

Questions for Sections

Introduction

Q: Are the actors always the same across issue areas? Think about how we may want to consider different actors when considering why nations go to war.

A: No, actors are contingent on the puzzle we are trying to explain. States may be preferable when considering the international threat environment. Leaders may be superior when thinking about individual incentives to fight (Goemans and Chiozza, 2004).

Q: What are the differences between a bargaining and cooperation problem?

A: In a bargaining problem, the goal of the actors is to achieve the best outcome possible at the (possible) expense of the other side without necessarily shared interests. In a cooperation problem, actors with similar interests try to coordinate to achieve a common objective. As a simplifying assumption, bargaining occurs when actors are in conflict, cooperation occurs when actors would like to work together. Bargaining games are zero-sum games. Cooperation games are positive-sum games.

Chapter 1: What Shaped our World? A Historical Introduction

Q: What was the most costly restriction for US colonies? Why was this restriction a problem for colonial welfare?

A: Enumeration, or the restriction on goods such that they could only be exported to Britain. This burden fell disproportionately on tobacco and rice planters in Virginia and South Carolina and merchants and craftsmen in New England. These were the principal supporters of independence.

Q: Using the framework of the book, explain how Europe came to dominate world politics?

Interests: European states wanted to strengthen economies and societies relative to other European states

Interactions: Industrialization in Europe widened the wealth gap between Europe and the rest of the world. Technological advances, particularly in weaponry, gave Europeans the ability to control others even with smaller absolute militaries

Institutions: European powers used mercantilist policies to rule colonies for the interests of the European state, not the colonies.

Q: Following World War 1, what created great resentment in Germany, and why?

A: Treaty of Versailles. The treaty imposed payments of reparations from Germany to other powers, notably France. The economic depressions caused in parts by this treaty fermented negative sentiments in Germany that were captured and used to advance the Nazi Party.

Q: What impact did nuclear weapons have on military relations?

A: As neither the US or the USSR had a monopoly on nuclear weapons, the relative arsenals and second-strike capability meant that war between the US and USSR was unlikely. Instead, both nations could only influence the affairs in other states via proxy conflicts. E.g., Iran 1953, Guatemala 1954, DR 1962, Chile 1972, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Afghanistan 1979.

Chapter 2: Understanding Interests, Interactions, and Institutions

Q: What is a common interest that we attribute to states?

A: States are interested in survival (an assumption), so a common interest that we attribute is states have an interest in preventing attacks on their territories and citizens. You may think of others. Often, analysts group interests into three categories: power or security, economic welfare, and ideological goals.

Q: What are the key components of sovereignty?

A: There are four core elements. 1) The sovereign possesses ultimate authority over the people and territory of a given realm. 2) Other states and/or political actors are excluding from exercising political authority over a sovereign people in the territory. 3) Sovereignty is indivisible 4) All sovereign units are formally equal or have the same legal status.

Q: What makes an interaction strategic?

A: An interaction where each actor's decision (strategy) depends on the actions and decisions of others

Q: What are the two assumptions made for studying interactions?

A: Actors behave in an interaction with the intention of producing some desired result. Actors adopt strategies according to what they believe to be the interests and likely actions of others. We will often use the phrase "Best Response" to describe these strategies.

Q: What kind of cooperation interaction describes the reason why FIFA referees must be fluent in English?

A: Coordination. Here the key question is to pick a language that everyone can speak. Once the language is decided, there's no incentive to switch to something else (at least for some limited time horizons).

Q: Using terms for the chapter, explain the 3Is for a group homework project for which all group members receive a single grade. What are the major challenges?

A: A group is a collection of individuals. Each individual is an actor. This is a cooperation problem, specifically a collaboration problem. The grade is a public good because group members cannot exclude any other group member from sharing in the final grade, and one member getting a grade does not prevent another from getting the same grade (e.g., the number of grades are not affected). The collective action problem is that cooperation by all leads to the best grade, but every individual has an incentive to defect and not put forth full effort (free ride). If group members could create an institution to punish defection, they would be more likely to see effort from all.

Q: What is the conceptual difference between iteration and linkage?

A: Iteration enables actors to punish defectors by withholding gains from future cooperation, whereas linkage enables actors to withhold cooperation on other issues of potential cooperation.

