

Interconnected or Interdependent? 21st century U.S. Relations with the Rest of the World

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Biography

Samantha Raneri graduated with a B.A. in English and a minor in Education, Schooling, and Society from the University of Notre Dame. After graduation, she was awarded a Fulbright Research and Study grant to Mexico to pursue an ethnographic research project with the women's cooperative *Maseual Siuat Xochitajkitinij*. Her project explored issues of cultural conservation, innovative entrepreneurship, gender issues, and fair trade and her research was compiled into a historical narrative. For the past year, Samantha worked at a New York law firm before deciding to pursue a graduate degree. She is a MA candidate in International Relations at Yale University. She is interested in studying economics and foreign policy as they relate to developing nations and minority cultures within those countries, particularly in Latin America.

Background

Although the United States is more connected with other nations now than ever before, what does that mean? This discussion will explore the distinction between the terms "interconnected" and "interdependent," in order to frame U.S. relationships with other nations. While "interconnected" implies a mutual relationship with little or no obligation attached, "interdependent" connotes a reciprocal relationship based on necessity. U.S.-China relations exemplify this fundamental distinction: economically, China depends on U.S. financial markets and currency to provide necessary capital for infrastructure, while the United States depends on China's vast manufacturing capabilities. Yet, politically, ideologically, and even religiously the two nations are far from like-minded, in fact they are at odds. Technology and the freer flow of information have challenged the barriers of misinformation that once kept us from recognizing our common humanity; the interconnected world has incited this. How can the example of U.S. interconnectedness and interdependence with China shape our understanding of U.S. relations with other nations?

Discussions Questions

- 1.) How do we define what it means for two (or more) nations to be interconnected versus interdependent? How are these terms differentiated in the U.S.'s relationship with China? With other nations?
- 2.) How can nations reconcile actions taken in the pursuit of self-interest (i.e.--military/ defense build-up, development of nuclear capabilities, etc.) with their interdependent relationships with other nations? How does this apply to U.S.-China relations, relationships in the Middle East, with Russia, and in Africa?
- 3.) What relationships between two or more nations exemplify "beneficial" or "positive" interdependence and/ or "dangerous" or "negative" interdependence? [**Potential relationship examples: Iran/ Syria, Russia/ Venezuela, European Union, U.S./ Israel, etc.]. What specific characteristics contribute to this dynamic?
- 4.) What, if any, facets (i.e.--socio-cultural, political, economic, religious, etc.) of two or more countries must be in harmony before an interconnectedness can be assumed? Interdependence?
- 5.) Which kinds of events signal a transition from interconnectedness to interdependence? What are some specific examples of countries whose relationships have evolved in this way?