# 1

# Understanding International Relations

International relations are concerned with the political, economic, social, and cultural relations between two countries or among many countries. We also include in this definition relations countries have with other important actors such as global corporations or international organizations. Did you know that what we currently consider international relations can be traced back at least 2,500 years? During the fifth BCE, the relevant political groups were Greek city-states rather than modern nation-states. City-states such as Athens and Sparta traded with each other, participated in cross-border sports competitions, practiced diplomacy, formed alliances, and fought wars against each other as enemies and as allies against the Persian Empire. International relations in that period in some ways looks similar to what it is today, but, of course, the modern international system also looks very different. Today's nation-states operate in a global system of interaction. Goods, technology, and money change hands with the click of a mouse rather than with the launch of a sailing ship. States still fight wars, but the destructive capacity of modern weapons, especially nuclear weapons, introduces a strong element of caution into how states resolve conflicts with each other. Non-state actors, such as global corporations, environmental advocacy groups, and criminal and terrorist networks cross borders and share the stage with countries and their governments.

This book introduces you to the fascinating and complex world of international relations. The best way to begin to acquire a solid knowledge of this field is to master some basic terms and concepts that are used to describe international relations and foreign policy and to learn how to employ the levels-of-analysis framework for organizing and understanding arguments and ideas about international relations. Second and most importantly, we believe you can begin to master the complexity of international relations by exploring what we call enduring questions. These are questions which have engaged and challenged generations of international relations scholars and students – large,

challenging questions that have stood the test of time. Finally, we believe it is critically important that you be able to make connections about international relations that relate the past and the present, theory and practice, and aspiration and reality, and be able to view the world from multiple perspectives. We will explain what we mean by each of these defining features of our book as we introduce you in this chapter to the field of international relations.

**Source:** © Cousin_Avi–Fotolia.com.

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

→ Understand why international relations matter.

→ Apply a basic vocabulary and the levels-of-analysis analytical device in international relations and foreign policy.

→ Analyze the use of enduring questions in international relations.

→ Recognize the need to make connections between international relations theory and practice, the past and present, and aspirations and reality in order to develop a better understanding of international relations.

→ Evaluate the significance of viewing world politics from multiple perspectives.

## *Chapter Contents*

## International Relations are Part of Everyday Life

If you happen to be one of the many people – over one billion worldwide as of 2013 – to own an iPhone, you are probably familiar with Apple, the famous American computer company. Although the iPhone was designed by Apple in California, its components are produced all over the world. A South Korean company, Samsung, manufactures the applications processor. The display module and touch screen come from Japan. Infineon, a German-based company, produces the camera module. The various components are sent to China, where a company named Foxconn assembles and ships phones to customers around the globe (Xing and Detert 2010). As a consumer, you benefit directly from this global network of trade: the mobile phone you buy and the service you receive are more affordable than if your phone had been built and serviced all in one country. Some East Asian, European, and American workers share in the benefits of this trade as well, since the more phones that are sold, the more US-, European-, and East Asian-based jobs are created to produce and service them.

The stakes in international relations sometimes involve conflict and war rather than, or alongside, trade and mutual economic benefit. On September 11, 2001, members of the Al Qaeda transnational terrorist organization hijacked two airliners and crashed them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Al Qaeda hijackers flew a third plane into the Pentagon in the nation's capital. They commandeered a fourth plane that was also headed for Washington, but due to a passenger uprising failed to keep control of the plane and crashed it in a field in Pennsylvania. Over 3,000 people died during the September 11 attacks, including several hundred police and fire workers who tried to save the initial victims in the Twin Towers. These attacks prompted a US invasion of Afghanistan, whose Taliban government had been giving refuge to Al Qaeda, and served as one justification for a second US war, against Iraq, in 2003. It also prompted US special-forces and spy operations against Al Qaeda in numerous countries, including one in Pakistan in May 2011 in which its leader, Osama bin Laden, was killed. The conflict between the United States and Al Qaeda has continued, and in 2012 Al Qaeda operatives attacked the US consulate in Bengazi, Libya, killing four Americans including the US ambassador to that North African country.