Q: How might we measure states' coercive ability?

A: Usually, coercive ability is measured from material capabilities and economic strength. Scholars often look at military personnel and technical acumen as well as economic resources such as natural resources. Coercive ability can also be the ability to bear the costs of conflict if bargaining breaks down.

Q: What is the primary way that institutions affect cooperation?

A: Enforcement, or imposing punishment on actors who refuse to cooperate

Q: How do international institutions facilitate cooperation? Provide as many ways as possible.

A: There are at least four: setting standard of behaviors, monitoring and verifying compliance to the regime, reducing costs of joint decision making, resolving disputes. Institutions rarely, if ever do all four. Clear standards of behavior are critical for determining whether an actor has violated an agreement.

Chapter 3: Why Are there Wars?

Q: What does not qualify as a war

A: Unorganized violence such as large scale rioting, events that do not have at least two parties such as mass killings against civilian victims, and military force that does not meet an appropriate violent threshold such as border skirmishes

Q: Why is anarchy not a sufficient reason to see war?

A: Anarchy may make states worried about other states causing a security dilemma, but war still imposes costs on states that they could negotiate over. In effect, war is ex-post inefficient, so the puzzle is why states cannot avoid it and find a more efficient distribution.

Q: What kinds of goods do states fight over?

A: Territory, which might contribute to the value of a state from resources or might have strategic or ideological value. War can also arise from state policies when states enact a policy that benefits one state but harms the interests of another. States also fight over regime type or the composition of another country's government. This is, in some sense, a conflict over state policy.

Q: What is the difference between general and extended deterrence?

A: General deterrence refers to efforts taken by a state to prevent attacks on its own interests and territory. Extended deterrence occurs when states seek to protect allies by extending protection to another state.

Q: What are the three mechanisms by which states can make their threats credible? Explain each one. What is the major downside of each strategy?

A: Brinkmanship, tying hands, paying for power. All of them leave something to chance and create the potential for accidental conflict.

Q: Using the language of commitment problems, explain why Iran has no incentive to give up its nuclear program?

A: Iran sees the nuclear program as a counterweight against American power. If Iran dismantles its nuclear program, the US could press its strength advantage in the future to get concessions on other issues. The US also does not have the ability to credibly promise not to overthrow the Iranian regime because of long-running hostility between the two regimes.

Q: What is the logic for why war happens?

A: States have conflicting interests over a contentious issue, and bargaining may fail even though there exists a peaceful resolution that is preferred by both states because of commitment or information problems.

Q: What are some reasons that war may have become less likely in the modern era?

A: States are satisfied with territorial division in the status quo, and other conflicting interests can be better results through peaceful means. Changes in weapons technology, such as the advent of nuclear weapons, have greatly increased the cost of war. Institutions such as countries with democratic systems may make war less desirable as a mechanism to resolve conflicts.

Chapter 4: Domestic Politics and War

Q: Discuss explanations for conflict from a general interest and narrow interest category?

A: Consider the case of oil from the textbook, a country may have a strong interest in protecting oil because it is vital for modern military planning. A narrow interest might focus on how certain influential constituencies benefit from oil production (oil companies) who are major donors to politicians.

Q: Using the Falkland Islands War as an example, explain why Argentine and British leaders had a diversionary incentive to fight a war.

A: Both countries were experiencing economic crises. International conflict can serve as a diversion by refocusing on conflict instead of problems that might drag down their support, such as economic troubles. War also increases the attachment of citizens to the government in power.

The Argentinian junta may have gambled on British leniency when attacking the Falklands. The junta's failure to take into account Thatcher's similar domestic situation meant that Britain responded instead of backing down.

Q: Why might a small group have an easier time getting their policy preferences heard than larger groups?

A: Small groups with influence are able to solve collective action problems related to coordination that bigger groups cannot. A small group, such as the military, is able and willing to intervene in state decision making and also can capture a higher benefit per capita, making it easier to deal with coordination challenges. Small groups of voters, such as the Cuban American lobby, may have outsized influence if they can coordinate in critical battleground states, such as Florida.

Q: Why should we not assume all wars are caused by interest group explanations?

