

French forces intervene in Mali, 2013.



CHAPTER 2

Realist Theories

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Realism

No single theory reliably explains the wide range of international interactions, but one theoretical framework has historically held a central position in the study of IR. This approach, called realism, is favored by some IR scholars and vigorously contested by others, but almost all take it into account.

Realism (or *political realism*) is a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power. The exercise of power by states toward each other is sometimes called *realpolitik*, or just *power politics*.

Modern realist theory developed in reaction to a liberal tradition that realists called **idealism**. Idealism emphasizes international law, morality, and international organization, rather than power alone, as key influences on international events. Idealists think that human nature is basically good. They see the international system as one based on a community of states that have the potential to work together to overcome mutual problems (see Chapter 3). For idealists, the principles of IR must flow from morality.

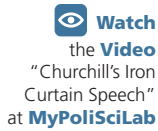
Idealists were particularly active between World War I and World War II, following the painful experience of World War I. U.S. president Woodrow Wilson led the effort to create the **League of Nations**, a forerunner of today's United Nations. But the U.S. Senate did not approve, and the League proved ineffective. U.S. isolationism between the world wars, along with

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Realism
- Power
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- Alliances
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declining British power and a Russia crippled by its own revolution, left a power vacuum in world politics that Germany and Japan filled in the 1930s. In an effort to appease German ambitions, Britain and France agreed in the **Munich Agreement** of 1938 to let Germany occupy part of Czechoslovakia. This “appeasement” seemed only to encourage Hitler’s further conquests. Yet the lessons of the two world wars seem contradictory. From the failure of the Munich Agreement in 1938 to appease Hitler, many people have concluded that only a hardline foreign policy with preparedness for war will deter aggression and prevent war. Yet in 1914 it was just such hardline policies that apparently led Europe into a disastrous war, which might have been avoided by appeasement. Evidently the best policy would be sometimes harsh and at other times conciliatory.

After World War II, realists blamed idealists for looking too much at how the world *ought* to be instead of how it *really* is. Sobered by the experiences of World War II, realists set out to understand the principles of power politics without succumbing to wishful thinking.

Realists ground themselves in a long tradition. The Chinese strategist *Sun Tzu*, who lived 2,000 years ago, advised the rulers of states how to survive in an era when war had become a systematic instrument of power for the first time. Sun Tzu argued that moral reasoning was not very useful to the state rulers of the day, faced with armed and dangerous neighbors. He showed rulers how to use power to advance their interests and protect their survival.

At roughly the same time, in Greece, *Thucydides* wrote an account of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) focusing on relative power among the Greek city-states. He stated that “the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.” Much later, in Renaissance Italy (around 1500), *Niccolò Machiavelli* urged princes to concentrate on expedient actions to stay in power, including the manipulation of the public and military alliances. Realists see in these historical figures evidence that the importance of power politics is timeless and cross-cultural.

After World War II, scholar *Hans Morgenthau* argued that international politics is governed by objective, universal laws based on national interests defined in terms of power (not psychological motives of decision makers). He reasoned that no nation had “God on its side” (a universal morality) and that all nations had to base their actions on prudence and practicality. He opposed the Vietnam War, arguing in 1965 that a communist Vietnam would not harm U.S. national interests.

Similarly, in 2002, before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, leading realists figured prominently among the 33 IR scholars signing a *New York Times* advertisement warning that

TABLE 2.1 Assumptions of Realism and Idealism

Issue	Realism	Idealism
Human Nature	Selfish	Altruistic
Most Important Actors	States	States and others including individuals
Causes of State Behavior	Rational pursuit of self-interest	Psychological motives of decision makers
Nature of International System	Anarchy	Community

POWER AS INFLUENCE


Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others. Military force and economic sanctions are among the various means that states and non-state actors use to try to influence each other. Russia's position as a major energy supplier to Europe has increased its power in recent years even though its military threat to Europe has decreased. In 2009 Russia shut off natural gas supplies during a price dispute with Ukraine, a dispute shadowed by Russian anger at Ukraine's efforts to join NATO. The shutoff, visible here in a pressure gauge reading zero, left customers across Europe without heat. In 2010 Ukrainians elected a new president more friendly toward Russia.

Defining Power

Power is often defined as the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done (or not to do what it would have done). A variation on this idea is that actors are powerful to the extent that they affect others more than others affect them. These definitions treat power as influence. If actors get their way a lot, they must be powerful. One problem with this definition is that we seldom know what a second actor would have done in the absence of the first actor's power. There is a danger of circular logic: power explains influence, and influence measures power.

Power is not influence itself, however, but the ability or potential to influence others. Many IR scholars believe that such potential is based on specific (tangible and intangible) characteristics or possessions of states—such as their sizes, levels of income, and armed forces. This is power as *capability*. Capabilities are easier to measure than influence and less circular in logic.

Measuring capabilities to explain how one state influences another is not simple, however. It requires summing up various kinds of potentials. States possess varying amounts of population, territory, military forces, and so forth. *The best single indicator of a state's power may be its total GDP*, which combines overall size, technological level, and wealth. But even GDP is at best a rough indicator, and economists do not even agree how to measure it. The method followed in this book adjusts for price differences among countries, but an alternative method gives GDP estimates that are, on average, about 50 percent higher for countries in the global North and about 50 percent lower for the global South including China (see footnote 2 on p. 12). So GDP is a useful estimator of material capabilities but not a precise one.

Power also depends on nonmaterial elements. Capabilities give a state the potential to influence others only to the extent that political leaders can mobilize and deploy these

capabilities effectively and strategically. This depends on national will, diplomatic skill, popular support for the government (its legitimacy), and so forth. Some scholars emphasize the *power of ideas*—the ability to maximize the influence of capabilities through a psychological process. This process includes the domestic mobilization of capabilities—often through religion, ideology, or (especially) nationalism. International influence is also gained by forming the rules of behavior to change how others see their own national interests. If a state's own values become widely shared among other states, that state will easily influence others. This has been called *soft power*. For example, the United States has influenced many other states to accept the value of free markets and free trade.

As the concept of soft power illustrates, dominance is not the only way to exert power (influence others). The core principles of reciprocity and (in the case of soft power) identity can also work. For example, a father who wants his toddler to stop screaming in a supermarket might threaten or actually administer a spanking (dominance); he might promise a candy bar at the checkout as a reward for good behavior (reciprocity); or he could invoke such themes as “Be a big boy/girl” or “You want to help Daddy, don’t you?” (identity). Although realists emphasize dominance approaches, they do not dispute that states sometimes achieve their interests in other ways. Furthermore, even realists recognize that power provides only a general understanding of outcomes. Real-world outcomes depend on many other elements, including accidents or luck.

Because power is a relational concept, a state can have power only relative to other states' power. *Relative power* is the ratio of the power that two states can bring to bear against each other. It matters little to realists whether a state's capabilities are rising or declining in absolute terms, only whether they are falling behind or overtaking the capabilities of rival states.

Estimating Power

The logic of power suggests that in wars, the more powerful state will generally prevail. Thus, estimates of the relative power of the two antagonists should help explain the outcome of each war. These estimates could take into account the nations' relative military capabilities and the popular support for each one's government, among other factors. But most important is the total size of each nation's economy—the total GDP. With a healthy enough economy, a state can buy a large army, popular support (by providing consumer goods), and even allies.

Elements of Power

State power is a mix of many ingredients. Elements that an actor can draw on over the *long term* include total GDP, population, territory, geography, and natural resources. These attributes change only slowly. Less tangible long-term power resources include political culture, patriotism, education of the population, and strength of the scientific and technological base. The credibility of its commitments (reputation for keeping its word) is also a long-term power base for a state. So is the ability of one state's culture and values to consistently shape the thinking of other states (the power of ideas).

