

Analytical Frames for Studying Technology and Politics (Isms You Can Use)

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Attributes	Realism	Liberalism	Marxism	Science and Technology Studies
Actor	Unitary state: mutually exclusive, territorially distinct; benevolent hegemon accepts costs with eye to long-term power; malevolent hegemon thinks short term	State representative and other non-state actors, including corporations, domestic political parties	Classes: social elites, civil society, consumers	Nodes, defined by links in a network; social and material actors; whistle blowers, coders, bots and other software agents; digerati, netizens
System	Anarchy; balance of power	Interdependence; trans-nationalism; transactions	Hierarchical; powerful groups structure capitalist world economy	Socio-technical systems and networks, made up of sub-networks
Action	Interruptions in balance of power; cycles of concern and disinterest	Market fluctuations, different technology & information	Class conflict, historical materialism	Information asymmetry, conflicting code, technological competition; capacity and constraint
Interests	Power; security	Welfare; liberty	Capital accumulation	Science or network driven, temporary and project based
Peace & Cooperation	Balance of power	Actors with complimentary capabilities; market	Always in interests of rich & Northern, and at the expense of poor & Southern; until the revolution!	Power distributed equally across links and nodes, consensus behind technical standards, protocols IP and code
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Authors	Bull, Gilpen, Morgenthau, Kennedy	Keohane, Nye, Putnam	Both Andersons, Marx, Lenin	Castells, Latour
Methods	Comparative, large-N	Single case, comparative, large-N	Comparative, natural experiment	Network metaphor or formal analysis
Strengths	One strong dominant power can really get things done	Explains multi-polarity & declining role of American state; parsimonious	Good critique of motivations; global & systemic trends	Interpretive, inductive; politics of code and infrastructure
Weaknesses	Not explain lags between changes; persistence of other actors	Not everybody maximizes utility in voluntary and rational ways	Not great on policy recommendations	Too much historical contingency, path dependence, and complex causation
Understanding the <i>Pax Technica</i> ?	Diplomacy 2.0, cyber-war, -terror, -espionage, information war	Dot-com and heterarchical firms, permanently beta organization, death of distance, long-tail economics, corporate cyber-espionage, bureaucratic rationalization	Data as ultimate extracted value, hyper-capitalism, information barons, fetishization of consumer electronics, alienation experienced through privacy and data loss	Implied

* With apologies to cognitivism, constructivism, and feminism, and the critical, phenomenological and epistemic perspectives.



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