The war on terrorism has been a prominent part of America's recent engagement with international relations. But taking a longer view, we should recognize that in relative terms Americans have been among the peoples of the world least affected by foreign wars. Consider that, for example, in the Vietnam War, one of the longest and costliest wars fought by the United States, 58,000 Americans were killed and about 300,000 were wounded. However America's adversary, North Vietnam, suffered 1.1 million dead and 600,000 wounded. In 1995, the Vietnamese government estimated that 2 million civilians in the North and another 2 million in the South also died during the war. Vietnamese casualties represented a shocking 13 percent of the total population of that country.

Consider that the citizens of France and Germany treated each other as adversaries for almost 100 years. These two countries fought a major war against each other in 1870, and were the principal combatants in two devastating world wars, between 1914 and 1918 and again between 1939 and 1945. It is not surprising that, for many decades, the French and German people regarded each other with suspicion and resentment

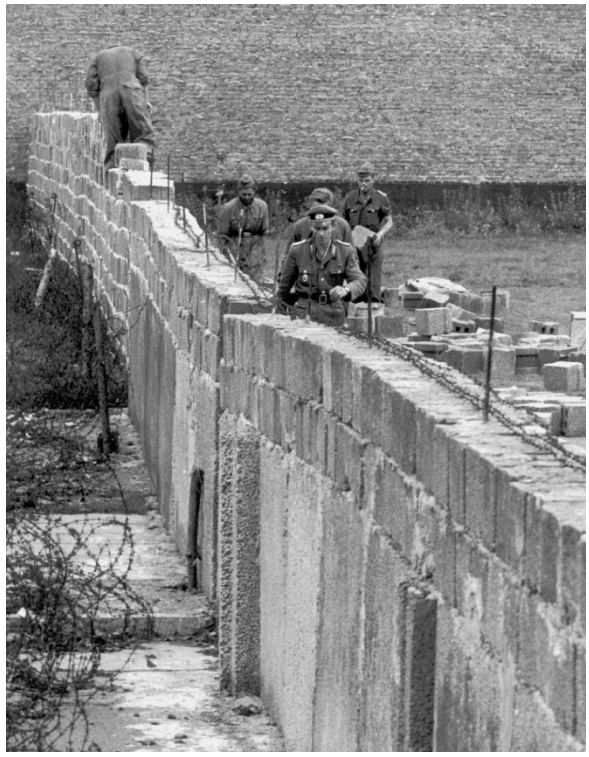
and considered each other mortal enemies. But, since 1945, the French and German governments have cooperated with each other politically and economically in what is today called the **European Union** (EU) – a group of 28 European countries that abide by common laws and practices – and militarily in an alliance called the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO), which requires the United States and its European partners to come to the defense of each other in the event of a military attack against one of them. Today, war between France and Germany is almost unthinkable, and in 2012 the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its historical accomplishments. French and German citizens freely cross each other's borders and work in each other's factories and offices. The Germans and French even gave up their long-standing national currencies, the Deutschmark and the French franc; beginning in 2002, they have shared, along with fifteen other European Union members, a common currency called the **euro**. Today, members of the European Union worry very little about war with each other and very much about economic instability as they struggle to recover from a financial crisis that has threatened their own prosperity and that of the global economy.

**Euro**: the common currency of the Euro zone.

**European Union**: A group of 28 European countries that abide by common laws and practices.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**: A defense pact formed in 1949 between the US, Britain, and several other western European states. It has since expanded and is still very active today.