Other capabilities allow actors to exercise influence in the *short term*. Military forces are such a capability—perhaps the most important kind. The size, composition, and preparedness of two states' military forces matter more in a short-term military confrontation than their respective economies or natural resources. Another capability is the military-industrial capacity to quickly produce weapons. The quality of a state's bureaucracy is another type of capability, allowing the state to gather information, regulate international trade, or participate in international conferences. Less tangibly, the *support* and *legitimacy* that an actor commands in the short term from constituents and allies are capabilities that the actor can use to

gain influence. So is the *loyalty* of a nation's army and politicians to their leader.

Given the limited resources that any actor commands, trade-offs among possible capabilities always exist. Building up military forces diverts resources that might be put into foreign aid, for instance. Or buying a population's loyalty with consumer goods reduces resources available to the military. To the extent that one element of power can be converted into another, it is *fungible*. Generally, money is the most fungible capability because it can buy other capabilities.

Realists tend to see *military force* as the most important element of national power in the short term, and other elements such as economic strength, diplomatic skill, or moral legitimacy as being important to the extent that they are fungible into military power. Yet, depending on the nature of the conflict in question, military power may be only one of many elements of power.

Morality can contribute to power, by increasing the will to use power and by attracting allies. States have long clothed their actions, however aggressive, in rhetoric about their peaceful and defensive intentions. Of course, if a state overuses moralistic rhetoric to cloak self-interest too often, it loses credibility even with its own population.

The use of geography as an element of power is called **geopolitics**. It is often tied to the logistical requirements of military forces. In geopolitics, as in real estate, the three most important considerations are location, location, location. States increase their power to the extent they can use geography to enhance their military capabilities, such as by securing allies and bases close to a rival power, or by controlling key natural resources. Today, control of oil pipeline routes, especially in Central Asia, is a major geopolitical issue. Military strategists have also pointed out that the melting of the continental ice shelf (see Chapter 8) has opened new shipping routes for military purposes, creating a new geopolitical issue for Russia and the United States.

THE ECONOMICS OF POWER




Military power such as tanks rests on economic strength, roughly measured by GDP. The large U.S. economy supports U.S. military predominance. In the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the United States could afford to send a large and technologically advanced military force to the Middle East. Here, U.S. forces enter Iraq, March 2003.

The International System

States interact within a set of long-established “rules of the game” governing what is considered a state and how states treat each other. Together these rules shape the international system.

The modern international system is sometimes dated from the *Treaty of Westphalia* in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years’ War. It set out the basic rules that have defined the international system ever since—the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states as equal and independent members of an international system. Since then, states defeated in war might have been stripped of some territories but were generally allowed to continue as independent states rather than being subsumed by the victor. Key to this system was the ability of one state, or a coalition, to balance the power of another state so that it could not gobble up smaller units and create a universal empire.

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Anarchy and Sovereignty

Realists believe that the international system exists in a state of **anarchy**—a term that implies not chaos or absence of structure and rules, but rather the lack of a central government that can enforce rules. In domestic society within states, governments can enforce contracts, deter citizens from breaking rules, and carry out laws. Both democracies and dictatorships provide central government enforcement of a system of rules. Realists contend that no such central authority exists to enforce rules and ensure compliance with norms of conduct. This makes collective goods problems especially acute in IR. The power of one state is countered only by the power of other states. States must therefore rely on *self-help*, which they supplement with allies and the (sometimes) constraining power of international norms. In this anarchic world, realists emphasize prudence as a great virtue in foreign policy. Thus states should pay attention not to the *intentions* of other states but rather to their *capabilities*.

Despite its anarchy, the international system is far from chaotic. The great majority of state interactions closely adhere to **norms** of behavior—shared expectations about what behavior is considered proper. Norms change over time, slowly, but the most basic norms of the international system have changed little in recent centuries.

Sovereignty—traditionally the most important norm—means that a government has the right, in principle, to do whatever it wants in its own territory. States are separate and autonomous and answer to no higher authority. In principle, all states are equal in status, if not in power. Sovereignty also means that states are not supposed to interfere in the internal affairs of other states. Although states do try to influence each other (exert power) on matters of trade, alliances, war, and so on, they are not supposed to meddle in the internal politics and decision processes of other states. More controversially, some states claim that sovereignty gives them the right to treat their own people in any fashion, including behavior that other states call genocide.

The lack of a “world police” to punish states if they break an agreement makes enforcement of international agreements difficult. For example, in the 1990s, North Korea announced it would no longer allow inspections of its nuclear facilities by other states, which put it in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

PASSPORT PLEASE


Sovereignty and territorial integrity are central norms governing the behavior of states. Terrorism and secessionist movements present two challenges to these norms, but the world's mostly stable borders uphold them. Every day, millions of people cross international borders, mostly legally and peacefully, respecting states' territorial integrity. Here, tightrope walker Nik Wallenda crosses the U.S.-Canadian border at Niagara Falls, 2012.

The international community used a mix of positive incentives and threats to persuade North Korea to stop producing nuclear material. But in 2002 North Korea withdrew from the NPT and built perhaps a half-dozen nuclear bombs, one of which it exploded in 2006 (the world's first nuclear test in a decade). After reaching an agreement with the United States to stop producing nuclear weapons in 2008, North Korea refused to allow physical inspection of some of its nuclear facilities, arguing "it is an act of infringing upon sovereignty." These examples show the difficulty of enforcing international norms in the sovereignty-based international system.

In practice, most states have a hard time warding off interference in their affairs. Such "internal" matters as human rights or self-determination are, increasingly, concerns for the international community. Also, the

integration of global economic markets and telecommunications makes it easier than ever for ideas to penetrate state borders.

States are based on territory. Respect for the territorial integrity of all states, within recognized borders, is an important principle of IR. Many of today's borders are the result of past wars or were imposed arbitrarily by colonizers.

The territorial nature of the interstate system developed long ago when agrarian societies relied on agriculture to generate wealth. In today's world, in which trade and technology rather than land create wealth, the territorial state may be less important. Information-based economies are linked across borders instantly, and the idea that the state has a hard shell seems archaic. The accelerating revolution in information technologies may dramatically affect the territorial state system in the coming years.

States have developed norms of diplomacy to facilitate their interactions. Yet the norms of diplomacy can be violated. In 1979, Iranian students took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran, holding many of its diplomats hostage for 444 days—an episode that has soured American-Iranian relations ever since.

Realists acknowledge that the rules of IR often create a **security dilemma**—a situation in which actions taken by states to ensure their own security (such as deploying more

military forces) threaten the security of other states. The responses of those other states (such as deploying more of their own military forces) in turn threaten the first state. The dilemma is a negative consequence of anarchy in the international system. If a world government could reliably detect and punish aggressors who arm themselves, states would not need to guard against this possibility. Yet the self-help system requires that states prepare for the worst. Realists tend to see the dilemma as unsolvable, whereas liberals think it can be solved through the development of norms and institutions (see Chapters 3 and 6).

