

Realism

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Northern Alliance tanks prepare to attack
Kabul, November 2001.





Power Politics

REALISM

No single theory reliably explains the wide range of international interactions, both conflictual and cooperative. But there is a theoretical framework that has traditionally 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. It is a relatively conservative theoretical approach; liberal and revolutionary alternatives will be reviewed in Chapter 3.

Realism (or *political realism*) is a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power (see “Defining Power,” pp. **-*). The exercise of power by states toward each other is sometimes called *realpolitik*, or just *power politics*. Realism has a long history, and it dominated the study of IR in the United States during the Cold War.

Realism as we know it developed in reaction to a liberal tradition that realists called **idealism** (of course, idealists themselves do not consider their approach unrealistic). 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. With good habits, education, and appropriate international structures, human nature can become the basis of peaceful and cooperative international relationships. Idealists see the international system as one based on a community of states with the potential to work together to overcome mutual problems (see Chapter 3).

For idealists, the principles of IR must flow from morality. More than 2,000 years ago the Chinese writer Mo Ti pointed out that everyone “knows that [murder] is unrighteous,” yet “when murder is committed in attacking a country it is not considered wrong; it is applauded and called righteous.” For Mo Ti, this made no sense. “If a man calls black black if it is seen on a small scale, but calls black white when it is seen on a large scale, then he is one who cannot tell black from white.”¹ Idealists were particularly active in the period between World Wars I and II, following the painful experience of World War I. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and other idealists placed their hopes for peace in the League of Nations as a formal structure for the community of nations.

Those hopes were dashed when that structure proved helpless to stop German and Japanese aggression in the 1930s. Since World War II, realists have blamed idealists for

¹ Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. Translated by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 22.



WEB LINK

Aggression in
the 1930s

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. Realism provided a theoretical foundation for the Cold War policies of containment and the determination of U.S. policy makers not to appease the Soviet Union and China.

Realists ground themselves in a long tradition. The Chinese strategist *Sun Tzu*, who lived two thousand years ago, at the time of *Mo Ti*, advised the rulers of states how to survive in an era when war had become a systematic instrument of power for the first time (the “warring states” period). *Sun Tzu* argued that moral reasoning was not very useful to the state rulers of the day, faced with armed and dangerous neighbors. *Sun Tzu* 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.”² Much later, in Renaissance Italy (around 1500), *Niccolò Machiavelli* urged princes to concentrate on expedient actions to stay in power and to pay attention to war above all else. Today the adjective *Machiavellian* refers to excessively manipulative power maneuvers.³

English philosopher *Thomas Hobbes* in the seventeenth century discussed the free-for-all that exists when government is absent and people seek their own self-interest. He called it the “state of nature” or “state of war”—what we would now call the “law of the jungle” in contrast to the rule of law. *Hobbes* favored a strong monarchy to prevent the condition, but in international affairs there is no such central authority (see pp. **-*).

In the nineteenth century, the German military strategist *Karl von Clausewitz* said that “war is a continuation of politics by other means.” U.S. admiral *Alfred Mahan* promoted naval power as the key means of achieving national political and economic interests. 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 interest defined as power (not on 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.

Realists tend to treat political power as separate from, and predominant over, morality, ideology, and other social and economic aspects of life. For realists, ideologies do not matter much, nor do religions or other cultural factors with which states may explain their actions. Realists see states with very different religions or ideologies or economic systems as quite similar in their actions with regard to national power.⁴

Today realists share several assumptions about how IR works. They assume that IR can be best (though not exclusively) explained by the choices of states operating as autonomous actors rationally pursuing their own interests in a system of sovereign states.

² *Thucydides. History of the Peloponnesian War.* Translated by R. Warner. New York: Penguin, 1972, p. 402.

³ *Machiavelli, Niccolò. The Prince, and the Discourses.* Translated by Luigi Ricci. Revised by E. R. P. Vincent. New York: Modern Library, 1950. *Meinecke, Friedrich. Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'état and Its Place in Modern History.* Translated by D. Scott. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.

⁴ *Morgenthau, Hans J., and Kenneth W. Thompson. Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace.* 6th ed. New York: Knopf, 1985. *Carr, Edward Hallett. The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations.* London: Macmillan Press, 1974 [1939]. *Aron, Raymond. Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations.* Translated by R. Howard and A. B. Fox. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

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

Sometimes the realist framework is summarized in three propositions: (1) *states* are the most important actors (the state-centric assumption); (2) they act as *rational* individuals in pursuing national interests (the unitary rational-actor assumption); and (3) they act in the context of an international system lacking central government (the *anarchy* assumption).

Table 2.1 summarizes some major differences between the assumptions of realism and idealism. We will return to the realism-liberalism debate at the start of Chapter 3.

POWER

Power is a central concept in international relations—the central one for realists—but one that is surprisingly difficult to define or measure.

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).⁵ A variation on this idea is that actors are powerful to the extent that they affect others more than others affect them.⁶ 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. Thus it is hard to use power to explain why international events occur (the aim of realism). A related problem is that common usage treats power as a thing rather than a process: states “have” power.

These problems are resolved if we recall that power is not influence itself, but the ability or potential to influence others. 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, armed forces, and so forth. This is *power as capability*. Capabilities are easier to measure than influence and less circular in logic.

Measuring capabilities to explain how one nation 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. An alternative method, compared to the

⁵ Dahl, Robert A. *Modern Political Analysis*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970.

⁶ Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.



GDP by
Alternative
Method
Statistics

POWER AS INFLUENCE



Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others. Military force and economic sanctions are among the various means states use to try to influence each other. U.S. intervention in Afghanistan's civil war influenced the outcome decisively, bringing a change of government and the destruction of terrorist infrastructure in the country. U.S. pilot in Afghanistan campaign, 2001.

method followed in this book, 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 (see footnote 6 on p. **). In particular, this alternative method reduces China's GDP substantially from the figures reported in this book. So GDP is a useful estimator of material capabilities but not a precise one.

Furthermore, beyond tangible capabilities, power depends on intangible elements. Capabilities give a state the potential to influence others only to the extent that political leaders can mobilize and deploy them effectively and strategically. This depends on national will, on diplomatic skill, on 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 being the one to form rules of behavior, to change how others see their own national interests. If a state's own values become widely shared among other states, it will easily influence others. For example, the United States has influenced many other states to accept the value of free markets and free trade. This has been called *soft power*.⁷

A state can have power only relative to other states. *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.

Even realists recognize the limits to explanations based on power. At best, power provides a general understanding of typical or average outcomes. In actual IR there are many other elements at work, including an element of accident or luck. The more powerful actor does not always prevail. Power provides only a partial explanation.⁸

⁷ Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

⁸ Rothgeb, John M., Jr. *Defining Power: Influence and Force in the Contemporary International System*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. Pettman, Ralph. *International Politics: Balance of Power, Balance of Productivity, Balance of Ideologies*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991. Cox, Robert W. *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*. Columbia University Press, 1987. Liska, George. *The Ways of Power: Patterns and Meaning in World Politics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1990. Stoll, Richard, and Michael D. Ward, eds. *Power in World Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988. Sullivan, Michael P. *Power in Contemporary International Politics*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.

Estimating Power

Sun Tzu's first chapter advises rulers to accurately estimate their own power—ranging from money to territory to popular domestic support—and that of their potential enemies. “Know the enemy and know yourself,” he wrote. Any estimate of an actor's overall power must combine diverse elements and will therefore be inexact. But such estimates are nonetheless very useful. Consider two examples in which states went to war: Iraq and Iran in 1980, and Iraq and the United States in 1991. 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—which reflects both population size and the level of income per person (per capita). With a healthy enough economy, a state can buy a large army, buy popular support (by providing consumer goods), and even buy allies.

When Iraq attacked its neighbor Iran in 1980, the two countries appeared roughly equal in power. Both were oil-producing countries with middle-range income levels. Both could use oil income to buy arms on world markets, and both had relatively large and advanced military forces (by third world standards). Iran's military had been developed under the Shah in alliance with the United States; Iraq's had been largely supplied by the Soviet Union. Iran's population of 38 million was three times as large as Iraq's but its total GDP was less than double Iraq's.

Counterbalancing Iran's modest advantage in GDP was its short-term internal disorder. The Shah had been overthrown. Much of the military could be expected to offer little support, and perhaps active opposition, to Ayatollah Khomeini and the other new leaders who had overthrown the Shah. It seemed that the new government would be unable to mobilize its potential power. By contrast, Saddam Hussein (also known as just Saddam) had recently taken absolute power as leader of Iraq and could count on a loyal military. He invaded Iran, hoping for a quick victory and the installation of a friendly government there.

The key element on which Saddam's plan depended was Iran's low internal cohesion, which would counteract Iran's advantage in size. But Saddam miscalculated this element. The Iranian military pulled together under Khomeini to put up a spirited defense, and its population proved more willing than Iraq's to die for its cause. The tide soon turned against Iraq. Saddam then looked to allies in the Arab world. These, with the tacit support of all the great powers, provided him enough aid to keep from losing (which would expand Iran's power) but not enough to win (which would expand Iraq's power). Thus the two sides were roughly equal in the power they could bring to bear. The war dragged on for ten years, killing a million people, before its end was negotiated with no winner.

The second example could hardly be more different. When Iraq seized its small and rich neighbor Kuwait, it came into a confrontation with the United States (which was determined not to let Iraq control Persian Gulf oil). The power disparity was striking. In GDP, the United States held an advantage of nearly a hundred to one; in population, more than ten to one. The larger U.S. armed forces were much more capable technologically. The United States also enjoyed a power advantage in the moral legitimacy conferred by the UN Security Council. Finally, a broad coalition of U.S. allies against Iraq included the most powerful states regionally and globally. Iraq had few allies of any kind and no strong ones.

Iraq had the advantage in one important element, geography: Kuwait was right next to Iraq and was occupied by its entrenched troops, whereas the United States was halfway around the world and had few military forces in the Middle East region at the outset. Saddam also looked to the internal-cohesion dimension, where (as with Iran) he expected



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Oil, Source of
Iraqi Power
Photo



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Kuwait
Map

domestic politics in the United States to sap its will to fight. Again this was a miscalculation. The U.S. political leadership and citizenry rallied behind the war.

Overall, the GDP ratio—nearly one hundred to one—provided a good estimate of the power imbalance between Iraq and the United States. (In the short term, of course, other factors ranging from political strategies to military forces to weather played a role.) When the war began, the U.S.-led coalition established its dominance within the first few hours and went on to systematically crush Iraq's military power over six weeks and evict its forces from Kuwait. Thus, despite its lack of precision, GDP is probably the best single indicator of power. It does not always predict who will win a war, however, as shown by the U.S. loss in the Vietnam War.

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. Sustained economic growth in countries like China and South Korea is allowing military modernization. Here, South Korean tanks cross a river in Seoul during joint exercises with U.S. forces.

Elements of Power

State power is a mix of many ingredients, such as natural resources, industrial capacity, moral legitimacy, military preparedness, and popular support of government. All these elements contribute to an actor's power. The mix varies from one actor to another, but overall power does relate to the rough quantities of the elements on which that power is based.

Power resources are elements that an actor can draw on over the *long term*. The power measure used earlier—total GDP—is in this category. So are 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 power resource that a state can nurture over time. So is the ability of one state's culture and values to consistently shape the thinking of other states (the power of ideas). Power resources shape an actor's potential power.

