

How Does International Politics Influence Your Life?

How does international politics influence your life? And how do you influence international politics? For many people, the subject may seem distant from everyday life. Here we consider the ways in which an average college student in Asean or Asia is connected to international politics and the connections with other people around the world.

Start with the clothes you are wearing. Were any of them made in the country you live in? Probably not if you live and shop in North America or Europe. What makes it possible for those clothes, and other consumer goods, to get from ASEAN countries or Asia, where most are made, to the rest of the world? Trade, of course. But international trade rests upon a dense web of international agreements and institutions. These include trade agreements that provide for the movement of goods and financial agreements that allow for the movement of money, as well as legal practices that facilitate the fulfillment of contracts. Many elderly people did not consume vast amounts of consumer goods made in China, because until the 1970s, China was isolated both diplomatically and economically from the rest of the world, much as North Korea is today. In sum, our access to cheap and plentiful consumer goods is a direct result of changes in international politics in recent decades.

Have you experienced war, either as a combatant or a bystander? Although much violence in the world today is rooted in civil conflicts, international war is still a prominent threat. For example, the United States has been involved in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003, making this the longest period of warfare in the nation's history. Many other states have been involved in those conflicts or in others. What have been the effects of these wars on combatants? What have been the effects on their families? What are the indirect economic effects?

How do you influence international politics? What the economic and political impact of your consumption of goods produced in one country versus another? Each purchase has an infinitesimal influence on wages, exchange rates, and tax revenues in different countries. Have you taken conscious steps to influence affairs in other countries? Have you undertaken a mission trip? Donated to an organization dedicated to aiding people in another country? "Liked" a Facebook post or forwarded a link on a foreign policy issue?

Have you sought to directly influence your country's foreign policy? How? In some cases, One might take foreign policy positions into account in voting for a candidate (or working on a campaign). One might also donate money to organizations promoting a particular policy or supporting a foreign country. How would all the answers to all these questions change if you lived in a country very different from the one you live in? If you lived in Afghanistan, for example, how might you answer questions relating to buying cell phones to experiencing war, or to international aid efforts?