International relations involve not just war and the movement of goods and money across borders, but also the ability of people themselves to move across those borders. If you are not a citizen, national governments require you to have special permission (for example, in Australia an employer-sponsored 457 visa, or in the United States, an identification document commonly known as a green card) before you may legally work in their country. Even visiting different countries simply as a tourist often requires you to request permission in the form of a visa from the respective governments of those countries. The citizens of some countries have an easier time crossing borders than do the citizens of others; in 2012, for example, citizens of Sweden and Finland could enter 168 other countries without needing a visa, while Chinese citizens could only enter 41 countries and Pakistani citizens only 32 countries visa-free (Henley 2012). Today many Americans with sufficient means take for granted their ability to travel just about anywhere outside the United States. But one country they cannot visit without special permission from their own government is Cuba, because the US government has long attempted to punish Cuba's communist regime by isolating it. This is a relatively small inconvenience



◀ **Photo 1.1 The Berlin Wall, 1961**

East German policemen heightening the Berlin Wall, September 9, 1961. Armed forces erected the Wall on August 13, 1961 to stop people fleeing from East to West Berlin.

**Source**: PA Images.

**Iron Curtain**: A term coined by British leader Winston Churchill to capture the profound political and human divisions separating the western and eastern parts of Europe.

**Berlin Wall**: The wall that divided Soviet East Berlin from American, French, and British West Berlin during the Cold War, until its fall in 1989.

**International governmental organizations (IGOs)**: Organizations that states join to further their political or economic interests.

**National leaders**: Individuals who hold executive offices as a result of which they are entitled to make foreign policy and military decisions on behalf of their countries.

compared to what international relations imposed on people living in Eastern Europe between the late 1940s and late 1980s. During that time an **iron curtain**, a term coined by British leader Winston Churchill to capture the profound political and human divisions, separated the western and eastern parts of Europe. The communist governments of Eastern European countries tried to prevent their citizens from traveling to the West because they feared people would find freedom so attractive that they would not return home. The eastern and western parts of today's German capital city, Berlin, were divided by the **Berlin Wall**. East Berliners trying to escape across the wall to West Berlin were routinely shot by East German guards.

International relations powerfully affect our everyday lives. There are 196 countries in the world today (that includes Taiwan, which operates as a country but which is also claimed by the People's Republic of China as a part of its own country) and they interact with each other over a wide variety of political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific issues. They also interact with an array of **international governmental organizations** (IGOs) – organizations that states join to further their political or economic interests – such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), World Trade Organization (WTO), and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Countries also deal regularly with private actors whose work crosses borders, such as the US-based conglomerate General Electric, the Chinese-based computer company Lenovo, the international health crisis response team Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), and transnational political and social movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the World Social Forum. Your task is to gain an understanding of those relationships, and so we begin by laying some of the necessary foundations.

**▼ Photo 1.2 The Berlin Wall, 1989**

Germans from East and West standing on the Berlin Wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate, November 10, 1989, one day after the wall opened.

**Source**: PA Images.

## Building Blocks for the Study of International Relations

In this section we provide you with some foundational material for the study of international relations. We start with some basic terminology that will help you become familiar with discussions in the field. Then we introduce the levels-of-analysis device which helps scholars and students organize their ideas and arguments about international relations.

### Basic Concepts for International Relations

The initial step is to identify the fundamental actors in international relations. While the question of which actors in international relations are most important is controversial and will be taken up in many of the chapters that follow, for now we can identify at least three important classes of key actors in international relations.

First, we are interested in individual **national leaders**. By national leaders we mean individuals, like the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, or the Chancellor of Germany, who hold executive offices as a result of which they are entitled to make foreign policy and military decisions on

behalf of their countries. We also include those individuals, such as the Russian Defense Minister or the Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, who as a result of the offices they hold give counsel to and implement the decisions of their respective core executive leaders, like the Russian or Brazilian President.