A: Lack of evidence of the counterfactual outcome. Most foreign policy decisions bestow benefits on some groups that are also generally decisions we might expect states to make. Second, many foreign policy decisions have competing groups. The existence of opposing groups makes it harder for any single group to capture the state's foreign policy. Third, war requires the cooperation of multiple states. Interest groups may push for war, but the other state may back down.

Q: What is a reason why actors may want war in such a way as to constrain the bargaining space?

A: Actors may stand to benefit from a war but cannot derive benefits from a negotiated settlement. In this case, peace is costly for these interests. If the net benefits of war are high enough to offset both states' costs of war, then we may see war because acceptable bargains can no longer be reached.

Q: How can autocratic leaders be held accountable for their actions?

A: Autocratic leaders cannot rule alone and are in some way responsible to a ruling coalition whose support is necessary for the leader to remain in power. Autocrats need to prioritize policies that keep those in the coalition satisfied, and/or take action such that the coalition shrinks down as in a full cult of personality.

Q: How does accountability explain the democratic peace? What is one caution when assuming the democratic leaders care more about the costs of war than autocratic governments?

A: Increases in the cost of war diminishes a state's willingness to enter into violent conflict to contest the status quo. Democratic leaders who are more aligned with the general costs of war will be likely to start wars in general and only start wars when the odds of winning are sufficiently high. In two democratic states, the odds that leaders of both states would find war profitable enough to fight instead of settle are low. A caution to this argument is that autocratic leaders often face much higher costs of losing a conflict (death, torture, coups) than democratic leaders, so it is possible that an autocrat pays great attention to the costs of war.

Q: If democracies do not fight each other, should democracies intervene in other states to push for democratic regimes?

A: Probably not if that's the sole reason. The Democratic peace observation is only for mature democratic states. Weak democratic states are often war-prone. More generally, it is possible that the mature democratic states themselves arise from a selection process that is not well understood. Merely changing a regime to a democracy does not then mean less fighting. It could mean much more. The relationship's selection may be driven by economic development.

Consolidated democracies emerge in states that are wealthier, and those states have more interest in peace to preserve economic interests. Second, it might be the case that peace causes mature democracy. Third, it may be the case that the democratic peace is really just a carryover of shared strategic interests between these countries. Making new democracies might not mean that those democracies share the same interests, thus creating situations for conflict and crisis bargaining.

Chapter 5: International Institutions and War

Q: What kind of cooperative interaction is an alliance?

A: Collaboration. Alliances are agreements made because of mutual interests, but there are always incentives for one state to not comply with its obligations and bear costs on behalf of another state.

Q: Why does Balance of Power theory not account for all alliance formation?

A: Balance of power does not account for all alliance formation because sometimes weaker states bandwagon with stronger states. States can also choose between many potential partners in order to balance the capabilities of a strong state, and so may join into alliances for ideological and not pure military power reasons. Finally, not all states provoke balancing responses.

Q: What happens if not all states involved in crisis bargaining believe that there will be foreign intervention?

A: If parties to a dispute have different information about what a third-party will do, there will be greater uncertainty, which increases the probability of a bargaining failure and, therefore, conflict.

Q: What is the major trade-off in alliance formation?

A: Credibility and control. Credibility requires ironclad promises, which increase the possibility of risky behavior by allies. Control reduces the risk of allies entrapping their partners but does so at the cost of ambiguity, which reduces the credibility of the alliance.

Q: What made the post World War II system more stable than the Pre-World War I system?

A: The diplomatic features of the world were different. In the Cold War, the world was dominated by two superpowers, which meant less scope for miscalculation because any conflict depended on the choice of fewer actors. In the run-up to WWI, there were several major powers in competition that were highly contingent on their allies. Second, neither superpower would be as threatened by a loss of an ally as the states of Europe were before 1914. In essence, the marginal cost of losing an ally was smaller. Cold War Alliances were also highly institutionalized, which increased the credibility of commitments in the eyes of adversaries.

Q: How do collective security organizations influence crisis bargaining?

A: The prospect of outside involvement by the CSO can make change the likely outcome of the interaction between bargaining actors. Second, outsiders can help resolve the commitment problems identified by enforcing what would otherwise be an incredible commitment by one actor not to exploit its power against another. Third, CSOs can serve as neutral observers or peacekeepers, which diminishes the first strike advantage in a crisis-bargaining scenario.