The importance of long-term power resources was illustrated after the Japanese surprise attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor in 1941, which decimated U.S. naval capabilities in the Pacific. In the short term, Japan had superior military power and was able to occupy territories in Southeast Asia while driving U.S. forces from the region. In the longer term, the United States had greater power resources due to its underlying economic potential. It built up military capabilities over the next few years that gradually matched and then overwhelmed those of Japan in the Pacific.

Power 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 do their respective economies or natural resources. Another capability is the military-industrial capacity to quickly produce tanks, fighter planes, and other 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.

As with power resources, some power capabilities are intangible. 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. The *loyalty* of a nation's army and politicians to its leader (in the short term) is in effect a capability available to the leader. Although capabilities come into play more quickly than power resources, they are narrower in scope. In particular, military capabilities are useful only when military power can be effective in gaining influence. Likewise, economic capabilities are of little use in situations dominated by a military component.

Given the limited resources that any actor commands, there are always trade-offs among possible capabilities. 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 for building up military capabilities. 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 they see other elements such as economic strength or diplomatic skill or moral legitimacy as being important to the extent that they are fungible into military power. Such fungibility of nonmilitary elements of power into military ones is considerable, at least in the long term. Well-paid soldiers fight better, as do soldiers imbued with moral fervor for their cause, or soldiers using higher-technology weapons. Skilled diplomats can avoid unfavorable military confrontations or provoke favorable ones. Moral foreign policies can help sway public opinion in foreign countries and cement alliances that increase military strength. Realists tend to treat these dimensions of power as important mainly because of their potential military impact. Indeed, realists share this emphasis on military power with revolutionaries such as communist leaders during the Cold War. Chairman Mao Zedong of China said: "All power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

The different types of power capabilities can be contrasted by considering the choice to possess tanks or gold. One standard power capability that states want is battle tanks. In land warfare to control territory, the tank is arguably the most powerful instrument available, and the leading defense against it is another tank. One can assess power on this dimension by counting the size and quality of a state's tank force (an imprecise but not impossible exercise). A different power capability of time-honored value is the stockpile of *gold* (or its modern-day equivalent in hard currency reserves; see Chapter 9). Gold represents economic power and is a power resource, whereas tanks represent military power and are a power capability.

In the long term, the gold is better because one can always turn gold into tanks (it is fungible), but it might be hard to turn tanks into gold. However, in the short term the tanks might be better because if an enemy tank force invades one's territory, gold will not stop them; indeed they will soon take the gold for themselves. For example, in 1990 Iraq (which had gone for tanks) invaded its neighbor Kuwait (which had gone for gold). In the short term, Iraq proved much more powerful: it occupied Kuwait and plundered it.

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. For instance, the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama was named “Operation Just Cause.” Military capabilities are most effective in the context of justifications that make state actions seem moral. 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 (see Chapter 6). Frequently, state leaders use maps in thinking about international power positions and alignments. 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 along strategic trade routes, or by controlling key natural resources. In general, power declines as a function of distance from a home state, although technology seems to be making this decline less steep.

A recurrent geopolitical theme for centrally located, largely land-locked states such as Germany and Russia is the threat of being surrounded. In the 1840s, British politician Lord Palmerston warned that “Russia has a basic drive for warm water ports” (free of ice year-round). The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was seen by some Western leaders as a step toward Soviet expansion southward to the Indian Ocean, driven by such a motive. Militarily, centrally located states often face a *two-front problem*. Germany had to fight France to the west and Russia to the east simultaneously in World War I—a problem reduced early in World War II by Hitler’s pact with Stalin (until Hitler’s disastrous decision to invade the Soviet Union).

For states less centrally located, such as Britain or the United States, different geopolitical problems appear. These states have been called “insular” in that bodies of water protect them against land attacks.⁹ Their geopolitical problem in the event of war is to move soldiers and supplies over long distances to reach the scene of battle. This capability was demonstrated in the U.S. participation in the World Wars, the Cold War, and the Gulf War.



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Strategic Suez
Canal
Photo

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U.S.–Asia
Distance
Map

BARGAINING

The exercise of power involves two or more parties, each trying to influence the other more than it is itself influenced. The mutual attempts to influence others constitute a bargaining process. Bargaining is important in various theoretical perspectives (not just realism), though different theories emphasize different motivations, tactics, and outcomes.

Bargaining and Leverage

Bargaining may be defined as tacit or direct communication in an attempt to reach agreement on an exchange of value—that is, of tangible or intangible items that one or both

⁹ Dehio, Ludwig. *The Precarious Balance: Four Centuries of the European Power Struggle*. Translated by Charles Fullman. New York: Vintage Books, 1962 [from the German version of 1948]. Modelski, George, and William R. Thompson. *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494–1993*. Washington Press, 1988. Goldstein, Joshua S., and David P. Rapkin. After Insularity: Hegemony and the Future World Order. *Futures* 23 (9), 1991: 935–59.

¹⁰ Synder, Glenn H., and Paul Diesing. *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Morgan, T. Clifton. *Untying the Knot of War: A Bargaining Theory of International Crises*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. Telhami, Shibley. *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. Habeeb, William Mark. *Power and Tactics in International Negotiation: How Weak Nations Bargain with Strong Nations*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. Zartman, I. William, ed. *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995.

parties value. Bargaining need not be explicit. Sometimes the content is communicated through actions rather than an exchange of words.¹⁰

A bargaining process has two or more *participants* and sometimes has *mediators* whose participation is nominally neutral. Participants have a direct stake in the outcome; mediators do not. There are one or more *issues* on which each participant hopes to reach agreement on terms favorable to itself, but the participants' *interests* diverge on these issues, creating conflicts. These conflicts define a *bargaining space*—one or more dimensions, each of which represents a distance between the positions of two participants concerning their preferred outcomes. The bargaining process disposes of these conflicts by achieving agreement on the distribution of the various items of value that are at stake. The end result is a position arrived at in the bargaining space.

Such agreements do not necessarily represent a *fair* exchange of value; many agreements are manifestly one-sided and unfair. But in a broad sense, bargains whether fair or unfair contain an element of *mutual gain*. This is possible because the items of value being exchanged have different value to the different parties. To take a clearly unfair example, an armed robber values a victim's wallet more than the victim does, and the victim values his or her own life more than the robber does. The robber "gives" the victim life and the victim "gives" the robber money—so both gain. As this example illustrates, the mutual gains in bargaining are relative to other possible outcomes, not necessarily to the status quo before the bargain.

Participants bring different means of *leverage* to the bargaining process.¹¹ Leverage derives from power capabilities that allow one actor to influence the other to reach agreements more favorable to the first actor's interests. Leverage may operate on any of three dimensions of power: the *promise* of positive sanctions (rewards) if the other actor gives one what one wants; the *threat* of negative sanctions (damage to valued items) if not; or an *appeal* to the other's feeling of love, friendship, sympathy, or respect for oneself.¹² For instance, Cuba during the Cold War could obtain Soviet oil by purchasing the oil with hard currency, by threatening to cut its alliance with the Soviet Union unless given the oil at subsidized prices, or by appealing to the Soviet leaders' sense of socialist solidarity.

Bringing a bargaining leverage into play generally opens up a new dimension in the bargaining space, allowing outcomes along this new dimension to be traded off against those on the original dimension (the main issue at stake). Leverage thus helps to get deals done—albeit not always fair ones. One-sided agreements typically result when one side has a preponderance of leverage relative to the other.

The use of violence can be a means of settling conflicts. The application of violent negative leverage can force an agreement that ends a conflict. (Again, the agreement may not be fair.) Because such violence may also create new sources of conflict, agreements reached through violence may not last. Nonetheless, from a realist perspective violence is just another leverage—an extension of politics by other means. Politics itself has been described as the process of deciding "who gets what, when, how."¹³

The same principles of bargaining apply to both international security affairs and international political economy. In both cases power and leverage matter. Also in both cases structures and institutions have been designed to aid the bargaining process. Economic markets serve this purpose, from the New York Stock Exchange to the local su-

¹¹ North, Robert C. *War, Peace, Survival: Global Politics and Conceptual Synthesis* (see footnote 9 in Chapter 1).

¹² Boulding, Kenneth E. *Three Faces of Power*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

¹³ Lasswell, Harold D. *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. New York: Meridian, 1958.

permarket. In international security such institutions as diplomatic missions and international organizations facilitate the bargaining process. Realists studying international security focus on political-military bargaining more than economic bargaining because they consider it more important. The economic framework will be elaborated in Chapter 8.

Bargaining that takes place formally—usually at a table with back-and-forth dialogue—is called **negotiation**. Because the issues in IR are important and the actors are usually sophisticated players in a game with long-established rules and traditions, most issues of contention reach a negotiating table sooner or later. Often bargaining takes place simultaneously at the negotiating table and in the world (often on the battlefield). The participants talk in the negotiation hall while manipulating instruments of leverage outside it.

Negotiating styles vary from one culture or individual to another. In international negotiations on major political and military issues, problems of cultural difference may become serious obstacles. For example, straight-talking Americans might misunderstand negotiators from Japan, where saying “no” is rude and is therefore replaced by phrases such as “that would be difficult.” A good negotiator will take time to understand the other party’s culture and bargaining style, as well as its interests and available means of leverage.

SEALING THE DEAL



Bargaining includes both indirect moves and explicit negotiations. Palestinians got a seat at the table in formal Arab-Israeli peace negotiations only in 1991, and the Israeli and PLO leaders first shook hands in 1993. But for decades Israel and the PLO used various power capabilities as leverage in implicit bargaining with each other, and continued to do so after the peace process broke down in 2000.

Strategies

Power strategies are plans actors use to develop and deploy power capabilities to achieve 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. ***-***). Strategies also include choices about how capabilities are used in situations—sequences of actions designed for maximum effect; the creation of alliances; the use of contingency plans; and so forth. Depending on the situa-

tion, most power strategies mix economic instruments (trade, aid, loans, investment, boycotts) with military ones. (In the short term, within a given situation such plans are called *tactics*.)

Strategies include whether (and in which situations) a state is willing to use its power capabilities. For example, in the Vietnam War the United States had overall power capabilities far superior to those of the Vietnamese communists but lost the war because it was unwilling or unable to commit the resources necessary or use them effectively. 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). Taiwan's government was set up to represent all of China in 1949, when the nationalists took refuge there after losing to the communists in China's civil war. Since 1949, Taiwan has operated more and more independently, and many Taiwanese favor independence. China does 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 might lose such a war, but would certainly inflict immense damage on Taiwan. In 1996, China held war games near Taiwan, firing missiles over the sea. The United States sent two aircraft carriers to signal China that its exercises must not go too far.

Not risking war by declaring independence, Taiwan instead has engaged in diplomacy to gain influence in the world. It lobbies the U.S. Congress, asks for admission to the UN and other world organizations, and grants foreign aid to countries that recognize Taiwan's government (27 mostly small, poor countries worldwide as of 2001). In 1999, Taiwan's president declared that relations with China should be on a "state-to-state" basis, edging closer to declaring independence.

China has used its own diplomacy to counter these moves. It breaks diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan, and it punishes any moves in the direction of Taiwanese independence. Half the countries that recognize Taiwan are in the Caribbean and Central America, leading to a competition for influence in the region. China has tried to counter Taiwanese ties with those countries by manipulating various positive and negative leverages. For example, in Panama, where China is a major user of the Panama Canal (which reverted to Panama from U.S. ownership in 1999), Taiwan has cultivated close relations, invested in a container port, and suggested hiring guest workers from Panama in Taiwan. But China has implicitly threatened to restrict Panama's access to Hong Kong, or to reregister China's many Panamanian-registered ships in the Bahamas instead. (Bahamas broke with Taiwan in 1997 after a Hong Kong conglomerate, now part of China, promised to invest in a Bahamian container port.)