Second, we are interested in states. In international relations we often say 'India' has this or that foreign policy interest, or that 'China' has this or that strategy toward 'Russia,' or that 'Venezuela' is making use of this or that foreign policy instrument to attain some goal. India, China, Russia, and Venezuela are among the 196 states in the current international system. But what, in general, is a state? It is a political entity with two key features: a piece of territory with reasonably well defined borders, and political authorities who enjoy **sovereignty**, that is, they have an effective and recognized capacity to govern residents within the territory and an ability to establish relationships with governments that control other states.

**State**: A political entity with two key features: a piece of territory with reasonably well-defined borders, and political authorities who enjoy sovereignty.

**Sovereignty**: The effective and recognized capacity to govern residents within a given territory and an ability to establish relationships with governments that control other states.

The state should be distinguished from another key international relations actor, the **nation**. States are political units, while nations are collections of people who share a common culture, history, or language. The term **nation-state** refers to a political unit inhabited by people sharing common culture, history, or language. Although nation-state is used frequently in international relations literature, often as a synonym for country, pure nation-states are rare: possible examples might include Albania, where over 95 percent of the population consists of ethnic Albanians, or Iceland, which has a language and culture found only on that island. Nations often transcend the boundary of any single state; members of the Chinese nation, for example, are found in mainland China and in Taiwan, but also in Singapore, Malaysia, and other parts of Southeast Asia. Similarly, states often contain more than one nation. The former Soviet Union included not only Russians but Armenians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Latvians, and Lithuanians, among others.

**Nation**: Collections of people who share a common culture, history, or language.

**Nation-state**: A political unit inhabited by people sharing common culture, history, or language.

Third, to understand international relations we often want to analyze **non-state actors**. These are actors others than states that operate within or across state borders with important consequences for international relations. Multinational enterprises such as the US-based soft drink company Coca Cola, the Netherlands-based electronics firm Phillips, and the Japan-based conglomerate Mitsubishi are non-state actors with important business operations all across the globe. The Catholic Church and the US National Council of Churches are both active around the world and are thus important non-state actors; and, with radically different aims and methods, several criminal and terrorist organizations, such as mafias or Al Qaeda, are consequential non-state actors.

**Non-state actors**: Actors others than states that operate within or across state borders with important consequences for international relations..

What do these actors want and how do they get what they want in international relations? Here it is useful to distinguish interests, strategies, objectives (or goals), and policy instruments.