Q: Since P5 members have veto power, define the term that factors into the UNSC decision-making and what that means for its decisions?

A: Policy bias. The UNSC is unlikely to take on a mission for which the P5 states have strongly divergent interests. P5 policy bias introduces a bias towards inaction.

Chapter 6: Violence by Nonstate Actors, Civil War and Terrorism

Q: Civil War and Terrorism are not synonymous, but share what underlying commonalities?

A: Both employ the use of violence for political goals by nonstate actors who face the same fundamental problem of how to organize and mobilize individuals and resources to engage in violence when they do not have the legitimate use of coercive force. As a result, rebel groups and terrorists are almost always weaker than their adversary and so employ asymmetric tactics.

Q: Describe the difference between Greed and Grievance motivations for civil war.

A: Grievances arise when the policies of the government discriminate against members of a particular group, such as repressing their language or culture or denying access to infrastructure. Greed is a group's desire to control more of the country's economic resources, such as having a greater share of profits from natural resource extraction or privileged access to jobs and government largesse.

Q: What country-level features are associated with increased risk of armed opposition?

A: Political institutions that do not allow peaceful redress of grievances and do not have strong repressive capacity, low overall wealth because richer states may be more likely to be able to afford repression, and poor geography, especially mountainous regions or rough terrain that make it easier for rebels to hide. Countries with large populations may provide more people available for recruitment.

Q: What requirements need to exist for civil violence to occur?

A: There are groups of people within a country motivated to put their interests in conflict with a government. Those people cannot pursue those interests through regular political institutions, and those people can owe their resource endowments, which may include foreign support, overcome collective action problems to recruit enough fighters, and purchase enough weapons to pose a threat.

Q: Why do combatants sharing the same territory in a civil war create a commitment problem?

A: Once the conflict is settled, one side is unable to retain coercive power. Once one side demobilizes and disarms, they cannot be sure that the other side will abide by the terms of their agreement absent third-party enforcement.

Q: What is the purpose of COIN doctrine?

A: COIN doctrine seeks to defeat an insurgency by giving the population an interest in the survival of the government, increasing the rebels' collective action problems, and eliminating their informational advantage.

Q: What are the two ways in which terrorist organizations are weak? How does this affect their ability to be successful?

A: They are weak relative to the states they seek to coerce, and they are weak relative to the demands that they make. Weak groups make the problem of recruitment greater because they have a smaller pool of motivated individuals from which to draw. They also must seek out alternative sources of funding, such as criminal behavior, which has a higher risk.

Q: Who are the audiences for terrorism?

A: The government and population of the target state and the home population or the people on whose behalf terrorists claim to act.

Chapter 7: International Trade

Q: What is the redistributive effect of trade protection?

A: Producers gain and consumers lose. Income is redistributed from domestic consumers to the protected domestic industry. Trade protection also introduces economic distortions and inefficiencies and leads consumers to consume less of those goods that protection has made artificially expensive.

Q: Explain the three leading theories of trade-policy interests.

A: Stolper-Samuelson's approach emphasizes the interest of broad factors of production. Trade under this theory affects broad factors of production. The Ricardo-Viner approach emphasizes specific actors of the economy. A firm based approach is that trade-policy focuses on individual firms.

Q: How can domestic political institutions affect trade policy?

A: Politicians with local concerns tend to be more responsive to local interest groups. Nationally elected politicians have less interest in catering to local concerns. This suggests that institutional focus will matter in determining who gains and who loses from trade policy

Q: How can international trade overcome problems of strategic interaction?

A: Small numbers make it easier for governments to monitor each other's behavior. The existence of privileged groups (e.g., NAFTA) will find it easier to monitor and enforce trade agreements than very large groups. Information and transparency through institutions can facilitate cooperation. Repeated interactions between states also encourage cooperation because the shadow of the future is long, and countries could punish each other for cheating on terms of agreements. Countries can link concessions in one area to concessions in another area, making it more likely that they can reach an acceptable deal for both sides.

Q: How does the WTO monitor a country's compliance? What is the benefit of monitoring?