Two of the five vetoes China has ever used in the UN Security Council were to block peacekeeping forces in countries that extended recognition to Taiwan. These vetoes demonstrate that if China believes its Taiwan interests are threatened, it can play a spoiler role on the Security Council. When the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia recognized Taiwan in 1999 (in exchange for \$1 billion in aid), China vetoed a UN peacekeeping mission there at a time of great instability in next-door Kosovo. By contrast, when its Taiwan interests are secure, China cooperates on issues of world order. For example, although China opposed the Gulf War, it did not veto the UN resolution authorizing it.



Taiwan,
Recent
Decades
Article

AMPLIFYING POWER



Coherent strategy can help a state to make the most of its power. China's foreign policy is generally directed toward its most important regional interests, above all preventing Taiwan's formal independence. Despite conflicts with a number of its neighbors, China has had no military engagements for two decades. Here, China uses its veto in the UN Security Council for only the fifth time ever, to end a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia, which had just established ties with Taiwan (1999).



WEB LINK

Camp David

In the context of bargaining, actors use various strategies to employ leverage in an effort to move the final agreement point closer to their own positions. One common bargaining strategy is to start with extreme demands and then gradually compromise them in an effort to end up close to one's true (but concealed) position. Another strategy is to "drive a hard bargain" by sticking closely to one's original position in the belief that the other participant will eventually accept it. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the 1970s, however, used a policy of preemptive concessions to induce movement on the other side and get to a middle-ground agreement quickly in few steps.¹⁴

Another common bargaining strategy is *fractionation*—splitting up a complex issue into a number of small components so that progress may be sought on solvable pieces. For

These Chinese strategies mobilize various capabilities, from missiles to diplomats to industrial conglomerates, in a coherent effort to influence the outcome of China's most important international issue. Strategy thus amplifies China's power. Similarly, during the Cold War China used strategy to amplify power, by playing a balancer role between two superpowers and by playing up the importance of the global South, which it claimed to lead.¹⁴

Some individual actors too are better than others at using their capabilities strategically. For instance, U.S. President Jimmy Carter in the 1970s used the great-power capabilities available to him, but his own strategic and interpersonal skills seem to have been the key to success in the Camp David agreements (which achieved the U.S. foreign policy goal of an Egyptian-Israeli treaty). Good strategies bring together power capabilities for maximum effect, but poor strategies make inefficient use of available capabilities. Of course, even the most skillful leader never has total control of an international situation, but can make best use of the opportunities available while minimizing the effects of bad luck.

¹⁴ *Current History* 96 (611), September 1997, Special Issue on China. Rohter, Larry. Taiwan and Beijing Duel for Recognition in Central America. *New York Times*, Aug. 5, 1997: A7. Zhao, Quansheng. *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-Macro Linkage Approach*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Shih, Chih-yu. *China's Just World: The Morality of Chinese Foreign Policy*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992.

¹⁵ Kissinger, Henry. *White House Years*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979, pp. 179–80.

instance, the Arab-Israeli negotiations that began in 1991 had many sets of talks concurrently working on various pieces of the problem. The opposite approach, which some bargainers prefer, is to lump together diverse issues—called *linkage*—so that compromises on one can be traded off against another in a grand deal. This was the case, for instance, in the Yalta negotiations of 1945 among the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. On the table simultaneously were such matters as the terms of occupation of Germany, the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe, the strategy for defeating Japan, and the creation of the United Nations.

Reciprocity, Deterrence, and Arms Races

To have the best effect, strategic bargaining over IR outcomes should take into account the other actor's own goals and strategies. Only then can one predict which forms of leverage may induce the other actor to take the actions one desires. But this can be a problem: often states do not know each others' true intentions but can only observe each others' actions and statements (which may be lies).

One very effective strategy for influencing another actor whose plans are not known is **reciprocity**—a response in kind to the other's actions.¹⁶ A strategy of reciprocity uses positive forms of leverage as promises of rewards (if the actor does what one wants); simultaneously it uses negative forms of leverage as threats of punishment (if the actor does not refrain from doing what one does not want). Reciprocity is effective because it is easy to understand. After one has demonstrated one's ability and willingness to reciprocate—gaining a reputation for consistency of response—the other actor can easily calculate the costs of failing to cooperate or the benefits of cooperating.

Reciprocity can be an effective strategy for achieving cooperation in a situation of conflicting interests. If one side expresses willingness to cooperate and promises to reciprocate the other's cooperative and conflictual actions, the other side has great incentive to work out a cooperative bargain. And because reciprocity is relatively easy to interpret, the vow of future reciprocity often need not be stated explicitly.¹⁷ For example, in 1969 China's relations with the United States had been on ice for 20 years. A total U.S. economic embargo against China was holding back the latter's economic development. China's support of North Vietnam was costing many American lives. The two states were not on speaking terms. President Nixon (and adviser Kissinger) decided to try a signal to China in hopes of improving relations (splitting China away from North Vietnam and further away from the Soviet Union). Nixon slightly relaxed the U.S. trade embargo against China. Three days later, with no explicit connection to the U.S. move, China released three U.S. citizens whose boat had earlier drifted into Chinese waters.¹⁸ China reciprocated other U.S. initiatives in the following months, and the two states resumed formal talks within six months. By 1972, Nixon visited China in a spirit of rapprochement.

¹⁶ Keohane, Robert O. Reciprocity in International Relations. *International Organization* 40 (1), 1986: 1–27.
Larson, Deborah Welch. The Psychology of Reciprocity in International Relations. *Negotiation Journal* 4, 1988: 281–301.
Jervis, Robert. Security Regimes. In Stephen D. Krasner, ed. *International Regimes*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
Rock, Stephen R. *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective*. North Carolina Press, 1989.
Downs, George W., and David M. Rocke. *Optimal Imperfection? Domestic Uncertainty and Institutions in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁷ Goldstein, Joshua S., and John R. Freeman. *Three-Way Street: Strategic Reciprocity in World Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
Goldstein, Joshua S. Great-Power Cooperation Under Conditions of Limited Reciprocity: From Empirical to Formal Analysis. *International Studies Quarterly* 39 (4), 1995: 453–77.
Goldstein, Joshua S., and Jon C. Pevehouse. Reciprocity, Bullying, and International Cooperation: Time-Series Analysis of the Bosnia Conflict. *American Political Science Review* 91 (3), 1997: 515–29.

¹⁸ Kissinger, Henry. *White House Years*. Boston: Little, Brown, pp. 179–80.

Reciprocity can also help achieve cooperation in the sense of refraining from an undesired action. This is the intent of the strategy of **deterrence**—the threat to punish another actor if it takes a certain negative action (especially attacking one’s own state or one’s allies). The slogan “peace through strength” reflects this approach. If deterrence works, its effects are almost invisible; its success is measured in attacks that did not occur.¹⁹ Nuclear deterrence is the threat to use nuclear weapons if another state does so.

Generally, 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 use of force to make another actor take some action (rather than refrain from taking an action).²⁰ 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).



WEB LINK

Escalation

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 should induce the second actor to comply, assuming that it finds the potential costs of the escalating punishments to be greater than the costs of compliance.

U.S. actions against Saddam prior to the Gulf War illustrate the strategy of escalation. First came statements of condemnation, then UN resolutions, then the formation of an alliance with power clearly superior to Iraq’s. Next came the application of economic sanctions, then a military buildup with an implicit threat to use force, then explicit threats of force, and finally ultimatums threatening force after a specific deadline. In this case the strategy did not induce compliance, and only military defeat induced Iraq to accept U.S. terms.

Escalation can be quite dangerous (especially when dealing with an adversary not as easily defeated as Iraq was). 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. In fact, side by side with the potential for eliciting cooperation, reciprocity in general contains a danger of runaway hostility. When two sides both reciprocate but never manage to put relations on a cooperative footing, the result can be a drawn-out, nasty, tit-for-tat exchange of punishments. This characterizes Israeli relations with Islamic guerrillas in southern Lebanon, for instance.

An **arms race** is a reciprocal process in which two (or more) states build up military capabilities in response to each other. Since each wants to act prudently against a threat (often a bit overblown in the leaders’ perceptions), 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

¹⁹ Zagare, Frank C. *Perfect Deterrence*. NY: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Goldstein, Avery. *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. Hopf, Ted. *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965–1990*. Michigan, 1994. Huth, Paul K. *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War*. Yale, 1988. Jervis, Robert, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. *Psychology and Deterrence*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. George, Alexander L., and Richard Smoke. *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*. Columbia University Press, 1974.

²⁰ Schelling, Thomas C. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

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.²¹

Rationality

Consistent with the bargaining framework just outlined, most realists (and many nonrealists) assume that those who wield power behave as **rational actors** in their efforts to influence others.²²

First, this rationality implies that the actor 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, and it is used to describe the nature of states as international actors. Although useful, this simplification does not capture the complexity of how states actually arrive at decisions (see Chapter 4).

Second, 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. Again, 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. President Kennedy, for instance, said that “every nation determines its policies in terms of its own interests.”²³

But what are the interests of a state? Are they the interests of domestic groups (see Chapter 4)? The need to prevail in conflicts with

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. Here, the Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai meets with U.S. senators including Joseph Lieberman and John McCain. Karzai’s government barely controlled the warlords governing Afghanistan, while President Bush’s party did not control the Senate.

²¹ Isard, Walter, and Charles H. Anderton. Arms Race Models: A Survey and Synthesis. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 8, 1985: 27–98. Plous, S. Perceptual Illusions and Military Realities: The Nuclear Arms Race. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 29 (3), 1985: 363–90. McGinnis, Michael D., and John T. Williams. Stability and Change in Superpower Rivalry. *American Political Science Review* 83, 1989: 1101–24.

²² Brown, Michael E., Owen R. Cote, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds. *Rational Choice and Security Studies*. MIT Press, 2000. Lake, David A., and Robert Powell, eds. *Strategic Choice and International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Nicholson, Michael. *Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Friedman, Jeffrey, ed. *The Rational Choice Controversy: Economic Models of Politics Reconsidered*. Yale, 1996.

²³ Address at Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, UT, September 26, 1963.

other states (see Chapter 5)? The need to cooperate with the international community for mutual benefit (see Chapter 7)? There is no simple answer. Some realists simply define the national interest as maximizing power—a debatable assumption.

Third, 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 in cases where 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. Finally, human behavior and luck can be unpredictable.

The ancient realist Sun Tzu advised that the best general was not the most courageous or aggressive one, but the one who could coolly calculate the costs and benefits of alternative courses. The best war was a short one, in Sun Tzu's view, because wars are costly. Better yet was to take another state intact without fighting—by intimidation, deception, and the disruption of enemy alliances. Capturing an enemy army was better than fighting it. If fighting was necessary, it should occur on another state's territory so the army could live off the land. Attacking cities was too destructive and thus reduced the benefits of war.