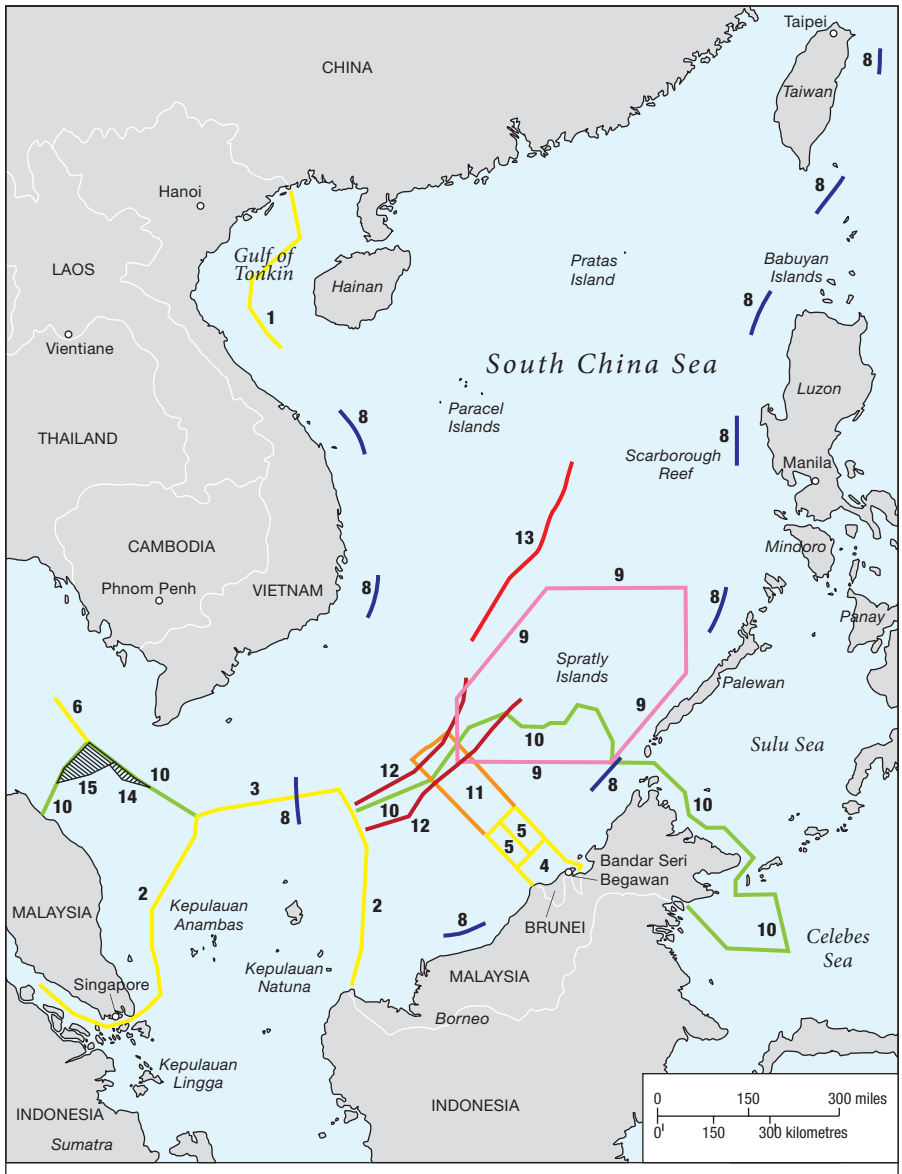
When we say that a state (or nation-state) has a particular **interest**, we mean that the state wishes either to maintain or attain some condition of the world sufficiently important that it is willing to pay meaningful costs. For example, in recent years, the Chinese government has revealed that it has an interest in attaining sovereignty over the South China Sea, perhaps because that area may be rich in oil and natural gas. In making that claim it has come into conflict with numerous neighbors such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, for they too claim sovereignty over parts of that sea space (see Map 1.1). Not surprisingly, the South China Sea has become a potential flash-point in world politics.

**Interest**: Some condition of the world sufficiently important that a state is willing to pay meaningful costs to attain or maintain it.

**▶ Map 1.1 A National Interest: China and its Claims to the South China Sea**

This map shows why the South China Sea is an area of geopolitical dispute in the current international system. The region is potentially rich in energy resources and several countries, including China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, claim that the territory falls within their jurisdiction. In recent years China has employed a variety of diplomatic and coercive tactics to try to convince other countries that they should recognize China's claim.

**Source**: US State Department. See also US Energy Information Administration, 'Country Analysis Brief: South China Sea', February 2013.




*Agreed maritime boundaries*

1. China–Vietnam Gulf of Tonkin boundary (2000)
2. Indonesia–Malaysia continental shelf boundary (1969)
3. Indonesia–Vietnam continental shelf boundary (2003)
4. Brunei–Malaysia Orders of Council boundary (1959)
5. Malaysian oil blocks ceded to Brunei (2010)
6. Thailand–Vietnam EEZ/continental shelf boundary (1996)

*Declared limits*

8. China/Taiwan undefined claim (1946)
9. Philippine Malayaan Island Group limits (1978)
10. Malaysia continental shelf limits (1979)
11. Brunei limits (1988)
12. Malaysia–Vietnam joint extended continental shelf (ECS) submission (2009)

*Areas*

14. Malaysia–Vietnam continental shelf Defined Area (1992)
15. Malaysia–Thailand Joint Development Area (1979)

Pratas Island: administered by Taiwan
Paracel Islands: occupied by China, claimed by Vietnam
Spratly Islands: claimed entirely by China, Taiwan and Vietnam
Scarborough Reef: claimed by Philippines, China and Taiwan