A: The WTO members must report actions taken to restrict trade as well as RTAs. Second, countries that believe that foreign exporters or importers are not complying with the rules can file a complaint with the WTO, which will adjudicate. Monitoring is helpful because it provides information about cooperation to all parties, providing some assurance that cooperation is being kept.

Chapter 8: International Financial Relations

Q: Why do investors make foreign investments?

A: Investors want to make money. Investing in capital-poor environments provide a higher rate of return than investing in capital-rich environments. Investors may also prefer to invest in low-risk instruments in rich countries because there is a high likelihood they will recoup their investment with interest.

Q: Explain the primary interests of debtors and creditors in a conflict?

A: For a debtor, making prompt and full debt payments means restraining consumption and increasing taxes, which imposes domestic costs. They would prefer to reduce the demands on their citizens. Creditors' profits depend on debt service payments received, and the reduction of payments means fewer profits. Debtors always have the threat of default, while creditors can cut off debtors from future lending and credit markets.

Q: Why might a corporation want to become multinational?

A: Corporations may want to establish overseas affiliates to gain access to local markets or take advantage of local resources (e.g., labor) in situations where doing so through trade is unattractive. For a country's part, multinational corporations can provide investment, managerial, technological, and marketing skills that may not be available in the domestic market.

Q: Why does labor migrate from one country to another?

A: Labor, like capital, responds to differential rates of returns. Higher wages in rich countries attract workers from poorer countries in both skilled and unskilled labor. Countries with abundant unskilled labor will export it while countries that are labor scarce will import it.

Q: How does immigration benefit receiving countries?

A: Employers gain from the lower wages they can pay. The economy benefits from having a larger labor force and lower costs of production. Note, though, that the lowering of wages can create tension because it also lowers the wage paid to native workers who compete with immigrants.

Chapter 9: International Monetary Relations

Q: Why would lowering interest rates stimulate demand for a country's products in the world market?

A: Lowering interest rates means that the currency depreciates relative to other currencies. The weaker currency makes local goods cheaper to foreigners, which increases the demand for exports. It also makes foreign goods more expensive to local residents, which helps domestic producers. A weakness is that money is now less valuable, so consumers in a nation can buy less with the same amount.

Q: Describe the difference between a fixed and floating exchange rate.

A: A fixed exchange rate is an exchange rate policy under which a government commits itself to keep its currency at or around a specific value relative to another currency or a commodity, such as gold. A floating exchange rate is an exchange rate policy under which a government permits its currency to be traded on the open market with direct government intervention.

Q: What are the two principles of an international monetary regime?

A: First, a regime makes clear whether currency values should float, be fixed, or a hybrid of the two. Second, there must be agreement about whether there will be a mutually accepted benchmark against which values are measured, such as a gold standard or paper-backed standard.

Q: Describe the path of a typical currency crisis.

A: A government commits itself to a particular fixed exchange rate. Over time, the government faces economic or political incentives to stop maintaining the fixed rate. People begin to lose faith in the government's commitment to the exchange rate policy, which gives investors a strong reason to sell the nation's currency. As doubts about the government's credibility grow, more people exchange the currency for a different, more reliable currency. Eventually, the government runs out of resources (including the time to stabilize) and is forced to devalue the currency. A drop in the currency for a country with substantial foreign debts means that those debts become substantially more expensive, and the local economy is hit with austerity measures.

Chapter 10: Development, Causes of the Wealth and Poverty of Nations

Q: Identify and describe the major domestic variables used to explain why development is difficult to achieve.

A: Political geography, domestic factors that affect the domestic political economy, and domestic institutions. Geography and disease environments, along with the distance to major markets, provide a development disadvantage because they are less conducive to urbanization and industrialization than temperate zones. A weakness of this approach is that there is a good deal of variation between countries with similar geographies. Domestic factors can prevent governments from credibly committing to provide essential public goods like infrastructure and the protection of property rights, which inhibits the ability of domestic producers to take advantage of economic opportunities. Governments may be dependent on actors who engage in economic sectors that would be threatened by the growth of more modern economies. Domestic institutions might be biased against participation and serve to restrict broad-based participation in economic growth.

Q: Explain the thesis of Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson's argument about the impact of colonialism on subsequent development.