These three assumptions about rationality—that states are unitary actors, that they have coherent interests, and that they can make cost-benefit calculations—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. Power in IR has been compared with money in economics, as a universal measure. In this view, just as firms compete for money in economic markets, states compete for power in the international system.²⁴

In order to provide a general explanation of state actions, realism makes a fourth assumption, implicit in the parallel to economics. This is the assumption that all states (or their leaders) have basically the same values and interests—*intersubjective preferences*. (The outcomes valued by an actor are called preferences or *utility*.) Economists assume that everyone prefers more money to less. Realists assume that all states prefer more power to less.

This assumption has been criticized. If a state leader prefers upholding his or her honor by fighting a losing war rather than being dictated to, such an action is rational in terms of the leader's own preferences—even though a U.S. college student or European prime minister might find it inexplicable in terms of Western cultural norms. Similarly, the suicidal charges of Iranian teenagers against Iraqi positions in the Iran-Iraq war were rational for the teenagers, who believed that as martyrs they would go directly to heaven. But such preferences are hardly universal.

Despite these criticisms, realists argue that rational-actor models capture not all but the most important aspects of IR. These simplified models provide the foundations for a large body of IR research that represents international bargaining relationships mathematically. By accepting the limitations of the four assumptions of rationality, IR scholars can build very general and abstract models of international relationships.

²⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (see footnote 6 in this chapter.)



THINKING THEORETICALLY

Realism favors cold cost-benefit calculations. When terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center, the damage seemed immeasurable, and no price seemed too high to prevent a recurrence. Yet, analysts soon tallied up the damage—human deaths representing lost future income—and estimated the cost of the attack and its aftermath to be on the order of magnitude of \$100 billion. This is a very large number, but not infinite. It roughly equals the cost of fighting the Gulf War, over one-third of U.S. annual military spending, or 1 percent of the annual U.S. GDP.

A rational state, then, should pay up to \$100 billion annually to prevent a recurrence, or \$50 billion a year to reduce the chances by half. The actual allocations of the U.S. government to fight the war on terrorism are on this level. Congress passed \$29 billion in emergency funding to combat terrorism, and President Bush proposed a \$45 billion increase in the annual defense budget. The funds primarily support military and law-enforcement efforts. If such methods are effective, these expenditures would seem to pass the cost-benefit test.

However, there are other ways to spend funds. A rational actor considers a variety of options in making a cost-benefit analysis. The idea of world views (conservative, liberal, revolutionary) helps generate alternatives. For example, from a revolutionary world view, the War Resisters' League argues: "The best way to improve our national security is to redirect money from the military and arms trade to social programs at home and massive humanitarian aid abroad." \$50 billion a year would go a long way; for example, the UN is trying to raise \$7 billion for a world AIDS fund, and total U.S. foreign aid is below \$10 billion a year. Now think: Which would

be more likely to reduce the frequency of major terrorist attacks on the United States—more military and law enforcement to stop terrorists from succeeding, or more foreign aid to alleviate the poverty and despair that breeds terrorism? One can make a good case either way, but how you answer will strongly affect your cost-benefit calculations.

A liberal world view suggests yet another alternative—no dramatic response at all. Of course, law enforcement and international coordination can be improved incrementally, but suppose the United States put its funds and energies elsewhere and "took the hit" from time to time as terrorists destroyed people and property? This may seem callous, but economic liberals believe in rationality and cost-benefit just as much as realists do. Money spent fighting terrorism might be more rationally used for debt reduction and tax cuts, or possibly in such areas as public health, education, or other economically productive programs. A major terrorist attack even once a year would just slow the economy by 1 percent, whereas successful economic policies could raise the growth rate by more than this amount. You will find the do-nothing option less attractive if you think future terrorist attacks could be even more costly (for example, by using biological or nuclear weapons), or more frequent.

Theories should help us clarify our thinking. Considering multiple perspectives helps avoid "blind spots." If you were trying to reduce the future incidence of major terrorist attacks by half, how would you allocate \$50 billion per year among the three options—military and law enforcement; foreign aid and social programs; or unrelated areas like tax cuts or health research?

Game Theory

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 players 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.

A *two-person game* has only two players; because it is simple and easy to analyze mathematically, this is the most common type of game studied. An *N-person game* has more than two players, and the moves typically result in coalitions of players, with the members of the winning coalition dividing the payoff among themselves in some manner. In most games, all the players make a move simultaneously. They may do so repeatedly, in a *repeated game* (or an *iterated game*, a *sequential game*, or a *supergame*). In a few games, the players alternate moves so each knows the other's move before deciding on its own.

Analysis of a game entails searching for a *solution*—a set of moves by all the players such that no player can increase its payoff by changing its move. It is the outcome at which rational players will arrive. Some simple games have one solution, but many games have multiple solutions or no stable solution.

A category of games with a given structure—in terms of the relationships between moves and payoffs—is sometimes given a name that evokes a story or metaphor representing the nature of the game. Each such game yields an insight or lesson regarding a category of international bargaining situations.²⁵

The game called *Prisoner's Dilemma (PD)* is the one most commonly studied. It is a situation in which rational players will 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 nei-

²⁵ O'Neill, Barry. A Survey of Game Theory Models on Peace and War. In R. Aumann and S. Hart, eds. *Handbook of Game Theory*. Volume 2. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1994. Powell, Robert. *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics*. Princeton, 1999. Morrow, James D. *Game Theory for Political Scientists*. Princeton, 1995. Myerson, Roger B. *Game Theory: Analysis of Conflict*. Harvard, 1991. Brams, Steven J. *Superpower Games: Applying Game Theory to Superpower Conflict*. Yale, 1985.

ther 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 will 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. In 1998, when India detonated underground nuclear explosions to test weapons designs, Pakistan promptly followed suit. Now, 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 go 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 Table 2.2). The first number in each cell is India’s payoff, and the second number is Pakistan’s. To keep things 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. And, indeed, a costly and dangerous arms race is currently underway.

The model can be made more realistic by allowing the players to play the game repeatedly; as in most IR contexts, the same actors will bargain over this issue repeatedly over a sustained time period. Game theorists have shown that in a *repeated* PD game, the possi-

TABLE 2.2 ■ 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.

bility of reciprocity can make it rational to cooperate. Now the state leader reasons: “If we defect now, they will respond by defecting and both of us will lose; if we cooperate they might cooperate too; and if we are suckered once we can defect in the future.” The keys to cooperation are the non-zero-sum nature of the PD game and the ability of each player to respond in the future to present moves.²⁶

IR scholars have analyzed many other games beyond PD. For example, *Chicken* represents two male teenagers speeding toward a head-on collision. The first to swerve is “chicken.” Each reasons: “If he doesn’t swerve, I must; but if he swerves, I won’t.” The player who first commits irrevocably not to swerve (“throwing away the steering wheel”) will win. Similarly, in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, some scholars argued that President Kennedy “won” by seeming ready to risk nuclear war if Khrushchev did not back down and remove Soviet missiles from Cuba. (There are, however, alternative explanations of the outcome of the crisis.)

Through analysis of these and other games, IR researchers try to predict what rational actors would do in various types of situations. Games can capture and simplify the fundamental dynamics of various bargaining situations. However, a game-theoretic analysis is only as good as the assumptions that go into it. In particular, the results of the analysis depend on the preferences that players are assumed to have about outcomes. And it is difficult to test either the assumptions or the predictions of a formal model against the realities of IR, which are so much more complex in practice.

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

States interact within a set of well-defined and 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 as we know it.²⁷

Anarchy and Sovereignty

Realists emphasize that the rules of the international system create **anarchy**—a term that implies not complete chaos or absence of structure and rules, but rather the lack of a central government that can enforce rules.²⁸ In domestic society within states, governments can enforce contracts, deter participants from breaking rules, and use their monopoly on legally sanctioned violence to enforce a system of law. Both democracies and dictatorships provide central government enforcement of a system of rules. Lack of such a government among states is what realists mean by anarchy. No central authority enforces rules and ensures compliance with norms of conduct. The power of one state is countered only by the power of other states. States must rely on *self-help*, which they supplement with allies and the (sometimes) constraining power of international norms.

²⁶ Majeski, Stephen J. Arms Races as Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma Games. *Mathematical Social Sciences* 7, 1984: 253–66. Snidal, Duncan. Coordination vs. Prisoner’s Dilemma: Implications for International Cooperation and Regimes. *American Political Science Review* 79, 1985: 923–42.

²⁷ Buzan, Barry and Richard Little. *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. Oxford, 2000. Luard, Evan. *Conflict and Peace in the Modern International System: A Study of the Principles of International Order*. London: Macmillan, 1988. Wight, Martin. *Systems of States*. Leicester, 1977.

²⁸ Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. NY: Columbia University Press, 1977. Taylor, Michael. *Anarchy and Cooperation*. NY: Wiley, 1976. Starr, Harvey. *Anarchy, Order, and Integration: How to Manage Interdependence?* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Some people think that only a world government can solve this problem. Others think that adequate order can be provided by international organizations and agreements, short of world government (see Chapter 7). But most realists think that IR cannot escape from a state of anarchy and will continue to be dangerous as a result.²⁹ In this anarchic world, realists emphasize prudence as a great virtue in foreign policy. States should pay attention not to the intentions of other states but rather to their capabilities. As Sun Tzu advised, do not assume that other states will not attack but rather be ready if they do.

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.³⁰ 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, at least in principle, to do whatever it wants in its own territory. States are separate, are autonomous, and answer to no higher authority (due to anarchy). 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. For example, it would be inappropriate for Russia or Britain to endorse a candidate for U.S. president. (This rule is often bent in practice.)³¹

The principles of state sovereignty are exemplified in the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, signed during President Nixon's visit to China. The United States recognized the reality that the communist government (not the nationalist government based in Taiwan) controlled mainland China. Both sides agreed to uphold respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, nonaggression against other states, and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. In recent years, China has vigorously protested U.S. efforts to improve China's human rights record as "meddling in China's internal affairs."

In practice, states have a harder and harder time warding off interference in their affairs. Such "internal" matters as human rights or self-determination are, increasingly, concerns for the international community. For example, in the Helsinki agreements that codified East-West détente in the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe promised to respect human rights within their own borders (an internal affair). 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 (in which winners took territory from losers), or were imposed arbitrarily by third parties such as colonizers. These borders therefore create many problems—the splitting of nations or ethnic groups into different states, the creation of oddly shaped states that may lack resources or access to ports, and so forth (see pp. ***_***). Despite these imperfections, the international system places the highest value on respect for internationally recognized borders. Almost all of the world's land territory falls under the sover-



WEB LINK

Sovereignty



ATLAS CD

Boundaries

²⁹ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. NY: Norton, 2001.

³⁰ Jones, Dorothy. *Code of Peace: Ethics and Security in the World of the Warlord States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Franck, Thomas M. *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations*. NY: Oxford, 1990.

³¹ Krasner, Stephen D. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, 1999. Kegley, Charles W. and Gregory A. Raymond. *Exorcising the Ghost of Westphalia: Building World Order in the New Millennium*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002. Lyons, Gene M., and Michael Mastanduno, eds. *Beyond Westphalia: State Sovereignty and International Intervention*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

STILL SOVEREIGN TERRITORY



Sovereignty and territorial integrity are central norms governing the behavior of states. They give states control within established borders. Embassies are considered the home country's territory. Here, the ruined Russian Embassy grounds in the capital of Afghanistan become a refuge to 15,000 people displaced by war (2002).

eign control of existing states; very little is considered “up for grabs” (high seas are outside any state's territory; see Chapter 11).

The territorial nature of the interstate system reflects the origins of that system in an age when agrarian societies relied on agriculture to generate wealth. In today's world, where 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 of the state as having a hard shell now seems archaic. The accelerating revolution in information technologies may dramatically affect the territorial state system in the coming years.