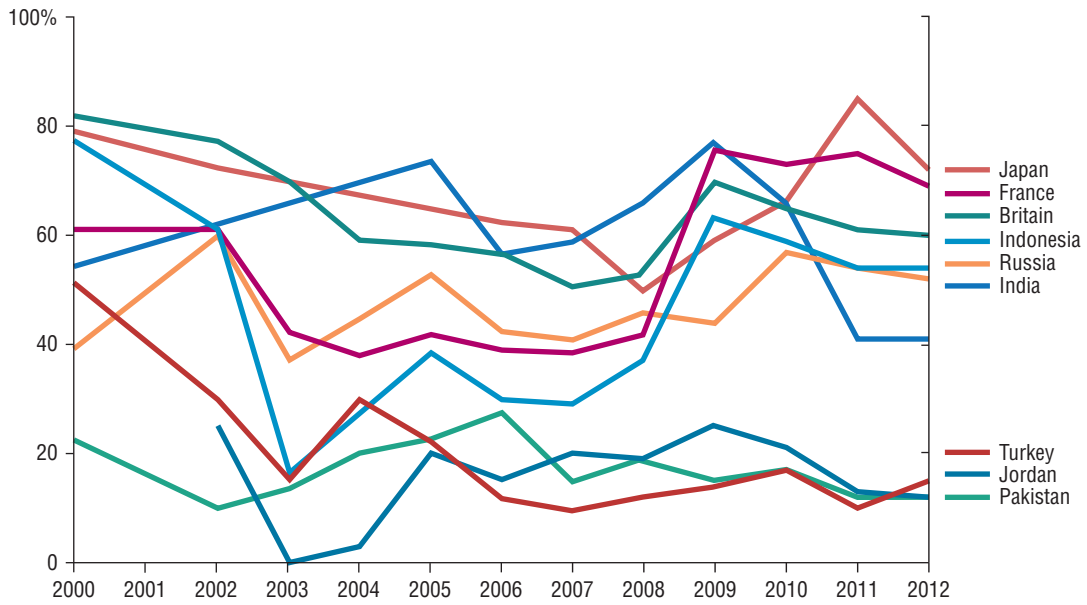
Balance of Power

In the anarchy of the international system, the most reliable brake on the power of one state is the power of other states. The term **balance of power** refers to the general concept of one or more states' power being used to balance that of another state or group of states. Balance of power can refer to any ratio of power capabilities between states or alliances, or it can mean only a relatively equal ratio. Alternatively, balance of power can refer to the *process* by which counterbalancing coalitions have repeatedly formed in history to prevent one state from conquering an entire region. The theory of balance of power argues that such counterbalancing occurs regularly and maintains the stability of the international system. The system is stable in that its rules and principles stay the same: state sovereignty does not collapse into a universal empire. This stability does not, however, imply peace; it is rather a stability maintained by means of recurring wars that adjust power relations.

Alliances (to be discussed shortly) play a key role in the balance of power. Building up one's own capabilities against a rival is a form of power balancing, but forming an alliance against a threatening state is often quicker, cheaper, and more effective. Sometimes a particular state deliberately becomes a balancer (in its region or the world), shifting its support to oppose whatever state or alliance is strongest at the moment. Britain played this role on the European continent for centuries, and China played it in the Cold War.

In the post-Cold War era of U.S. dominance, balance-of-power theory would predict closer relations among Russia, China, and even Europe to balance U.S. power. And indeed, Russian-Chinese relations improved dramatically in such areas as arms trade and demilitarization of the border. French leaders have even criticized U.S. "hyperpower." But in recent years, with U.S. power seemingly stretched thin in Afghanistan and Iraq, its economy also weak, and Chinese power on the rise, more countries are balancing against China and fewer against the United States. In 2012–2013, Japan struck military agreements with former enemies South Korea and the Philippines and reaffirmed its U.S. ties in response to China's growing power. World public opinion also reflects shifts in the balance of power. In 2003, as the Iraq war began, widespread anti-American sentiment revealed itself in Muslim countries. In Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, and Nigeria—containing half of the world's Muslims—more than 70 percent worried that the United States could become a threat to their own countries, a worry shared by 71 percent of Russians. A survey of 38,000 people in 44 nations showed a dramatic drop in support for the United States from 2002 to 2003. As Figure 2.2 illustrates, this decline in favorable views of the United States worldwide continued through 2007. But then, with the United States seeking to exit its wars and exert its power less forcefully around the world, opinions turned upward after 2008. These shifts in public opinion make the governments in those countries more or less likely to cooperate with, or oppose, the United States on the world stage.

FIGURE 2.2 Views of the United States in Nine Countries, 2000–2012
(Percent favorable view in public opinion polls)



Source: *New York Times* from data of Pew Global Attitudes Project. 2000 data from State Department surveys.

Great Powers and Middle Powers

The most powerful states in the world exert most of the influence on international events and therefore get the most attention from IR scholars. By almost any measure of power, a handful of states possess the majority of the world's power resources.

Although there is no firm dividing line, **great powers** are generally considered the half-dozen or so most powerful states. A system of great power relations has existed since around A.D. 1500, and the structure and rules of that system have remained fairly stable through time, although the particular members change. The structure is a balance of power among the six or so most powerful states, which form and break alliances, fight wars, and make peace, letting no single state conquer the others. Until the past century, the great power club was exclusively European. Sometimes great powers' status is formally recognized in an international structure such as the 19th-century Concert of Europe or today's UN Security Council. In general, great powers are often defined as states that can be defeated militarily only by another great power. Great powers also tend to share a global outlook based on national interests far from their home territories.

The great powers generally have the world's strongest military forces and the strongest economies to pay for them. These large economies in turn rest on some combination of large populations, plentiful natural resources, advanced technology, and

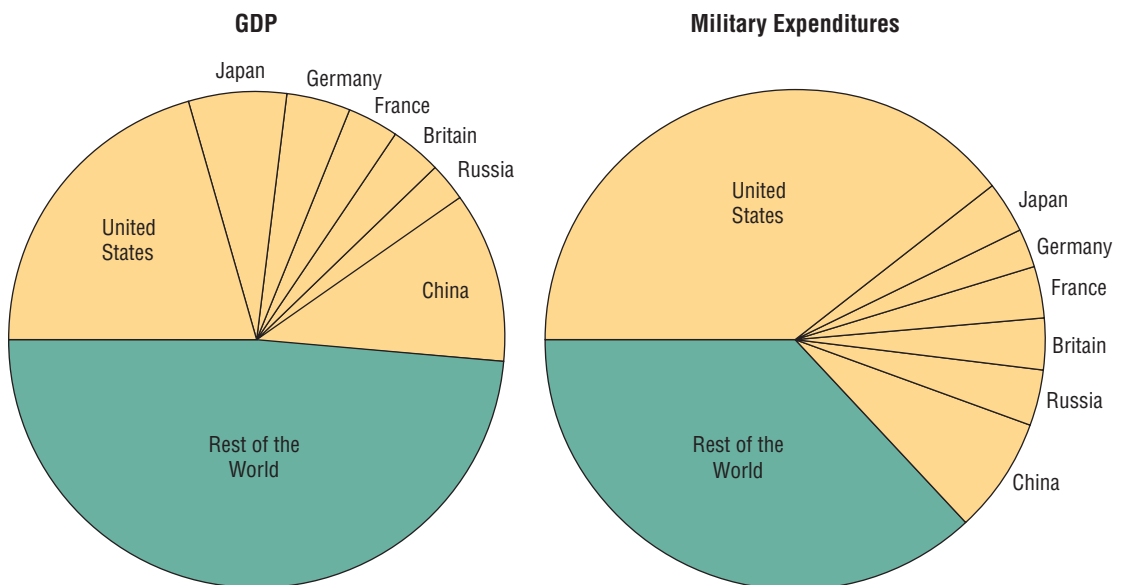
educated labor forces. Because power is based on these underlying resources, membership in the great power system changes slowly. Only rarely does a great power—even one defeated in a massive war—lose its status as a great power, because its size and long-term economic potential change slowly. Thus Germany and Japan, decimated in World War II, are powerful today.