A: Countries and regions of the world were divided into extractive and inclusive institutions. In places where the climate was such that Europeans could live easily, settlers set up institutions that enforced the rule of law and encouraged investment. These institutions persisted, and the result was successful future development. In places where the disease environment was high, or it was otherwise difficult to settle, Europeans set up extractive institutions with the intent of moving resources to the metropole. These institutions persisted after colonialism and impeded successful development.

Q: Given our framework, why does the relative weakness of LDCs help to explain why they may be biased against in the international economy?

A: The bargaining range for successful deals is influenced by a country's relative power. Countries with weaker economies have less influence on patterns of international trade. Rich countries make policies to benefit their own interests, knowing that they can derive a policy bias from cooperative institutions. Poorer countries still benefit (otherwise, there would be no reason to cooperate) but do so in a less beneficial way than they might with more power.

Chapter 11: International Law and Norms

Q: What determines the key parts of the definition of international law?

A: International law is a body of rules linked together in a common logical structure, not simply an ad hoc list of rules issued or even enforced by some authority. The primary unifying principle in the international community is sovereignty. Second, a body of rules must have the status of law by including both primary and secondary rules. Primary rules are the negative and positive rules regulating behavior. Secondary rules are akin to a constitution that structure the making of other rules.

Q: What are the two principles for making international law?

A: Customary international law: which develops slowly over time as states recognize practices as appropriate and correct, for example, diplomatic immunity. The second mechanism is international treaties, which are negotiated and then ratified by states. Agreements differ in their obligations, precision, and delegation.

Q: What is the difference between hard law and soft law?

A: Hard law is obligatory, precisely defined, and delegates substantial authority to third parties, usually international courts. Soft law is aspirational, ambiguous, and does not delegate significant powers to third parties. Countries often adopt soft law because it is easier to achieve in bargaining, is more flexible, so better to deal with uncertain futures, infringes less on state authority, and facilitates compromise.

Q: How might international law alter actors' interests?

A: There are a variety of ways, but one, in particular, is that international law creates compliance constituencies who benefit when their governments follow international law. Since these constituencies have a strong interest in compliance, they can lobby governments to follow their obligations.

Q: What are the three types of norms? Give an example of each.

A: Constitutive norms, those norms that define who is a legitimate or appropriate actor in a given set of circumstances. Examples include states having flags and national anthems. Procedural norms, which define how decisions involving multiple actors, should be made. Examples include consultation of important actors in international financial institutions.

Regulative norms govern the behavior of actors in their interactions with other actors. Examples include responsibility to protect.

Q: Explain the norm life cycle model.

A: The norm life cycle model is a three-stage model of how norms diffuse within a population and achieve a taken-for-granted status. First, norm entrepreneurs actively work to convince a critical mass of other individuals in other states to embrace their beliefs. In the second stage, there is a norm cascade as the number of adherents passes a tipping point beyond which the idea gains sufficient support that it becomes a nearly universal standard of behavior to which others can be held accountable. In the third stage, norms are internalized and become so widely accepted that they acquire a taken-for-granted quality that makes conformity almost automatic.

Chapter 12: Human Rights

Q: What is one way we can determine which human rights are important to states?

A: Like any interest, we can determine the extent that a state cares about human rights by how much it is willing to pay to enforce them. Economic sanctions, a common tool to punish violators of human rights, inflict costs on states that impose them as well because they are no longer able to access certain markets that have been cut off and must pay to monitor and enforce the sanctions.

Q: Why are overt acts of human rights abuses more likely in multiparty dictatorships?

A: In single-party or personalist dictatorships, political opponents are sufficiently repressed that human rights violations are less necessary. The state might use torture if it believes it to be in its interest, but opponents are already sufficiently deterred from challenging the government. In multiparty dictatorships, the political opposition remains visible and viable, especially if the dictator needs a large ruling coalition, so the state is more likely to use torture to suppress opponents to stay in power.

Q: What is the challenge of enforcing human rights?

A: There are many, but the key here is that enforcement of human rights is a collective action problem. The gains from human rights are small or nonexistent, meaning that states have few incentives to bear high costs for enforcing the law. States that violate the law also have no interest in enforcing the law against themselves.

