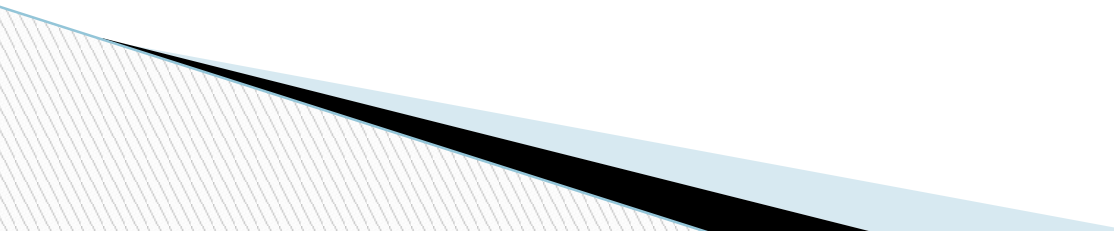
- **Regime type**

- Democratic peace theory is a theory that suggests that the nature of democracy means that democratic countries will not go to war with each other. The justifications for this are that democracies externalize their norms and only go to war for just causes, and that democracy encourages mutual trust and respect.

- **Communism** justifies a world revolution, which similarly would lead to peaceful coexistence, based on a proletarian global society. The power politics is also considered.

Revisionism/status quo

- **Status quo** is a Latin phrase meaning the existing state of affairs. It is the nominal form of the prepositional Latin phrase "in statu quo" – literally "in the state in which", which itself is a shortening of the original phrase in statu quo res erant ante bellum, meaning "in the state in which things were before the war".

Religion

A religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that are intended to explain the meaning of life and/or to explain the origin of life or the Universe.

Individual or sub-unit level concepts

- **A bureaucracy** is "a body of non-elective government officials" and/or "an administrative policy-making group". Historically, bureaucracy referred to government administration managed by departments staffed with nonelected officials. In modern parlance, bureaucracy refers to the administrative system governing any large institution.

- **Groupthink** is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints, by actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints, and by isolating themselves from outside influences.

Religious, ethnic, and secessionist groups

- **An ethnic conflict** or ethnic war is an armed conflict between ethnic groups. It contrasts with civil war on one hand (where a single nation or ethnic group is fighting among itself) and regular warfare on the other, where two or more sovereign states (which may or may not be nation states) are in conflict.

- **A religious war or holy war** (Latin: bellum sacrum) is a war primarily caused or justified by differences in religion. The (possibly fictional) account of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites in the Book of Joshua, the Muslim conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries, and the Christian Crusades (11th to 13th centuries) and Wars of Religion (16th and 17th centuries) are the classic examples but a religious aspect has been part of warfare as early as the battles of the Mesopotamian city-states.
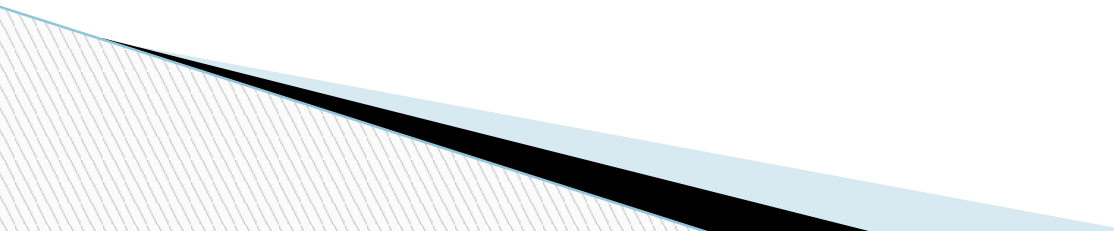
Diaspora

- **A diaspora** (from [Greek](#) διασπορά, "scattering, dispersion") is a scattered population with a common origin in a smaller geographic area.

- **Diaspora politics** is the [political behavior](#) of transnational [ethnic](#) [diasporas](#), their relationship with their ethnic [homelands](#) and their host states, as well as their prominent role in [ethnic conflicts](#). The study of diaspora politics is part of the broader field of [diaspora studies](#).

Diaspora

Ethnic diaspora communities are now recognized by scholars as "inevitable" and "endemic" features of the international system, writes Yossi Shain and Tamara Cofman Wittes, for the following reasons:

1. First, within each of a diaspora's host states, resident members can organize domestically to maximize their political clout.

2. Second, a diaspora can exert significant pressure in its homeland's domestic political arena regarding issues of diaspora concern.

3. Lately, a diaspora's transnational community can engage directly with third-party states and international organizations, in effect bypassing its homeland and host state governments.

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