Membership in the international system rests on general recognition (by other states) of a government's sovereignty within its territory. This recognition is extended formally through diplomatic relations and by membership in the UN. It does not imply that a government has popular support but only that it controls the state's territory and agrees to assume its obligations in the international system—to accept internationally recognized borders, to assume the international debts of the previous government, and to refrain from interfering in other states' internal affairs.

States have developed norms of diplomacy to facilitate their interactions. An embassy is considered to be territory of the home state, not the country where it is located (see pp. ***-***). The U.S. embassy in China, for instance, harbored a wanted Chinese dissident for two years after the Tiananmen Square crackdown of 1989, and Chinese troops did not simply come in and take him away. To do so would have been a violation of U.S. territorial integrity.

Diplomatic norms recognize that states try to spy on each other. It is up to each state to keep others from successfully spying on it. In 2002, China discovered that its new presidential aircraft—a Boeing 767 refurbished in Texas—was riddled with sophisticated listening devices. But China did not make an issue of it (the plane had not gone into service), and a U.S.–China summit the next month went forward.

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

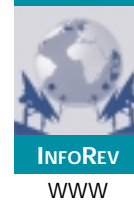
³² Jervis, Robert. Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma. *World Politics* 30 (2), 1978: 167–214.

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

Cyberspace versus Sovereignty?

The interstate system is based on states' sovereignty within their territories. In the 1990s, the astounding growth of the Internet and World Wide Web created "cyberspace." It is a world of business relationships and communities with shared personal interests, in which geography is irrelevant. How is the growth of cyberspace changing state sovereignty?

To explore this question, go to www.internationalrelations.net



forces) tend to threaten the security of other states.³² The responses of those other states (such as deploying more of their own military forces) in turn threaten the first state. The dilemma parallels the Prisoner's Dilemma game discussed earlier. It is a prime cause of arms races in which states waste large sums of money on mutually threatening weapons that do not ultimately provide security. The current debate over developing U.S. missile defenses hinges in part on whether such defenses would cause a worried China to deploy more nuclear weapons against the United States—another case of a security dilemma.

The security dilemma is a negative consequence of anarchy in the international system. 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 7).

As we shall see in later chapters, changes in technology and in norms are undermining the traditional principles of territorial integrity and state autonomy in IR. Some IR scholars find states to be practically obsolete as the main actors in world politics, as some integrate into larger entities and others fragment into smaller units.³³ Other scholars find the international system quite enduring in its structure and state units.³⁴ One of its most enduring features is the balance of power.

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. The term is used in several ways and is imprecisely defined. 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.³⁵

³³ Rosenau, James N. *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*. NY: Cambridge, 1997. Ferguson, Yale H., and Richard W. Mansbach. *Politics: Authority, Identities, and Change*. South Carolina, 1996.

³⁴ Gilpin, Robert. *War and Change in World Politics*. NY: Cambridge, 1981.

³⁵ Gulick, Edward V. *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*. Cornell, 1955. Niou, Emerson M. S., Peter C. Ordeshook, and Gregory F. Rose. *The Balance of Power: Stability and Instability in International Systems*. NY: Cambridge, 1989. Cusack, Thomas R., and Richard J. Stoll. *Exploring Realpolitik: Probing International Relations Theory with Computer Simulation*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990.



Balance of Power

The CHANGING World Order

The Bush Doctrine

In December 2001, Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor to President Bush, described an emerging “Bush Doctrine” to guide U.S. overseas interventions in the new era of warring on terrorism.* The doctrine “emphasizes that states are responsible for what goes on inside their borders.” Those harboring terrorists would be targeted themselves. In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime controlling most of the country was not internationally recognized as the government, but because it held territory, it could provide safe haven to the al Qaeda terrorist organization. The main U.S. response to the 2001 attack was to use military force to regain control of Afghanistan’s territory under a (recognized) government that would



Condoleezza Rice explains Bush policy to press, Sept. 19, 2001.

deny Afghan territory to the terrorists.

Thus, the September 11 attack arose from non-state actors operating across state borders worldwide, but the response focused on states (getting states to cooperate in stopping terrorism or holding them responsible if they refuse). This approach follows realist principles that have shaped successive world orders for 500 years. It constructs world order in terms of sovereign territorial states. Today, with technology allowing long-distance reach, even a remote territory like Afghanistan can breed a threat to a far-away superpower. So even a few “rogue” states or “failed” states can present major challenges. By reasserting control over the state of Afghanistan, the Bush administration left one less territory outside the rules of the interstate system. In this sense the Bush Doctrine represents not an abrupt change in world order, but a reassertion of existing world order in the face of challenges.

It has been said that everything changed on September 11. But one central aspect of world order did not change—the emphasis on sovereign, territorial states as the prime actors. Can you think of other aspects of world order that remained intact before and after September 11?

* Hoagland, Jim. Calling Audibles. *The Washington Post* 12/5/01: A29.

Note: The “Changing World Order” boxes are introduced on p. ***.

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. When such a counterbalancing coalition has a geopolitical element—physically hemming in the threatening state—the power-balancing strategy is called containment. In the Cold War, the United States encircled the Soviet Union with military and political alliances to prevent Soviet territorial expansion.

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. But states do not always balance against the strongest actor. Sometimes smaller states “jump on the bandwagon” of the most powerful state; this has been called bandwagoning as opposed to balancing. For instance, after World War II a broad coalition did not form to contain U.S. power; rather most major states joined the U.S. bloc. States may seek to balance threats rather than raw power; U.S. power was greater than Soviet power but was less threatening to Europe and Japan (and later to China as well).³⁶ Furthermore, small states create variations on power-balancing themes when they play off rival great powers against each other. For instance, Cuba during the Cold War received massive Soviet subsidies by putting itself in the middle of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

In the post-Cold War era of U.S. dominance, balance-of-power theory would predict closer relations among Russia, China, and even France—great powers that are not close U.S. military allies. These predictions appear to be on the mark. Russian-Chinese relations have improved dramatically in such areas as arms trade and demilitarization of the border. In 1997, the two presidents declared jointly that “No country should seek hegemony, practice power politics, or monopolize international affairs.” The “country” referred to could only be the United States. Russia and China signed a treaty of “friendship” in 2001. France, for its part, contested U.S. positions vigorously in global trade negotiations and discussions of NATO’s command structure, and sometimes sided with Russia and China in the UN Security Council. French leaders have complained repeatedly of U.S. “hyperpower.” Europe and Japan opposed U.S. positions on a range of proposed treaties in 2001, on subjects ranging from missile defense to biological weapons, small arms trade, and global warming. (Public opinion in European countries disapproved of Bush Administration international policies by large majorities in mid-2001.)³⁷ Only the appearance of a common enemy—international terrorists—brought the great powers back together in September 2001.

RISING POWER?



Realists emphasize relative power as an explanation of war and peace. The modernization of China’s military—in conjunction with China’s rapidly growing economy—is expected to increase China’s power over the coming decades. Chinese leaders refer to “two ups and two downs” in the region, as China and the United States increase in power while Russia and Japan decline. Some observers fear instability in Asia if the overall balance of power among states in the region shifts rapidly. Here, flags adorn the Old Executive Office Building for a Chinese visit, 1999.

³⁶ Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Cornell, 1987.

³⁷ *The New York Times*, April 24, 1997: A3. Going It Alone. *The Washington Post*, August 4, 2001: A15. Clymer, Adam. Surveys Find European Public Critical of Bush Policies. *The New York Times*, August 16, 2001: A6.

Great Powers and Middle Powers

Power, of course, varies greatly from one state to another. The *most powerful* states in the system 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. At most a few dozen states have any real influence beyond their immediate locality. These are called the great powers and middle powers in the international system.

Although there is no firm dividing line, **great powers** are generally considered the half dozen or so most powerful states. 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 nineteenth-century Concert of Europe or the UN Security Council. In general, great powers may be distinguished by the criterion that they 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.³⁸

The great powers generally have the world's strongest military forces and the strongest economies to pay for military forces and for other power capabilities. 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 and Russia, after gaining and then losing the rest of the Soviet Union, is still considered a great power.

What states are great powers today? Although definitions vary, seven states appear to meet the criteria. Certainly the United States is one. In total GDP, a measure of potential power, the United States ranks highest by far at almost \$10 trillion per year (2000 data). Because of its historical role of world leadership (especially in and after World War II), and its predominant military might, the United States is considered the world's only superpower.

China, with a total GDP of \$5 trillion, is or soon will be the world's second largest economy. China's GDP is especially hard to estimate, and another method would put it at \$2 trillion. In any case, China's sheer size (more than 1 billion people) and its rapid economic growth (10 percent annually in the 1990s) make it a powerful state. China has a large but not a very modern military, and its orientation is regional rather than global. But, with a credible nuclear arsenal and a seat on the UN Security Council, China qualifies as a great power. It is expected to play a central role in world politics in the twenty-first century. Japan ranks third (or perhaps second), with a GDP of \$3 trillion. Along with Germany (\$2 trillion GDP), Japan is an economic great power, but both countries' military roles in international security affairs have been curtailed since World War II. Nonetheless, both Japan and Germany have very large and capable military forces, and both have been edging toward using military forces beyond their own territories or regions.

Russia, even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, has a GDP above \$1 trillion—again a hard one to estimate—and very large (though run-down) military forces including a massive nuclear arsenal. France and Britain finish out the list at more than \$1 trillion GDP each. With Russia, they 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 by most standards.

³⁸ Levy, Jack S. *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975*. Kentucky, 1983.

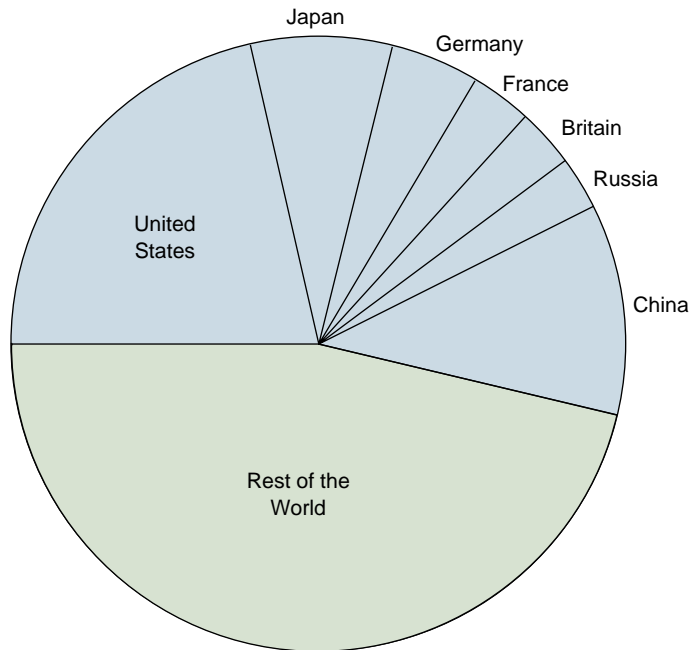


FIGURE 2.1 ■ Great-Power Shares of World GDP, 2000

The great powers thus include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—the United States, Russia, France, Britain, and China. The same five states are also the members of the “club” possessing large nuclear weapons arsenals (there are also several recent smaller-scale nuclear states). In world political and economic affairs, Germany and Japan are also great powers (they would like Security Council seats, too; see p. ***).

