

Transcript: Conclusion

We have introduced you to three of the major theoretical approaches to cooperation in the field of International Relations. Each of the theories opens up a very different story of the possibilities of cooperation under anarchy. This ranges from the very limited account given by realism with its focus on fear; the more hopeful possibilities of cooperation through institutions described by neo-liberal institutionalism; and the potentially even more progressivist (though not guaranteed) vision of trust through community opened up by constructivism.

Despite these important differences between the theories, they are all united by a third image story of how cooperation emerges under the condition of international anarchy. What is missing from each account and what will come out in the various puzzles to follow is the importance of the other two images of cooperation. The role of particular individuals, the interpersonal dynamics and chemistry in negotiations, peace processes, and summitry, and the critical influence that a nation's values, history, and memory play alongside the operation of domestic political forces are all ignored by the dominant theories. As we will show you, these theories need enriching by a greater appreciation of the interrelationship between the three images of cooperation.

With this conceptual material in mind, what we will be doing on this course is introducing you to how the rules, norms, and institutions that constitute global governance work in some of the most pressing issue-areas of the 21st century. Throughout the course you should be thinking back to these theories and deciding which you think offers us the most useful insights into what is going on in the world today.