In the *Concert of Europe* that dominated IR in the 19th century, the five most powerful states tried, with some success, to cooperate on major issues to prevent war—a possible precedent for today's UN Security Council. In this period, Britain became a balancer, joining alliances against whichever state emerged as the most powerful in Europe.

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union, allies in the war against Germany, became adversaries for 40 years in the Cold War. Europe was split into rival blocs—East and West—with Germany split into two states. The rest of the world became contested terrain where each bloc tried to gain allies or influence, often by sponsoring opposing sides in regional and civil wars. The end of the Cold War around 1990, when the Soviet Union collapsed, returned the international system to a more cooperative arrangement of the great powers somewhat similar to the Concert of Europe.

What states are great powers today? Although definitions vary, seven states appear to meet the criteria: the United States, China, Russia, Japan, Germany, France, and Britain. Together they account for more than half of the world's total GDP (see Figure 2.3).

FIGURE 2.3 Great Power Shares of World GDP and Military Expenditures, 2011



Note: GDP calculated by purchasing-power method. China's GDP using alternate method would be about half as large.

Source: World Bank Development Indicators, 2009; SIPRI Yearbook, 2009.

They include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who are also the members of the “club” openly possessing large nuclear weapons arsenals.

Notable on this list are the United States and China. The United States is considered the world’s only superpower because of its historical role of world leadership (especially in and after World War II) and its predominant military might. China has the world’s largest population, rapid economic growth (8–10 percent annually over 30 years), and a large and modernizing military, including a credible nuclear arsenal. Indeed, in 2008, the U.S. National Intelligence Council’s long-range planning report noted that China is poised to have a profound effect on the world over the next 20 years—perhaps more than any other state. Japan and Germany are economic great powers, but both countries have played constrained roles in international security affairs since World War II. Nonetheless, both have large and capable military forces, which they have begun to deploy abroad, especially in peacekeeping operations. Russia, France, and Britain were winners in World War II and have been active military powers since then. Although much reduced in stature from their colonial heydays, they still qualify as great powers.

Middle powers rank somewhat below the great powers in terms of their influence on world affairs. A list of middle powers (not everyone would agree on it) might include midsized countries of the global North such as Canada, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine, South Korea, and Australia. It could also include large or influential countries in the global South such as India, Indonesia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Israel, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. Middle powers have not received as much attention in IR as have great powers.

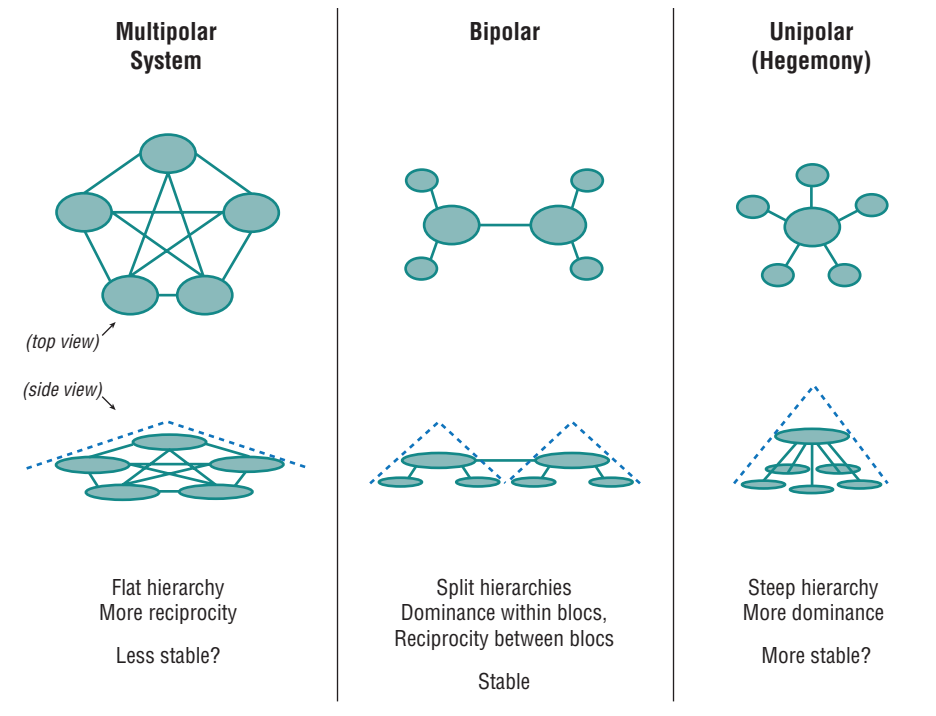
Power Distribution

With each state’s power balanced by other states, the most important characteristic of the international system in the view of some realists is the *distribution* of power among states. Power distribution as a concept can apply to all the states in the world or to just the states in one region, but most often it refers to the great power system.

Neorealism, sometimes called *structural realism*, explains patterns of international events in terms of the system structure—the international distribution of power—rather than the internal makeup of individual states. Compared to traditional realism, neorealism is more “scientific” in the sense of proposing general laws to explain events, but neorealism has lost some of the richness of traditional realism, which took account of many complex elements (geography, political will, diplomacy, etc.). Recently, *neoclassical realists* have sought to restore some of these lost aspects.

Sometimes an international power distribution (world or regional) is described in terms of polarity (a term adopted from physics), which refers to the number of independent power centers in the system. This concept encompasses both the underlying power of various participants and their alliance groupings. Figure 2.4 illustrates several potential configurations of great powers.

Some might argue that peace is best preserved by a relatively equal power distribution (multipolarity) because then no country has an opportunity to win easily. The empirical evidence for this theory, however, is not strong. In fact, the

FIGURE 2.4 Power Distribution in the International System

opposite proposition has more support: peace is best preserved by hegemony, and next best by bipolarity.

Power transition theory holds that the largest wars result from challenges to the top position in the status hierarchy, when a rising power is surpassing (or threatening to surpass) the most powerful state. At such times, power is relatively equally distributed, and these are the most dangerous times for major wars. Status quo powers that are doing well under the old rules will try to maintain them, whereas challengers that feel locked out by the old rules may try to change them. When a rising power's status (formal position in the hierarchy) diverges from its actual power, the rising power may suffer from relative deprivation: its people may feel they are not doing as well as others or as well as they deserve, even though their position may be improving in absolute terms. Germany's rise in the 19th century gave it great power capabilities even though it was left out of colonial territories and other signs of status; this tension may have contributed to the two world wars.

It is possible China and the United States may face a similar dynamic in the future. China may increasingly bristle at international rules and norms that it feels serves the interests of the United States. For its part, the United States may fear that growing Chinese economic and military power will be used to challenge U.S. power. In 2010, the U.S. military's strategic review questioned China's "long-term intentions," raising new questions about future power transitions.

Hegemony

Hegemony is one state's holding a preponderance of power in the international system, allowing it to single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangements by which international political and economic relations are conducted. Such a state is called a *hegemon*. Sometimes the term is used to refer to the complex of ideas that rulers use to gain consent for their legitimacy and keep subjects in line, reducing the need to use force to accomplish the same goal. By extension, such a meaning in IR refers to the hegemony of ideas such as democracy and capitalism, and to the global predominance of U.S. culture (see p. 342).