These seven great powers account for about half of the world’s total GDP—and hence, presumably, about half of the total power in the world. This concentration of power is especially strong in practice because the remaining half of the world’s power is split up among nearly 200 other states (see Figure 2.1).

The slow change in great-power status is evident. Britain and France have been great powers for 500 years, Russia and Germany for more than 250 years, the United States and Japan for about 100 years, and China for 50 years. Only six other states were ever (but no longer are) considered great powers: Italy, Austria (Austria-Hungary), Spain, Turkey (the Ottoman Empire), Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Middle powers rank somewhat below the great powers in terms of their influence on world affairs. Some are large but not highly industrialized; others have specialized capabilities but are small. Some aspire to regional dominance, and many have considerable influence in their regions. Even more than with great powers, it is hard to establish a bottom criterion for distinguishing middle powers.

The top rungs of middle powers are easier to identify. India (\$2.4 trillion) and Brazil (\$1.3 trillion) are both regional giants that some scholars see as rising powers and possible new great powers in this century. In terms of total GDP, Italy and Canada are just below the range of France and Britain and some would consider them great powers. Both states belong to the Group of Eight (G8) economic powers (along with the United States,



Brazil
Map

Germany, Japan, France, Britain, and Russia, which joined in 1998). Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, and Spain all have GDPs greater than half a trillion dollars, and are active middle powers. Below this level, GDP estimates become more closely bunched and the order of national economies becomes much harder to sort out.

A list of middle powers (not everyone would agree on it) might include the following states. The first tier would include large states with substantial economic activity, fairly strong military forces, and considerable regional political influence: Canada, Italy, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Iran, and Turkey. A second tier could include important regional actors with somewhat smaller economies or with strong capabilities on specific dimensions of power: Taiwan, Indonesia, Australia, Spain, Ukraine, Argentina, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, South Africa, and Kazakhstan. A third tier might include smaller rich states along with middle-sized, middle-income ones and regional “activists” that exercise power beyond their size: the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Greece, Poland, Nigeria, Venezuela, Vietnam, Syria, Iraq, Serbia, and North Korea.

Middle powers have not received as much attention in IR as have great powers. These states do, however, often come into play in the specific regional conflicts that dominate the day-to-day flow of international news.³⁹ Smaller, weaker states (not even of middle-power strength) also are often at the center of specific conflicts and crises. But their own actions have only minor influence on world politics; the actions of great powers and middle powers in those conflicts and crises have more impact.

Power Distribution

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

Neorealists (so called because they have adopted and refined realism) try to explain patterns of international events in terms of the system structure—the international distribution of power—rather than the internal makeup of individual states.⁴⁰ **Neorealism** is thus also called structural realism. Neorealists often use game theory and related models in such analyses.⁴¹ 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 realists who took account of many complex elements (geography, willpower, diplomacy, etc.).

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.

In a **multipolar system** there are typically five or six centers of power, which are not grouped into alliances. Each state participates independently and on relatively equal terms with the others. They may form a coalition of the whole for mutual security through coor-

³⁹ Cohen, Stephen P. *India: Emerging Power*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001. Otte, Max. *A Rising Middle Power? German Foreign Policy in Transformation, 1989–1999*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

⁴⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (see footnote 6 in this chapter).

⁴¹ Keohane, Robert O., ed. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. Columbia, 1986. Buzan, Barry, Charles Jones, and Richard Little. *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*. Columbia, 1993. Wayman, Frank W., and Paul F. Diehl, eds. *Reconstructing Realpolitik*. Michigan, 1994.

dination of efforts. Some IR researchers think that multipolarity provides a context for smooth interaction. There are always enough actors present to prevent one from predominating. But to other IR scholars a multipolar system is particularly dangerous, lacking the discipline that predominant states or alliance blocs impose. In a sense, both are correct: in the classical multipolar balance of power, the great-power system itself was stable but wars were frequently used as power-adjusting mechanisms.

At the other extreme, a unipolar system has a single center of power around which all others revolve. This is called hegemony, and will be discussed shortly. The predominance of a single state tends to reduce the incidence of war; the hegemonic state performs some of the functions of a government, somewhat reducing anarchy in the international system.

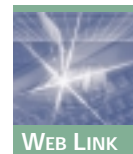
A bipolar system has two predominant states or two great rival alliance blocs. Tight bipolar systems, such as the East-West standoff in the 1950s, may be distinguished from looser ones such as developed when China and (to a lesser extent) France split off from their alliance blocs in the 1960s. IR scholars do not agree about whether bipolar systems are relatively peaceful or warlike. The U.S.-Soviet standoff seemed to provide stability and peace to great-power relations, but rival blocs in Europe before World War I did not.

In a tripolar system there are three great centers of power. Such a configuration is fairly rare; there is a tendency for a two-against-one alliance to form. Aspects of tripolarity can be found in the “strategic triangle” of the United States, the Soviet Union, and China during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴² Some scholars imagine that in the coming decades a tripolar world will emerge, with rival power centers in North America, Europe, and East Asia.

These various polarities can be conceptualized as a pyramid or hierarchy of power in an international system. At the top is the most powerful state, with other great powers and middle powers arrayed below. Such a pyramid is similar to the dominance (or status) hierarchies that many animals use to regulate access to valuable resources such as food. (We often call this a “pecking order.”) A multipolar system, then, is one with a relatively flat pyramid—relative equality of status among actors. A unipolar system has a relatively steep pyramid with unequal status. The steepness of the pyramid represents the concentration of power in the international system.

Some IR scholars have argued 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. The opposite proposition has more support: peace is best preserved by hegemony, and next best by bipolarity.

Such is the thrust of power transition theory.⁴³ This 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.⁴⁴ Status disequilibrium refers to a difference between a rising power’s status (formal position in the hierarchy) and its actual power. In such a situation, the rising power may suffer from relative deprivation—the feeling that it is not doing as well as others or as well as it deserves, even though its position may be improving in absolute terms. The classic example is Germany’s rise in the nineteenth century, which gave it great-power capabilities even though it was left out of colonial territories and other signs of status.



WEB LINK

Status Hierarchies in IR

⁴² Schweller, Randall. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest*. NY: Columbia, 1998. Segal, Gerald. *The Great Power Triangle*. NY: St. Martin’s, 1982.

⁴³ Organski, A. F. K. *World Politics*. NY: Knopf, 1958. Organski, A. F. K., and Jacek Kugler. *The War Ledger*. Chicago, 1980. Kugler, Jacek, and Douglas Lemke, eds. *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger*. Michigan, 1996.

If the challenger does not start a war to displace the top power, the latter may provoke a “preventive” war to stop the rise of the challenger before it becomes too great a threat.⁴⁵ Germany’s intensive arms race with Britain (the top power) led to increasing hostility and the outbreak of World War I. After the war there was again a disparity between Germany’s actual power (still considerable) and its harsh treatment under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. That disparity may have contributed to World War II.

According to power transition theory, then, peace among great powers results when one state is firmly in the top position, and the positions of others in the hierarchy are clearly defined and correspond with their actual underlying power. Such a situation usually results only from a great war, when one state predominates in power because its rivals and allies alike have been drained. Even then, the different rates of growth among great powers

lead to a slow equalization of power and eventually the emergence of challengers: the system becomes more multipolar.

THE ENFORCER



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. Here, a U.S. A-10 “warthog” tank-killer prepares for take-off, 2001.

Hegemony

Hegemony is the holding by one state of a preponderance of power in the international system, so that it can single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangements by which international political and economic relations are conducted.⁴⁶ Such a state is called a *hegemon*. (Usually hegemony means domination of the world, but sometimes it refers to regional domination.) The Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci used “hegemony” to refer to the complex of ideas that rulers use to gain consent for their legitimacy and keep subjects in line.⁴⁷ 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 pp. ***_***).

⁴⁴ Mansfield, Edward D. The Concentration of Capabilities and the Onset of War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (1), 1992: 3–24. Thompson, William R., and Karen Rasler. War and Systemic Capability Reconciliation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32 (2), 1988: 335–66. Doran, Charles F. *Systems in Crisis: New Imperatives of High Politics at Century’s End*. NY: Cambridge, 1991.

⁴⁵ Levy, Jack S. Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War. *World Politics* 40 (1), 1987: 82–107.

⁴⁶ Kapstein, Ethan B. and Michael Mastanduno. *Unipolar Politics*. Columbia, 1999. Rupert, Mark. *Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power*. NY: Cambridge, 1995. Brilmayer, Lea. *American Hegemony: Political Morality in a One-Superpower World*. Yale, 1994. Rapkin, David P., ed. *World Leadership and Hegemony*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990.

⁴⁷ Gramsci, Antonio. *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*. NY: International Publishers, 1959. Gill, Stephen, ed. *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*. NY: Cambridge, 1993.

Most studies of hegemony point to two examples: Britain in the nineteenth 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 defeat of Germany and Japan (and the exhaustion of the Soviet Union, France, Britain, and China in the effort). 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. U.S. industry led the world in technology and productivity, and U.S. citizens enjoyed the world's highest standard of living.

As the extreme power disparities resulting from major wars slowly diminish (states rebuild over years and decades), hegemonic decline may occur, particularly when hegemony has overextended itself with costly military commitments. IR scholars do not agree about how far or fast U.S. hegemonic decline has proceeded, if at all, and whether international instability will result from such a decline.⁴⁸ And beyond the U.S. and British cases, IR scholars do not agree on which historical cases were instances of hegemony. Some see the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century, or Spain in the sixteenth, as cases of hegemony.

The theory of hegemonic stability (see pp. ***-***) holds that hegemony provides some order in the international system, reducing anarchy, and provides some functions similar to a central government—detering aggression, promoting free trade, and providing a hard currency that can be used as a world standard. Hegemony can help to resolve or at least keep in check conflicts among middle powers or small states.

From the perspective of less powerful states, of course, such 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, feeling itself 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 itself there is considerable ambivalence about U.S. hegemony. U.S. foreign policy has historically alternated between *internationalist* and *isolationist* moods.⁴⁹ It was founded as a breakaway from the European-based international system, and its growth in the nineteenth century was based on industrialization and expansion within North America. The United States acquired overseas colonies in the Philippines and Puerto Rico but did not relish a role as an imperial power. 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 the League of Nations or joining with other nations to stop aggression.⁵⁰

Internationalists, such as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, favored U.S. leadership and activism in world affairs. These views seemed vindicated by the

⁴⁸ Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500–2000*. NY: Random House, 1987. Mead, W. R. *Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. Russett, Bruce. The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony. *International Organization* 39 (2), 1985: 207–31.

⁴⁹ Klingberg, Frank L. The Historical Alternation of Moods in American Foreign Policy. *World Politics* 4 (2), 1952: 239–73. Zakaria, Fareed. *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton, 1998.