Q: When are states more likely to take action to enforce human rights obligations?

A: States are most likely when states face domestic pressure to do something to stop human rights abuses by powerful domestic constituencies. Demands for action are more likely when these groups are better informed about abuses in other countries, meaning that TANS can play a role in human rights enforcement by providing information. Second, states are more likely to act when doing so serves their larger geopolitical interests. Third, states are more likely to enforce human rights obligations when the gap between the principle of sovereignty and international human rights law can be bridged.

Chapter 13: The Global Environment

Q: Define public goods. Explain why the tragedy of the commons makes the environment difficult to protect.

A: Public goods are goods that are nonexcludable and nonrival in consumption, such as clean air or water. The tragedy of the commons is that individually no one has an incentive to change their behavior for preservation, meaning that the environment suffers long term degradation.

Q: Define the five factors that affect cooperation?

A: Group size, the larger the group of actors, the more likely that free-riding will occur. The complexity of the problem, the more complex an issue, the harder it is to achieve cooperation.

Repeated interaction, groups that regularly interact (iteration), or frequently on other issues (linkage) will be able to induce greater contributions from one another through strategies of reciprocal punishment in which contributor sanction noncontributors by withholding future cooperation. Joint products, when public goods come bundled with private goods. The larger the benefit to private goods, the less free riding. Fifth, privileged groups that comprise a small number of actors may receive sufficient benefit from the good to provide it themselves.

Q: Define an externality and explain how externalities exist between countries in the case of environmental degradation.

A: Externalities: Costs or benefits for stakeholders other than the actor undertaking an action. When an externality exists, the decision-maker does not bear all the costs or reap all the gains from his or her activity. Countries that release pollutants in the air affect the atmosphere for at least neighboring countries and potentially the globe. Here, an actor that is not taking action is still affected by the actions of another.

Q: Using the case of oil tankers, explain why clarity and transparency in standards and verification matter for institutional success.

A: After a tanker delivers a cargo of crude oil, it must deal with the remaining tons left on board. Oil tankers were intentionally discharging approximately one million tons of oil into the ocean annually. The first standards permitted tankers to continue cleaning their tanks with seawater but mandated that the discharges be a small number of parts per million. Cleaning the tanks with seawater usually took place on the open ocean, which is far from observation, so captains could pollute with impunity. In 1978 countries adopted new standards that required tankers to use new technologies that were easily observable and verifiable. The ease of verification forced high rates of compliance.

Chapter 14: Challenges to the Global Order

Q: Why might nuclear weapons be a force for peace?

A: Thinking of war as a bargaining process, nuclear weapons alter the bargaining range of deals that both sides prefer over war. A state should prefer any deal, even one in which it receives nothing over nuclear war. Nuclear weapons can create a situation of mutual dependence in which neither side would contemplate an attack on the other, forcing them to resolve their disputes in other ways. Note that this argument hinges on neither side being able to wipe out the other weapons in a first strike, that leaders are rational, and that attacks are verifiable and attributable to an actor.

Q: If nuclear weapons promote peace, why do states push to reduce proliferation?

A: Nuclear weapons influence the distribution of power among states, which can harm the current interests of other states even if it never leads to war. Second, states that acquire weapons may not be able to meet the requirements for deterrence, which makes them highly unstable. Third, the spread of WMD increases the risk of proliferation to terrorist organizations, and there is doubt whether the language of deterrence works in the same way against a nonstate actor.

Q: Why does a rising power increase the possibility for conflict in a system?

A: A large shift in relative military power makes a rising state more powerful, which means it expects to do better in the event of war and so bargains harder to change the status quo. Bargains that were acceptable when the state was relatively weak are no longer satisfactory. More importantly, the rising power cannot commit not to revise deals in the future, which provides an incentive for the declining state to start a conflict in a situation where it is still relatively stronger.

Q: Given the logic of the previous question, why do interactions with rising powers and current leaders often end peacefully?

A: If the costs of conflict are large enough, a deal may be found that both sides prefer over war now and after the power shift. The deal gives both states more than their current and future values for war. In this case, the costs of war relative to the value of the good are too high. Additionally, the value of the good in a dispute might be low in an absolute sense, so states are unwilling to enter into conflict because the net value of war is negative.