Most studies of hegemony point to two examples: Britain in the 19th century and the United States after World War II. Britain's predominance followed the defeat of its archrival France in the Napoleonic Wars. Both world trade and naval capabilities were firmly in British hands, as "Britannia ruled the waves." U.S. predominance followed the destruction caused by World War II. In the late 1940s, the U.S. GDP was more than half the world's total; U.S. vessels carried the majority of the world's shipping; the U.S. military could single-handedly defeat any other state or combination of states; and only the United States had nuclear weapons. Over time, and as rival states rebuild after wars, hegemonic decline may occur, particularly when hegemons have overextended themselves with costly military commitments.

Hegemonic stability theory holds that hegemony provides some order similar to a central government in the international system: reducing anarchy, deterring aggression, promoting free trade, and providing a hard currency that can be used as a world standard. Hegemons can help resolve or at least keep in check conflicts among middle powers or small states. When one state's power dominates the world, that state can enforce rules and norms unilaterally, avoiding the collective goods problem. In particular, hegemons can maintain global free trade and promote world economic growth, in this view.

From the perspective of less powerful states, of course, hegemony may seem an infringement of state sovereignty, and the order it creates may seem unjust or illegitimate. For instance, China chafed under U.S.-imposed economic sanctions for 20 years after 1949, at the height of U.S. power, when China was encircled by U.S. military bases and hostile alliances led by the United States. To this day, Chinese leaders use the term *hegemony* as an insult, and the theory of hegemonic stability does not impress them.

Even in the United States there is considerable ambivalence about U.S. hegemony. U.S. foreign policy has historically alternated between *internationalist* and *isolationist* moods. In World War I, the country waited three years to weigh in and refused to join the League of Nations afterward. U.S. isolationism peaked in the 1930s; public opinion polls late in that decade showed 95 percent of the U.S. public opposed to participation in a future great European war, and about 70 percent opposed to joining with other nations to stop aggression.

Internationalists, such as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, favored U.S. leadership and activism in world affairs. These views seemed vindicated by the failure of isolationism to prevent or avoid World War II. U.S. leaders after that war feared Soviet (and then Chinese) communism and pushed U.S. public opinion toward a strong internationalism during the Cold War. The United States became an activist, global superpower.

A second area of U.S. ambivalence is *unilateralism* versus *multilateralism* when the United States does engage internationally. Multilateral approaches—working through international institutions—augment U.S. power and reduce costs, but limit U.S. freedom of action. In 2001, the United States declined to participate in such international efforts as a treaty on global warming (see pp. 314–315), a conference on racism, and an International Criminal Court (see p. 253). Unilateralist U.S. policies drew resistance from Europe and Canada. The international community’s united front against terrorism pushed these disputes to the back burner, but they soon reemerged. The 2003 U.S.-led war in Iraq, with few allies and no UN stamp of approval, marked the peak of U.S. unilateralism. Since then, the NATO alliance has assumed new importance in Afghanistan and in the 2011 Libya campaign, and UN dues have been repaid.

PRICE OF HEGEMONY




The United States is the world’s most powerful single actor. Its ability and willingness to resume a role as hegemon—as after World War II—are important factors that will shape world order, but the U.S. role is still uncertain. America’s willingness to absorb casualties will affect its role. Here, soldiers return from Afghanistan, 2009.

Alliances

An *alliance* is a coalition of states that coordinate their actions to accomplish some end. Most alliances are formalized in written treaties, concern a common threat and related issues of international security, and endure across a range of issues and a period of time. If actors’ purposes in banding together were shorter-term, less formal, or more issue-specific, the association might be called a *coalition* rather than an alliance. Informal but enduring strategic *alignments* in a region are discussed shortly. But these terms are somewhat ambiguous. Two countries may have a formal alliance and yet be bitter enemies, as are Greece and Turkey. Or, two countries may create the practical equivalent of an alliance without a formal treaty.

Purposes of Alliances

Alliances generally have the purpose of augmenting their members’ power by pooling capabilities. For smaller states, alliances can be their most important power element, and for great powers the structure of alliances shapes the configuration of power in the

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MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE



Alliances generally result from a convergence of practical interests, not sentimental or ideological reasons. Here, a U.S. general gets rival Afghan warlords to patch up relations, 2002.

system. Of all the elements of power, none can change as quickly and decisively as alliances. Most alliances form in response to a perceived threat. When a state's power grows and threatens that of its rivals, the latter often form an alliance to limit that power. This happened to Iraq when it invaded Kuwait in 1990, as it had to Hitler's Germany in the 1940s and to Napoleon's France in the 1800s.

Realists emphasize the fluidity of alliances. They are not marriages of love, but marriages of convenience. Alliances are based on national interests, and can shift as national interests change. This fluidity helps the balance-of-power process operate effectively. Examples of fluid alliances are many. Anticommunist Richard Nixon could cooperate with communist

Mao Zedong in 1972. Joseph Stalin could sign a nonaggression pact with a fascist, Adolf Hitler, and then cooperate with the capitalist West against Hitler. The United States could back the Islamic militants in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in the 1980s, then attack them in 2001. Every time history brings another such reversal in international alignments, many people are surprised. Realists are not so surprised.

The fluidity of alliances deepens the security dilemma (see p. 43). If there were only two states, each could match capabilities to have adequate defense but an inability to attack successfully. But if a third state is free to ally with either side, then each state has to build adequate defenses against the potential alliance of its enemy with the third state. The threat is greater and the security dilemma is harder to escape.

Alliance cohesion is the ease with which the members hold together an alliance. Cohesion tends to be high when national interests converge and when cooperation within the alliance becomes institutionalized and habitual. When states with divergent interests form an alliance against a common enemy, the alliance may come apart if the threat subsides. It did, for instance, with the World War II U.S.-Soviet alliance. Even when alliance cohesion is high, as in NATO during the Cold War, conflicts may arise over **burden sharing** (who bears the costs of the alliance).

Great powers often form alliances (or less formal commitments) with smaller states, sometimes called *client states*. Extended deterrence refers to a strong state's use of threats to deter attacks on weaker clients—such as the U.S. threat to attack the Soviet Union if it invaded Western Europe. Great powers face a real danger of being dragged into wars with each other over relatively unimportant regional issues if their respective clients go to war. If the great powers do not come to their clients' protection, they may lose credibility with other clients, but if they do, they may end up fighting a costly war.

NATO

At present, two important formal alliances dominate the international security scene. By far the more powerful is the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, which encompasses Western Europe and North America. (The second is the U.S.-Japanese alliance.) Using GDP as a measure of power, the 28 NATO members possess nearly half the world total (roughly twice the power of the United States alone). Members are the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Croatia. At NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, military staffs from the member countries coordinate plans and periodically direct exercises in the field. The NATO “allied supreme commander” has always been a U.S. general. In NATO, each state contributes its own military units—with its own national culture, language, and equipment specifications.

NATO was founded in 1949 to oppose and deter Soviet power in Europe. Its counterpart in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, the Soviet-led **Warsaw Pact**, was founded in 1955 and disbanded in 1991. During the Cold War, the United States maintained more than 300,000 troops in Europe, with advanced planes, tanks, and other equipment. After the Cold War ended, these forces were cut to about 100,000. But NATO stayed together because its members believed that NATO provided useful stability even though its mission was unclear. The first actual use of force by NATO was in Bosnia in 1994, in support of the UN mission there.

Currently, NATO troops from a number of member countries are fighting Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Since 2006, these forces, known as the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), have been under NATO leadership. Over 100,000 troops serve in the ISAF, with NATO states providing the bulk of the forces. International combat forces are to withdraw by 2014.

NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 proved effective, as air power turned the tide of the rebel war that overthrew Libya's dictator. With UN Security Council and Arab League backing for a no-fly zone, and European countries providing most of the combat planes, NATO rated the operation a great success.