⁵⁰ Free, Lloyd A., and Hadley Cantril. *The Political Beliefs of Americans*. Rutgers, 1967.

failure of isolationism to prevent World War II (or to allow the United States to stay out of it). U.S. leaders after the war became alarmed by the threat of Soviet (and then Chinese) communism and drummed up U.S. public opinion to favor a strong internationalism during the Cold War. The United States became an activist, global superpower. Despite an inward-looking period after the Vietnam War, the United States has largely continued this internationalist stance ever since. In the post-Cold War era, U.S. internationalism became tempered by a new cost consciousness, and by the emergence of a new isolationist camp born in reaction to the displacements caused by globalization and free trade. However, the terrorist attacks of September 2001 discredited the idea of U.S. disengagement from world affairs, and renewed public support for U.S. interventionism in distant conflicts that no longer seemed so distant.⁵¹

A second area of U.S. ambivalence is *unilateralism* versus *multilateralism* in U.S. internationalism. Multilateral approaches—working through international institutions—augment U.S. power and reduce costs, but they limit U.S. freedom of action. For example, the United States cannot always get the UN to do what it wants. Polls in the 1990s showed that a majority of U.S. citizens supported working through the UN and other multilateral institutions.⁵² However, members of the U.S. Congress, skeptical of the UN and international agencies, often favored a more unilateralist approach, in which the United States dictated terms and expected the world to comply. In the 1990s, Congress slipped more than \$1 billion behind in paying U.S. dues to the UN. Similarly, in the late 1990s Congress passed the *Helms-Burton Act*, which provides for sanctions against countries that do business in Cuba, and the *Iran-Libya Sanctions Act*, which imposes sanctions on countries that invest in Iran or Libya. These unilateralist U.S. policies, naturally, have been resisted by European states and Canada. In 2001, the new Bush Administration declined to participate in such international efforts as a treaty on global warming (see pp. ***-***), a conference on racism, and an International Criminal Court (see p. ***). The international community's united front against terrorism pushed these disputes to the back burner, but they will likely reemerge as U.S. foreign policy continues to vacillate between unilateral and multilateral approaches.

A third aspect of ambivalent U.S. hegemony is that of *morality* versus *realism*. Should the United States be a moral guiding light for the world—pursuing goals such as democracy and human rights—or should it concentrate on its own national interests, such as natural resources and geostrategic position? Most U.S. citizens do not want to be “the world’s policeman,” and some resent paying for the security of allies such as Japan and Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, efforts to win congressional approval of foreign aid for Russia had to be couched in terms of U.S. interests (avoiding a return to costly Russian aggression), not humanitarian assistance or a moral obligation to help a nation achieve freedom and democracy. Yet the U.S. people also think of themselves as a caring nation and a beacon of hope for the world. Presidents continue to say things such as “where people are hungry, we will help. We are the United States!”⁵³

⁵¹ Brown, Michael E., Owen R. Cote, Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds. *America's Strategic Choices* (revised edition). MIT Press, 2000. Haass, Richard N. *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1997. Ruggie, John G. *Winning the Peace*. Columbia, 1996. Oye, Kenneth A., Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild, eds. *Eagle in a New World: American Grand Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era*. NY: HarperCollins, 1992.

⁵² Kull, Steven and I.M. Destler. *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999.

⁵³ President George Bush, June 1992, speech on Sarajevo. McElroy, Robert W. *Morality and American Foreign Policy: The Role of Ethics in International Affairs*. Princeton, 1992. Smith, Tony. *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, 1994. Korey, William. *The Promises We Keep: Human Rights, the Helsinki Process and American Foreign Policy*. NY: St. Martin's, 1994.

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 (such as the current efforts to stop international terrorism), the association is usually called a *coalition* rather than an alliance. Informal but enduring strategic *alignments* in a region are discussed shortly. But all these terms are somewhat ambiguous. Two countries may have a formal alliance and yet be bitter enemies, such as the Soviet Union and China in the 1960s or NATO members Greece and Turkey today. 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 relative to other states. By pooling their power capabilities, two or more states can exert greater leverage in their bargaining with other states. 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 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 to overmatch that of its rivals, the latter often form an alliance to limit that power. Thucydides attributed the outbreak of the Peloponnesian Wars more than 2,000 years ago to the growing power of Athens, and to the fear that caused in Sparta. Sparta turned to its neighbors in the Peloponnesian League, and that alliance managed to defeat Athens.

Alliances are an important component of the balance of power. Except in the rare circumstance of hegemony, every state is weaker than some combination of other states. If states overstep norms of international conduct they may face a powerful alliance of opposing states. 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.

MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE



Alliances, such as that between Kuwait and the United States, generally result from a convergence of practical interests, not sentimental or ideological reasons. Here, U.S. general Norman Schwarzkopf meets with the emir of Kuwait, 1991.

Realists emphasize the fluidity of alliances. Because of the autonomy of states, alliances can be made or broken fairly easily. Alliances are not marriages of love; they are marriages of convenience. Alliances are based on national interests, and can shift as national interests change. This fluidity helps the balance-of-power process to operate effectively.

As critics of realism point out, it is not simple or costless to break an alliance: one's reputation may suffer and future alliances may be harder to establish. There is an important norm that says that written treaties should be honored—in Latin, *pacta sunt servanda*. So states often do adhere to alliance terms even when it is not in their short-term interest to do so. Nonetheless, because of the nature of international anarchy, there is no mechanism to enforce contracts in IR, so the possibility of turning against a friend is always present. Realists would agree with French president Charles de Gaulle (under whom France withdrew militarily from NATO and developed its own nuclear weapons in the 1960s) that “France has no permanent friends, only permanent interests.” He also said, “Treaties are like roses and young girls. They last while they last.”⁵⁴ One hears echoes of Napoleon, 150 years earlier: “Treaties are observed as long as they are in harmony with interests.”⁵⁵

Examples are many. Anticommunist Richard Nixon could cooperate with communist Mao Zedong in 1972. Joseph Stalin could sign a nonaggression pact with a fascist, Adolph 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 or even shocked. Realists are not so surprised.

The fluidity of alliances deepens the security dilemma in a world of multiple actors. Recall that the dilemma is that one state's efforts to ensure its own security (building up military capabilities) reduce the security of another state. With only two states, it is possible to match capabilities so that both have adequate defense but cannot attack. But if one adds a third state, 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.

The nightmare of being overpowered looms large when a state faces a potential hostile alliance that could form overnight. For example, in a war Israel could defeat any of its neighbors alone. But Israeli leaders believe they must arm against the worst contingency—an attack by all their neighbors together. Because the neighbors are not very aligned (and the most important, Egypt and Jordan, are at peace with Israel), Israel's military capabilities appear excessive to those neighbors.

Alliance cohesion is the ease with which the members hold together an alliance.⁵⁶ 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 (as with the U.S.-Soviet alliance in World War II, for instance). Even when alliance cohesion is high, as in NATO during the Cold War, conflicts may arise over who bears the costs of the alliance (**burden sharing**).⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Time*, July 12, 1963.

⁵⁵ Napoleon. *Maxims, 1804–1815*. See Tripp, Rhoda Thomas. *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970.

⁵⁶ Kegley, Charles W., and Gregory A. Raymond. *When Trust Breaks Down: Alliance Norms and World Politics*. South Carolina, 1990.

⁵⁷ Oneal, John R. The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO. *International Organization* 44 (3), 1990: 379–402. Palmer, Glenn. Corraling the Free Rider: Deterrence and the Western Alliance. *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (2), 1990: 147–64.

The credibility with which an alliance can deter an enemy depends on the alliance's cohesion as well as its total power capabilities. If an alliance is successful at displaying a common front and taking a unified line on issues, a potential enemy is more likely to believe that members will honor their alliance commitments (such as their promise to fight if an ally is attacked). An enemy may try to split the alliance by finding issues on which the interests of the members diverge. For instance, the United States subtly encouraged the Sino-Soviet split, and the Soviet Union subtly tried to turn European members of NATO away from the United States.

Great powers often form alliances with smaller states, sometimes called client states.⁵⁸ In the Cold War, each superpower extended a security umbrella over its allies. The issue of credibility in such an alliance is whether (and under what circumstances) the great power will assist its clients in a war. 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.⁵⁹ The Soviet Union worried that its commitments to China in the 1950s, to Cuba in the 1960s, and to Syria and Egypt in the 1970s (among others) could result in a disastrous war with the United States.

NATO and the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty

At present, two important formal alliances dominate the international security scene. By far the more powerful (although with a somewhat uncertain future in the post-Cold War era), is the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, which encompasses Western Europe and North America. Using GDP as a measure of power, the 19 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, and Hungary. 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.⁶⁰ Article V, considered the heart of NATO, asks members to come to



WEB LINK

NATO

⁵⁸ David, Steven R. *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World*. Johns Hopkins, 1991.

⁵⁹ Snyder, Glenn H. *Alliance Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. Siverson, Randolph M., and Michael R. Tenenbass. Power, Alliance, and the Escalation of International Conflict, 1815–1965. *American Political Science Review* 78 (4), 1984: 1057–69.

⁶⁰ Yost, David S. *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1999. Grayson, George W. *Strange Bedfellows: NATO Marches East*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999. Goldgeier, James M. *Not Whether But When: The Decision to Enlarge NATO*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1999.

MAP 2.1 TO COME

the defense of a fellow member under attack. It was envisioned as a U.S. commitment to help defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union, but instead was invoked for the first time when Europe came to the defense of the United States after the terrorist attacks in 2001.

The first actual use of force by NATO was in Bosnia in 1994, in support of the UN mission there. A “dual key” arrangement gave the UN control of NATO’s actions in Bosnia, and the UN feared retaliation against its lightly armed peacekeepers if NATO attacked the Serbian forces to protect Bosnian civilians. As a result, NATO made threats, underlined by symbolic airstrikes, but then backed down after UN qualms; this waffling undermined NATO credibility. More extensive NATO airstrikes in 1995, however, alarmed Russian leaders who were already concerned by NATO’s expansion plans. These problems, along with tensions between the American and European NATO members over Bosnia policy, dogged the first major NATO mission of the post–Cold War era. Later NATO actions in the Balkans (the air war for Kosovo in 1999 and peacekeeping in Macedonia in 2001) went more smoothly in terms of alliance cohesion.

In 1999, the European Union decided to form by 2003 its own 60,000-troop rapid deployment force, outside NATO. The decision 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 the European force will probably work *with* NATO in future operations, it also gives Europe a bit more independence from the United States. Despite other efforts in this direction earlier in the 1990s, currently NATO still dominates European security.

The biggest question for NATO is eastward expansion, beyond the East–West Cold War dividing line. In 1999, former Soviet-bloc countries Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined the alliance. (Other Eastern European states seeking admission in future rounds of expansion include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania.) Making the new members’ militaries compatible with NATO is a major undertaking, requiring increased military spending by existing and new NATO members at a time of general reductions. Arms industries look forward to new sales as Eastern European countries restructure their military forces. NATO expansion was justified by liberals as a way to solidify new democracies while keeping Europe peaceful, and by conservatives as protection against possible future Russian aggression.

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, but pushed closer to Russia’s borders. These fears strengthen nationalist and

ALLIANCE OF THE STRONG



The NATO alliance has been the world’s strongest military force since 1949; its mission in the post–Cold War era is somewhat uncertain. Here, President Kennedy reviews U.S. forces in Germany, 1963.



ATLAS CD

NATO
Expansion
Map

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. However, the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia heightened Russian fears regarding NATO's eastward expansion.

The second most important alliance is the **U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty**, a bilateral alliance. Under this alliance the United States maintains about 50,000 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 (during the Korean War) 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 (written by U.S. General MacArthur after World War II) 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, strong enough for territorial defense but not for aggression. It is a powerful army by world standards but much smaller than Japan's economic strength could support. Japanese public opinion restrains militarism in general and precludes the development of nuclear weapons in particular after Japanese cities were destroyed by nuclear weapons in World War II. Even the dispatch of unarmed Japanese troops on a UN peacekeeping mission to Cambodia was barely approved in 1992 after a vigorous debate.