How do states promote or defend an interest? They do so by the development and implementation of a **strategy**. A strategy essentially connects means to an end. If China's ultimate **objective** or goal is to attain sovereignty over the South China Sea, part of its strategy might be to induce such countries as Vietnam and the Philippines to renounce their own claims over the South China Sea, and to recognize Chinese sovereignty over the area. China will rely on **policy instruments** to help it obtain that goal. Policy instruments can take a variety of forms, and we will examine some in detail in Chapter 4. In the South China Sea case, China thus far has used multiple policy instruments, including diplomacy, propaganda, and low levels of military force.

**Strategy**: The overarching connection of means to an end for a state. A strategy aims at a policy objective, and outlines what policy instruments will be used to attain that objective.

**Objective**: A state's goal in IR, generally the attainment or maintenance of some interest.

**Policy instrument**: A tool used by a state's government to attain its interests. Policy instruments come in many forms, divided into persuasive and coercive forms.

## Levels of Analysis in International Relations

We now have a basic language for the description of the actions and interactions of states. Many more important terms will be introduced in the chapters that follow. You will also encounter many different arguments, ideas and theories about international relations. **Theories** help us understand *why* something occurred in international relations, and the likelihood that it will happen again. As you will see in subsequent chapters, there are many such theories, and debates over how useful or valid particular theories are. How do we keep track of these different arguments, ideas, and theories? How do we compare and contrast them to one another so that we can get a better sense of each and assess their relative strengths and weaknesses?

**Theory**: A group of ideas intended to explain some empirical phenomenon.

We employ a particular and well regarded analytical device for the classification of arguments about international relations. This device is called the **levels-of-analysis** framework. It emerged from the writings of two scholars, Kenneth Waltz and J. David Singer (Waltz 1959; Singer 1961). It is based on the view that a writer who puts forward any theory or explanation about international relations has had to make choices about which actors and causal processes are to be emphasized. Put differently, analysts of international relations have to decide *where to look* for explanations. The choices usually lead them to concentrate on actors and processes that are principally situated in one of three different categories, or levels of analysis.

**Levels of analysis**: Different ways of looking for answers to questions in international relations, generally grouped into the individual, state, and international levels.

Many explanations and arguments in international relations focus on actors and processes that are situated at the **individual level of analysis**. Scholars who work at this level focus their attention on the impact of individual decision makers (like Presidents and their main advisors) on international relations and foreign policy. There are several classes of individual-level theories about foreign policy and the causes of war, which we will discuss in detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Some scholars believe, for example, that to understand the causes of World War II requires you to focus on the personal experiences and ambitions of Adolf Hitler, the dictator who led Germany into war.

**Individual level of analysis**: A level of analysis focusing on the impact of individual decision makers (like presidents and their main advisors) on international relations and foreign policy.

Other studies at the individual level of analysis have focused on the psychological capacity of national leaders and their top officials, and in particular on how limitations on how human beings process information, especially in moments of stress and crisis, can lead to errors in judgment. When national leaders make these types of errors, it could lead to diplomatic crises and even war. We will also see that most feminist theories of international relations are cast at the individual level of analysis: these works, we will see in Chapters 3 and 5, propose that the biochemistry or upbringing of males often leads them to be more prone to risk taking and violence, including the choosing of military solutions to diplomatic conflicts of interest.

**State level of analysis**: A level of analysis focusing on the particular political or economic characteristics of countries or states.

**Democratic peace theory**: The theory that democracies are unusually peaceful toward each other. Democracies, or republics, are understood as states that have elected governments, a free press, private property, and the rule of law.