The European Union has formed its own rapid deployment force, outside NATO. The decision to form this force grew in part from European military weaknesses demonstrated in the 1999 Kosovo war, in which the United States contributed the most power by far. Although this Eurocorps generally works *with* NATO, it also gives Europe more independence from the United States. In 2003, the European Union sent military forces

as peacekeepers to Democratic Congo—the first multinational European military operation to occur outside NATO. In 2004, NATO and U.S. forces withdrew from Bosnia after nine years, turning over peacekeeping there to the European Union (as they had in Macedonia). But NATO forces, including U.S. soldiers, remain next door in Kosovo.

The biggest issue for NATO is its recent eastward expansion, beyond the East-West Cold War dividing line (see Figure 2.5). In 1999, former Soviet-bloc countries

FIGURE 2.5 NATO Expansion



Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined the alliance. Joining in 2004 were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria. In 2009, Albania and Croatia joined NATO, bringing the total number of members to 28. Georgia and Ukraine would like to join, but their contentious relation with Russia makes the possibility controversial. NATO expansion was justified as both a way to solidify new democracies and as protection against possible future Russian aggression. Yet, the 2003 Iraq War bypassed NATO and divided NATO members. Long-time members France and Germany strongly opposed the war, and Turkey refused to let U.S. ground forces cross into Iraq. Russian leaders oppose NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe as aggressive and anti-Russian. They view NATO expansion as reasserting dividing lines on the map of Europe, closer to Russia's borders. These fears strengthen nationalist and anti-Western political forces in Russia. To mitigate the problems, NATO created a category of symbolic membership—the Partnership for Peace—which almost all Eastern European and former Soviet states including Russia joined.

Other Alliances

The second most important alliance is the **U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty**, a bilateral alliance. Under this alliance, the United States maintains nearly 35,000 troops in Japan (with weapons, equipment, and logistical support). Japan pays the United States several billion dollars annually to offset about half the cost of maintaining these troops. The alliance was created in 1951 against the potential Soviet threat to Japan.

Because of its roots in the U.S. military occupation of Japan after World War II, the alliance is very asymmetrical. The United States is committed to defend Japan if it is attacked, but Japan is not similarly obligated to defend the United States. The United States maintains troops in Japan, but not vice versa. The United States belongs to several other alliances, but Japan's only major alliance is with the United States. The U.S. share of the total military power in this alliance is also far greater than its share in NATO.

Japan's constitution renounces the right to make war and maintain military forces, although interpretation has loosened this prohibition over time. Japan maintains military forces, called the Self-Defense Forces, which are a powerful army by world standards but much smaller than Japan's economic strength could support. Japanese public opinion restrains militarism and precludes the development of nuclear weapons (after Japanese cities were destroyed by nuclear weapons in World War II). Nonetheless, some Japanese leaders believe that Japan's formal security role should expand commensurate with its economic power.

For its part, the United States has used the alliance with Japan as a base to project U.S. power in Asia, especially during the wars in Korea (1950–1953) and Vietnam (1965–1975), when Japan was a key staging area. However, these U.S. forces have been drawn down somewhat in the past decade in response to high costs, reduced threats, and more American focus on the Middle East. In 2010, the alliance became a major political issue in Japan as its prime minister,

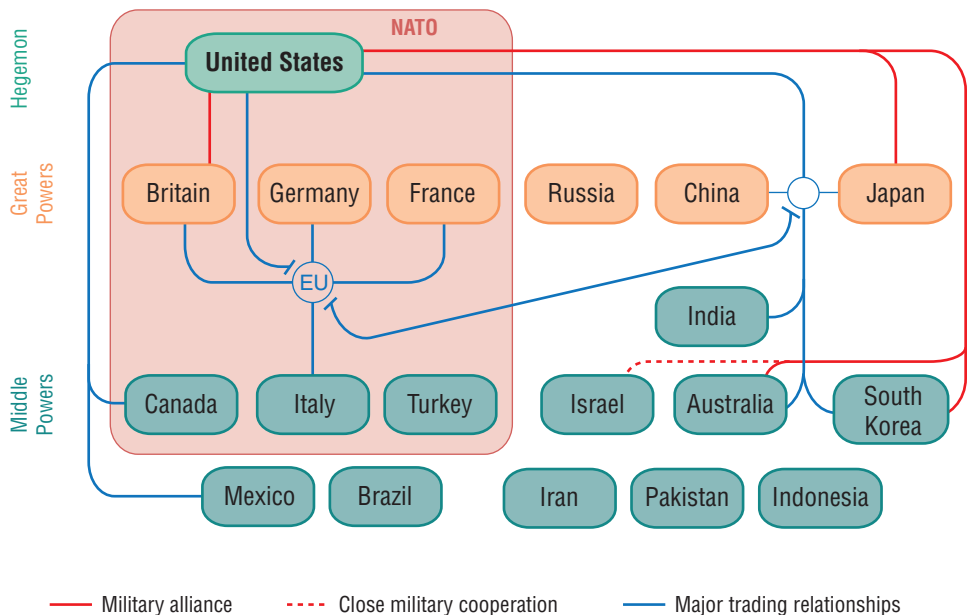
Yukio Hatoyama, resigned after reneging on his promise to force the United States to renegotiate certain aspects of the treaty.

Parallel with the U.S.-Japan treaty, the United States maintains military alliances with several other states, including South Korea and Australia. Close U.S. collaboration with militaries in other states such as Israel make them de facto U.S. allies.

The 11 members of the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS) comprise the former Soviet republics except the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Russia, the official successor state to the Soviet Union, is the leading member and Ukraine the second largest. Although some military coordination takes place through the CIS, initial plans for a joint military force did not succeed. Among the largest CIS members, Kazakhstan and Belarus are the most closely aligned with Russia, while Ukraine is the most independent (and in fact never officially ratified the CIS agreement). In 2009, Georgia withdrew from the CIS, due to its military conflict with Russia.

For the present, international alignments—both military alliances and trade relationships—center on the United States (see Figure 2.6). Although several independent-minded states such as China, Russia, and France keep U.S. hegemony in check, little evidence exists of a coherent or formal rival power alignment emerging to challenge the United States.

FIGURE 2.6 Current Alignment of Great and Middle Powers



Source: U.S. Department of Defense

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh

PROBLEM *How do you confront a fluid security environment by managing current and formal rivals?*

BACKGROUND As the world's largest democracy, your country faces many challenges both at home and abroad. In particular, in the past 50 years, you have fought wars against your two largest neighbors, China and Pakistan. Both states possess nuclear weapons, as do you. China and Pakistan have cooperated with each other in the past, including on sales of high technology military goods such as missiles.

Your generally hostile relationship with Pakistan grows from a territorial dispute over half of the region of Kashmir, which both of you claim, but India maintains control over. The territory is coveted not only by your respective governments but by the publics in each country as well. While there has been cooperation between each country, tensions still run high over Kashmir. In the aftermath of the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, many in your country blamed Pakistan since it is home to Islamic militant groups.

Your hostilities with China have cooled over the years, but China remains a major rival in the region and you still maintain competing claims over territory. Like your own country, China is large economically as well as militarily, and it attempts to exert strong leadership in your region. In the past two years, however, you have increased ties with China and you personally visited China at the beginning of 2008 to open discussions on future trade and military cooperation. In December 2007, your armies (the two largest in the world) held joint training exercises.

DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS Within your country, neither Pakistan nor China are popular choices for allies. Your population is still angered by the Chinese victory in the 1962 Sino-Indian war and the disputed border territory that gave rise to the conflict. Yet your largely Hindu population is also angry at repeated attempts by Muslim Pakistan to gain control of Kashmir. Your advisors also remind you that China still has a healthy relationship with Pakistan, including sales of




advanced weapons and large flows of military assistance. Indeed, the main political opposition parties argue that you have been too “soft” on both Pakistan and China in your time as prime minister. Any public backlash against your foreign policy on these issues could be widespread and bring calls for new elections that could unseat your government.

SCENARIO Imagine that the government of Pakistan begins to suffer from large-scale instability. Islamist militants are close to overthrowing the government there, giving them control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. They are also calling for Muslims in Kashmir to rise up against Indian control, promising to openly assist a rebellion in that province by providing weapons and intelligence. Your own intelligence service considers the collapse of the current Pakistani government “likely.”

CHOOSE YOUR POLICY Do you push for closer relations with China as a result of instability in Pakistan? Can you trust China to support you in a dispute with Pakistan, given those countries' close relationship? Do you ask China to help mediate between your government and Pakistan in the event of hostilities? Or do you continue your course as independently as possible, not trusting Chinese intentions toward your country?



Strategy

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Actors use strategy to pursue good outcomes in bargaining with one or more other actors. States deploy power capabilities as leverage to influence each other’s actions. Bargaining is interactive, and requires an actor to take account of other actors’ interests even while pursuing its own. Sometimes bargaining communication takes place through actions rather than words.

Statecraft

Classical realists emphasize *statecraft*—the art of managing state affairs and effectively maneuvering in a world of power politics among sovereign states. Power strategies are plans actors use to develop and deploy power capabilities to achieve their goals.

A key aspect of strategy is choosing the kinds of capabilities to develop, given limited resources, in order to maximize international influence. This requires foresight because the capabilities required to manage a situation may need to be developed years before that situation presents itself. Yet the capabilities chosen often will not be fungible in the short term. Central to this dilemma is what kind of standing military forces to maintain in peacetime—enough to prevent a quick defeat if war breaks out, but not so much as to overburden one’s economy (see pp. 164–166).

Strategies also shape policies for when a state is willing to use its power capabilities. The *will* of a nation or leader is hard to estimate. Even if leaders make explicit their intention to fight over an issue, they might be bluffing.

The strategic actions of China in recent years exemplify the concept of strategy as rational deployment of power capabilities. China’s central foreign policy goal is to prevent the independence of Taiwan, which China considers an integral part of its territory (as does the United Nations and, at least in theory, the United States). China may not have the military power to invade Taiwan successfully, but it has declared repeatedly that it will go to war if Taiwan declares independence. So far, even though such a war might be irrational on China’s part, the threat has deterred Taiwan from formally declaring independence. China also breaks diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan. Chinese strategies mobilize various capabilities, including missiles, diplomats, and industrial conglomerates, in a coherent effort to influence the outcome of China’s most important international issue. Strategy thus amplifies China’s power.

The strategy of **deterrence** uses a threat to punish another actor if it takes a certain negative action (especially attacking one’s own state or one’s allies). If deterrence works, its effects are almost invisible; its success is measured in attacks that did not occur.

Most advocates of deterrence believe that conflicts are more likely to escalate into war when one party to the conflict is weak. In this view, building up military capabilities usually convinces the stronger party that a resort to military leverage would not succeed, so conflicts are less likely to escalate into violence. A strategy of **compellence**, sometimes used after deterrence fails, refers to the threat of force to make another actor take some action (rather than refrain from taking an action). Generally, it is harder to get another state to change course (the purpose of compellence) than it is to get it to refrain from changing course (the purpose of deterrence).

One strategy used to try to compel compliance by another state is *escalation*—a series of negative sanctions of increasing severity applied in order to induce another actor to take some action. In theory, the less severe actions establish credibility—showing the first actor’s willingness to exert its power on the issue—and the pattern of escalation establishes the high costs of future sanctions if the second actor does not cooperate. These actions should induce the second actor to comply, assuming that it finds the potential costs of the escalating punishments greater than the costs of compliance. But escalation can be quite dangerous. During the Cold War, many IR scholars worried that a conventional war could lead to nuclear war if the superpowers tried to apply escalation strategies.

An **arms race** is a reciprocal process in which two (or more) states build up military capabilities in response to each other. Because each wants to act prudently against a threat, the attempt to reciprocate leads to a runaway production of weapons by both sides. The mutual escalation of threats erodes confidence, reduces cooperation, and makes it more likely that a crisis (or accident) could cause one side to strike first and start a war rather than wait for the other side to strike. The arms race process was illustrated vividly in the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race, which created arsenals of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons on each side.

Rationality

Most realists (and many nonrealists) assume that those who wield power while engaging in statecraft behave as **rational actors** in their efforts to influence others. This view has two implications for IR.

First, the assumption of rationality implies that states and other international actors can identify their interests and put priorities on various interests: A state’s actions seek to advance its interests. Many realists assume that the actor (usually a state) exercising power is a single entity that can “think” about its actions coherently and make choices. This is called the *unitary actor* assumption, or sometimes the *strong leader* assumption. The assumption is a simplification, because the interests of particular politicians, parties, economic sectors, or regions of a country often conflict. Yet realists assume that the exercise of power attempts to advance the **national interest**—the interests of the state itself.

INTERNAL DIVISIONS



The unitary actor assumption holds that states make important decisions as though they were single individuals able to act in the national interest. In truth, factions and organizations with differing interests put conflicting pressures on state leaders. In extreme cases, weak states do not control the armed factions within them. These Somali pirates being captured by Turkish commandos in 2009 are just one of the internal groups, ranging from autonomous territories to Islamist militants, that operate with impunity within Somalia.

But what are the interests of a state? Are they the interests of domestic groups (see Chapter 3)? The need to prevail in conflicts with other states (see Chapter 4)? The ability to cooperate with the international community for mutual benefit (see Chapter 6)? There is no simple answer. Some realists simply define the national interest as maximizing power—a debatable assumption. Others compare power in IR with money in economics—a universal measure. In this view, just as firms compete for money in economic markets, states compete for power in the international system.

Second, rationality implies that actors are able to perform a **cost-benefit analysis**—calculating the costs incurred by a possible action and the benefits it is likely to bring. Applying power incurs costs and should produce commensurate gains. As in the problem of estimating power, one has to add up different dimensions in such a calculation. For instance, states presumably do not initiate wars that they expect to lose, except when they stand to gain political benefits, domestic or international, that outweigh the costs of losing the war. But it is not easy to tally intangible political benefits against the tangible costs of a war. Even victory in a war may not be worth the costs paid. Rational actors can miscalculate costs and benefits, especially when using faulty information (although this does not mean they are irrational). Finally, human behavior and luck can be unpredictable.

These assumptions about rationality and the actors in IR are simplifications that not all IR scholars accept. But realists consider these simplifications useful because they allow scholars to explain in a general way the actions of diverse actors.

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Game theory is a branch of mathematics concerned with predicting bargaining outcomes. A game is a setting in which two or more players choose among alternative moves, either once or repeatedly. Each combination of moves (by all players) results in a set of payoffs (utility) to each player. The payoffs can be tangible items such as money or any intangible items of value. Game theory aims to deduce likely outcomes (what moves players will make), given the players' preferences and the possible moves open to them. Games are sometimes called formal models.

Game theory was first used extensively in IR in the 1950s and 1960s by scholars trying to understand U.S.-Soviet nuclear war contingencies. Moves were decisions to use nuclear weapons in certain ways, and payoffs were outcomes of the war. The use of game theory to study international interactions has become more extensive among IR scholars in recent years, especially among realists, who accept the assumptions about rationality. To analyze a game mathematically, one assumes that each player chooses a move rationally, to maximize its payoff.