Japan is as dependent as ever on natural resources from foreign countries, but Japanese leaders generally believe that economic and diplomatic (rather than military) capabilities can best assure a smooth flow of resources to Japan and export markets for Japanese goods. The security alliance with the United States—Japan's largest trading partner—provides a stable security framework conducive to business. Japan need not worry that in a dispute over trade barriers the U.S. Navy will arrive to pry Japan's doors open (as it did in 1854). Nonetheless, some Japanese leaders believe that Japan's formal security role should now expand commensurate with its economic power. Japanese troops participated in the war in Afghanistan in 2001 (though not in combat roles) and Japan seeks a seat on the UN Security Council. The UN in turn is pressing Japan to participate fully in peacekeeping missions.

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 for U.S. war efforts. The continued U.S. military presence in Japan (as in Europe) symbolizes the U.S. commitment to remain engaged in Asian security affairs.⁶¹ However, these U.S. forces have been drawn down somewhat in the past decade in response to high costs, reduced threats, and some opposition by local residents (especially on Okinawa island).

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 Saudi Arabia make them de facto U.S. allies.

⁶¹ Vogel, Steven K. The "Inverse" Relationship: The United States and Japan at the End of the Century. In Lieber, Robert J., ed. *Eagle Adrift: American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century*. NY: Longman, 1997.

The Former Soviet Republics

The 12 members of the *Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* comprise the former Soviet republics except the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Russia is the leading member and Ukraine the second largest. Officially, CIS headquarters is in the city of Minsk, in Belarus, but in practice there is no strong center and meetings rotate around. After its first decade, the CIS remains a loose coordinating institution for states to solve practical problems in economic and (sometimes) military spheres.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, a chaotic situation emerged. Power for several years had been shifting from the center in Moscow to the 15 constituent Soviet republics. The Warsaw Pact had collapsed. The Soviet army itself began to break up, and several republics began forming their own military forces using Soviet forces, bases, and equipment located on their territories. At the same time, other former Soviet forces located outside Russia remained in a chain of command centered in Moscow, effectively under Russian control. For years until 1997, Russia and Ukraine debated ownership of the Black Sea fleet, whose port was in Ukraine but whose history was distinctly Russian. (The fleet will be split and Russia's basing rights maintained for 20 years.)

One reason for forming the CIS was simply to speed the death of the old Soviet Union and ease the transition to full independence for its republics. After the formation of the CIS at the end of 1991, the Soviet Union quickly dissolved. The extensive property of the Union (including state-owned industry and military forces) went to the individual republics, especially to Russia, which became the USSR's successor state.

The disposition of the Union's property and armed forces was negotiated by CIS members. Although some military coordination takes place through the CIS, plans for a joint military force instead of 12 independent armies did not succeed. Among the largest CIS members, Kazakhstan and Belarus are the most closely aligned with Russia, while Ukraine is the most independent. In 1999, Russia and Belarus formed a confederation that might lead to future economic integration or even an anti-Western military alliance, but currently remains merely symbolic.

It is to the CIS's credit that in the post-Soviet chaos no major war erupted between major CIS member states. Substantial warfare did occur between some of the smaller members (notably Armenia and Azerbaijan), and there was civil violence within several other CIS states (Russia, Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan); CIS forces were drawn into a few small clashes. But the large members were not drawn into large wars. The outcome could have been much worse.

The most important relationship within the CIS is between its two largest members, Russia and Ukraine. They distrust each other somewhat but have managed to cooperate fairly effectively since becoming independent. Disputes over issues such as ownership of the Black Sea fleet have been negotiated step by step, often painfully but productively in the end.

One of the first problems facing CIS military forces was what position to take in interrepublic warfare, such as that between Armenia and Azerbaijan, secessionist wars as in Georgia, or civil wars to control republics' governments as in Tajikistan. In the mid-1990s, the CIS operated a 24,000-person peacekeeping force in Tajikistan, generally supporting the government in a civil war there. A 1,500-person force in Moldova and a 500-person force in Georgia, both acting as buffer forces to monitor cease-fires, operated under joint commands of Russia and the governments and rebel forces in each of those countries.

Another pressing military problem for the CIS was the disposition of the tens of thousands of nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union. As the Soviet successor state, Russia assumed control of the weapons and within a year moved all the tactical nuclear weapons out of the other republics and into Russian territory. This was a very touchy operation be-



ATLAS CD

CIS
Article

ATLAS CD

Russian
Influence in
CIS States
Photo

cause of the danger of theft or accident while so many weapons were in transit. The United States provided specially designed railroad cars for use in moving the weapons. Still, there were reports that nuclear materials (or perhaps even warheads) had been stolen and sold on the international market by corrupt CIS officers or officials (see pp. ***-*** on proliferation).

The strategic nuclear weapons—those on long-range missiles—presented another kind of problem. These weapons were located in four republics—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—under control of Russian commanders. They were not easily moved, and the three republic leaders expressed some ambivalence about losing them to Russia. At a minimum they wanted assurances that the nuclear weapons would be destroyed, not re-targeted on their own republics. Ukraine toyed with using the missiles as bargaining chips in negotiations with Russia or with the Western powers. But in the end all the former Soviet republics except Russia agreed to become nonnuclear states.

Overall, the CIS is a marriage of convenience. For now the members find it a necessary marriage—especially because of the tight economic integration of the member states—if not always a happy one. A divorce could occur quickly.

Regional Alignments

Beyond the three alliances just discussed and the regional IGOs mentioned earlier, most international alignments and coalitions are not formalized in alliances. Among the great powers, a close working relationship (through the UN) developed among the United States, Western European powers, Japan, and Russia after the Cold War. By the mid-1990s new strains had appeared in great-power relations, including economic conflicts among the former Western allies, differences over policy in Bosnia and Kosovo, and Western alarm at Russia's war in the secession-minded Chechnya province. Of the great powers, China continues to be the most independent, but prudently avoids conflict with the others unless China's immediate security interests are at stake.

In the third world, many states joined a **nonaligned movement** during the Cold War, standing apart from the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. This movement, led by India and Yugoslavia, was undermined by the membership of states such as Cuba that were clearly clients of one superpower. In 1992, the nonaligned movement agreed to stay in business, though its future is unclear. One vestige of past centuries is the Commonwealth—a group of countries with historical ties to Britain (including Canada and Australia) working together for mutual economic and cultural benefit. France also maintains ties (including regular summit meetings) with its former colonies in Africa. France had troops stationed in six African countries in the late 1990s. But France reduced its African ties in the 1990s, and in 1997 it stood by while friendly governments in Zaire (Democratic Congo) and the Republic of Congo were overthrown. Meanwhile the 53-member Organization of African Unity, an IGO with few powers, hopes to remake itself as the African Union, a stronger organization with a continentwide Parliament, central bank, and court.

In Asia, China has had conflicts with most of its major neighbors. Between 1940 and 1979 it engaged in military hostilities with Japan, South Korea, the United States, India, Russia, and Vietnam. In 1965, China lost its only major regional ally (Indonesia) after a violent change of government there. China has long been loosely aligned with Pakistan in opposition to India (which was aligned with the Soviet Union). The United States tended to favor the Pakistani side as well (especially when Pakistan supported anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan in the 1980s). But U.S.-Indian relations have improved since the Cold War ended. Vietnam slowly normalized relations with the United States after the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia. The United States has 35,000 troops stationed in South Korea under terms of a formal bilateral alliance dating to the Korean War (North Korea is



WEB LINK

Nonaligned
Movement

vaguely aligned with China). Other long-standing U.S. friends in Asia include the Philippines (where joint antiterrorist operations began in 2002), the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan (only informally since the 1970s), Singapore, and Thailand. With Australia and New Zealand the United States has had since 1951 a formal military alliance called ANZUS, which formally invoked its mutual support provisions for the first time in response to the terrorist attacks in 2001.

In the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict created a general anti-Israel alignment of the Arab countries for decades, but that alignment broke down as Egypt in 1978 and then the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Jordan in 1993–1994 made peace with Israel. As the Israeli-Palestinian peace process moves forward and backward year by year, Arab countries continue to express varying degrees of solidarity with each other and degrees of opposition to Israel. Iraq and Iran are Israel's most intractable enemies as it makes a tenuous peace with all its immediate neighbors. Meanwhile, Israel and Turkey have formed a close military relationship that amplifies Israeli power and links it to the oil-rich Caspian Sea region (see pp. ***-***). Also, despite its small size, Israel has been the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid since the 1980s (about \$3 billion per year).

The United States has close relations with Egypt (since 1978), and cooperates closely with Turkey (a NATO member), Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (cemented by the 1991 Gulf War), and with Morocco. But U.S.-Iranian relations remained frosty (despite some recent warming) two decades after the 1979 revolution. The United States has very hostile relations with Iraq, with recurrent U.S.-led bombing of Iraqi facilities continuing since the late 1990s. U.S. relations with Libya have also been hostile.

It is unclear what new international alignments may emerge in the years to come. The fluidity of alliances makes them a wild card for scholars to understand and for policy makers to anticipate. For the present, international alignments center on the United States; although several independence-minded states such as China, Russia, France, and Iran keep U.S. hegemony in check, there is little sign of a coherent or formal rival power alignment emerging to challenge the United States. Although U.S. leadership in international security affairs fluctuated in the 1990s, the leading U.S. role will be central to the course of world politics in the early twenty-first century.

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. Consistent with the realist framework, 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 security. Chapter 3 reexamines these themes critically, from more liberal and more revolutionary theoretical perspectives.



ATLAS CD

Arab-Israeli
Conflict
Map, Article

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Using Table 1.2 on pp. **-** (with GDP as a measure of power) and the maps at the front 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 which were not? Why?

3. Given the distinction between zero-sum and non-zero-sum games, can you think of a current international situation that is a zero-sum conflict? One that is non-zero-sum?
4. If you were the leader of a small state in Africa, bargaining with a great power about an issue where your interests diverged, what leverage and strategies could you bring into play to improve the outcome for your state?
5. Given recent changes in international power distribution and the end of the Cold War order, where do you think the threats to peace will come from in the future? Through what means—unilateral actions, alliances, collective security—could states respond to those threats?
6. 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 the ways in which states interact?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Realism explains international relations in terms of power.
- Realists and idealists differ in their assumptions about human nature, international order, and the potential for peace.
- 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 affairs can be seen as a series of bargaining interactions in which states use power capabilities as leverage to influence the outcomes.
- Bargaining outcomes depend not only on raw power but also on strategies and luck.
- Reciprocity can be an effective strategy for reaching cooperation in ongoing relationships but carries a danger of turning into runaway hostility or arms races.
- 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.
- International anarchy—the absence of world government—means that each state is a sovereign and autonomous actor pursuing its own national interests.
- The international system traditionally places great emphasis on the sovereignty of states, their right to control affairs in their own territory, and their responsibility to respect internationally recognized borders.
- 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 relative to another state or alliance.

- 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.

KEY TERMS

realism **

idealism **

power **

geopolitics **

bargaining **

negotiation **

reciprocity **

deterrence **

compellence **

arms race **

rational actor **

national interest **

cost-benefit analysis **

game theory **

zero-sum games **

anarchy **

norms **

sovereignty **

security dilemma **

balance of power **

great powers **

middle powers **

neorealism **

multipolar system **

hegemony **

alliance cohesion **

burden sharing **

North Atlantic Treaty Organization **

Warsaw Pact ***

U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty ***

nonaligned movement ***

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