Different kinds of situations are represented by different classes of games, as defined by the number of players and the structure of the payoffs. One basic distinction is between **zero-sum games**, in which one player's gain is by definition equal to the other's loss, and *non-zero-sum games*, in which it is possible for both players to gain (or lose). In a zero-sum game there is no point in communication or cooperation between the play-

ers because their interests are diametrically opposed. But in a non-zero-sum game, coordination of moves can maximize the total payoff to the players, although each may still maneuver to gain a greater share of that total payoff.

The game called **prisoner's dilemma (PD)** captures the kind of collective goods problem common to IR. In this situation, rational players choose moves that produce an outcome in which all players are worse off than under a different set of moves. They all could do better, but as individual rational actors they are unable to achieve this outcome. How can this be?

The original story tells of two prisoners questioned separately by a prosecutor. The prosecutor knows they committed a bank robbery but has only enough evidence to convict them of illegal possession of a gun unless one of them confesses. The prosecutor tells each prisoner that if he confesses and his partner doesn't confess, he will go free. If his partner confesses and he doesn't, he will get a long prison term for bank robbery (while the partner goes free). If both confess, they will get a somewhat reduced term. If neither confesses, they will be convicted on the gun charge and serve a short sentence. The story assumes that neither prisoner will have a chance to retaliate later, that only the immediate outcomes matter, and that each prisoner cares only about himself.

This game has a single solution: both prisoners will confess. Each will reason as follows: "If my partner is going to confess, then I should confess too, because I will get a slightly shorter sentence that way. If my partner is not going to confess, then I should still confess because I will go free that way instead of serving a short sentence." The other prisoner follows the same reasoning. The dilemma is that by following their individually rational choices, both prisoners end up serving a fairly long sentence when they could have both served a short one by cooperating (keeping their mouths shut).

In IR, the PD game has been used to gain insight into arms races. Consider the decisions of India and Pakistan about whether to build sizable nuclear weapons arsenals. Both have the ability to do so. Neither side can know whether the other is secretly building up an arsenal unless they reach an arms control agreement with strict verification provisions. To analyze the game, we assign values to each possible outcome—often called a *preference ordering*—for each player. This is not simple: if we misjudge the value a player puts on a particular outcome, we may draw wrong conclusions from the game.

The following preferences regarding possible outcomes are plausible: the best outcome would be that oneself but not the other player had a nuclear arsenal (the expense of building nuclear weapons would be worth it because one could then use them as leverage); second best would be for neither to go nuclear (no leverage, but no expense); third best would be for both to develop nuclear arsenals (a major expense without gaining leverage); worst would be to forgo nuclear weapons oneself while the other player developed them (and thus be subject to blackmail).

The game can be summarized in a *payoff matrix* (see Figure 2.7). The first number in each cell is India's payoff, and the second number is Pakistan's. To keep things

FIGURE 2.7 Payoff Matrix in India-Pakistan PD Game

		Pakistan	
		Cooperate	Defect
India	Cooperate	(3,3)	(1,4)
	Defect	(4,1)	(2,2)

Note: First number in each group is India's payoff, second is Pakistan's. The number 4 is highest payoff, 1 lowest.

simple, 4 indicates the highest payoff and 1 the lowest. As is conventional, a decision to refrain from building nuclear weapons is called “cooperation,” and a decision to proceed with nuclear weapons is called “defection.” The dilemma here parallels that of the prisoners just discussed. Each state's leader reasons: “If they go nuclear, we must; if they don't, we'd be crazy not to.” The model seems to predict an inevitable Indian-Pakistani nuclear arms race, although both states would do better to avoid one.

This India-Pakistan example appeared in the first edition of this textbook in 1993. Since then, as predicted by the model, both sides have built nuclear weapons. In 1998, India detonated underground nuclear explosions to test weapons designs, and Pakistan promptly followed suit. In 2002, the two states nearly went to war, with projected war deaths of up to 12 million. A costly and dangerous arms race continues, and both sides now have dozens of nuclear missiles, and counting. This example illustrates why realists tend to be pessimistic about cooperative solutions to collective goods problems such as the one that the PD game embodies.

Another example of game theory, the game of chicken, sheds light on the concept of deterrence. Deterrence involves convincing another actor not to undertake an action he or she otherwise would. Just as in the game of chicken, when one driver commits to not swerving, state leaders attempt to convince others that they will respond harshly if they (or an ally) are attacked. But because not swerving risks disaster for both sides, it is difficult for one side to convince the other that he or she will risk crashing (fighting a war) if the other side decides not to swerve. Game theory often studies *interdependent decisions*—the outcome for each player depends on the actions of the other.

This chapter has focused on the concerns of realists—the interests of states, distribution of power among states, bargaining between states, and alliances of states. The chapter has treated states as unitary actors, much as one would analyze the interactions of individual people. The actions of state leaders have been treated as more or less rational in terms of pursuing definable interests through coherent bargaining strategies. But realism is not the only way to frame the major issues of international relations. Chapter 3 reexamines these themes critically, relying less on the core principle of dominance and more on reciprocity and identity.



CHAPTER REVIEW

SUMMARY

- Realism explains international relations in terms of power. Power can be conceptualized as influence or as capabilities that can create influence.
- The most important single indicator of a state's power is its GDP.
- Short-term power capabilities depend on long-term resources, both tangible and intangible. Realists consider military force the most important power capability.
- International anarchy—the absence of world government—means that each state is a sovereign and autonomous actor pursuing its own national interests.
- Seven great powers account for half of the world's GDP as well as the great majority of military forces and other power capabilities.
- Power transition theory says that wars often result from shifts in relative power distribution in the international system.
- Hegemony—the predominance of one state in the international system—can help provide stability and peace in international relations, but with some drawbacks.
- States form alliances to increase their effective power. Alliances can shift rapidly, with major effects on power relations. The world's main alliances, including NATO and the U.S.-Japanese alliance, face uncertain roles in a changing world order.
- International affairs can be seen as a series of bargaining interactions in which states use power capabilities as leverage to influence the outcomes.
- Rational-actor approaches treat states as though they were individuals acting to maximize their own interests. These simplifications are debatable but allow realists to develop concise and general models and explanations.
- Game theory draws insights from simplified models of bargaining situations, such as the prisoner's dilemma.

KEY TERMS

realism	35	balance of power	43	burden sharing	50
idealism	35	great powers	44	North Atlantic Treaty	
League of Nations	35	middle powers	46	Organization	
Munich Agreement	36	neorealism	46	(NATO)	51
power	38	power transition		Warsaw Pact	51
geopolitics	40	theory	47	U.S.-Japanese Security	
anarchy	41	hegemony	48	Treaty	53
norms	41	hegemonic stability		deterrence	56
sovereignty	41	theory	48	compellence	56
security dilemma	42	alliance cohesion	50	arms race	57

rational actors	57	game theory	58	prisoner's dilemma	
national interest	57	zero-sum games	58	(PD)	59
cost-benefit analysis	58				

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Using Table 1.5 on pp. 22–23 (with GDP as a measure of power) and the maps at the back of the book, pick a state and speculate about what coalition of nearby states might form with sufficient power to oppose the state if it became aggressive.
2. Choose a recent international event and list the power capabilities that participants used as leverage in the episode. Which capabilities were effective, and why?
3. The modern international system came into being at a time when agrarian societies relied primarily on farmland to create wealth. Now that most wealth is no longer created through farming, is the territorial nature of states obsolete? How might the diminishing economic value of territory change how states interact?