The **state level of analysis** comprises arguments that focus on the particular political or economic characteristics of countries or states. A good example of a state level-of-analysis argument is **democratic peace theory**, a set of ideas developed by many international relations scholars including Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett (Doyle 1997; Russett 1993). That argument suggests that what states do abroad, including whether they get into conflict with one another, is heavily influenced by the domestic political institutions of the country. States with democratic governments, the theory suggests, are very unlikely to fight wars with one another, for reasons we will explore in Chapters 3 and 5. Another state level-of-analysis theory we will examine later in this chapter concerns economic systems: a long-standing argument by critics of capitalism is that states with capitalist economic systems at home are more likely to get into wars with one another than would be true if those same states were organized according to different principles. We will also encounter other types of argument about economic policy at the state level of analysis. The governments of countries in which multinational businesses exert a lot of influence, for example, might pursue strategies of open trade and investment because those policies support the financial interests of powerful companies.

**International level of analysis**: A level of analysis focusing on the international system

**International system**: States and non-state actors, taken collectively, co-existing and interacting at some point in history.

**Anarchy**: The fact that in international relations there is no centralized authority, no government of the whole world to adjudicate disputes among states and protect weak ones from strong ones.

Finally, many arguments about world politics emphasize the **international level of analysis**. Countries do not exist in isolation; they interact with each other. Taken collectively, states and non-state actors co-existing and interacting at any point in history form an **international system**. That system has its own features and characteristics which themselves might strongly influence how countries behave. For example, many political scientists emphasize anarchy, or the fact that in international relations there is no centralized authority, no government of the whole world to adjudicate disputes among states and protect weak ones from strong ones. As we will discuss later, the United Nations might be seen as an imperfect attempt to take on some of the functions of the non-existent world government.

Here is a simple way to remember the differences across levels of analysis. Ask yourself this fundamental question about international relations: what causes war? Scholars working at the individual level might answer that war is caused by overly aggressive or ambitious leaders. Some analysts place the blame (or give credit) for the 2003 Iraq War on the personal calculations of US President George W. Bush. Scholars who place their 'analytical bets' at the second level provide a different answer; they argue that wars are caused by certain types of states, or by powerful groups within states (like oil companies), regardless of the particular personal ambitions or characteristics of their leaders. Scholars working at the international system level might say that it doesn't matter whether leaders are good or bad, whether states are democratic or non-democratic, or whether big companies are politically powerful or not. What matters for these scholars is the international situation in which states find themselves. Lacking any centralized governing authority, any state at any time could start a war because it feels threatened by other states, needs more resources or territory than it already has, or has some other particular reason to use force against some other state in the system.

None of these arguments or theories is necessarily right or wrong. Each would need to be tested logically and against the evidence that the past and present of international relations offers to us. The important first step, aided by the levels of analysis, is to categorize arguments and understand where they are coming from. For that reason, in each chapter that follows we employ special features to remind you to think about arguments,

theories, and ideas with the aid of the levels-of-analysis framework. After every major section of each chapter, we use a box to summarize the material you have just learned from the perspective of different levels. We use simple icons in these boxes to represent the different levels visually. In some cases these boxes will display information at each of the three levels; in other cases, depending on the nature of the material covered, we will display information only with regard to one or two of the levels.

It is also important to recognize that the levels of analysis are not isolated from each other. Often a good explanation will combine or integrate ideas from different levels. For example, why do the United States and European Union have such close economic ties to each other? Part of the answer might be found at the international level: the trans-Atlantic partners are military allies, and close military cooperation encourages and reinforces close economic cooperation. Part of the explanation may be found at the state level as well: the United States and countries of the European Union are capitalist democracies with strong business sectors that operate across borders and thus have a mutual interest in open trade and investment.

▲ **Photo 1.3 Adolf Hitler**

Adolf Hitler, the head of Germany's Nazi Party, was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and quickly transformed German's Weimar Republic into a dictatorship. Hitler felt Germany had been humiliated by the victorious Western powers after World War I, and he believed the German people were a superior breed that required 'living space' through territorial conquest. Many view his aggressive foreign policy as the key cause of World War II.

**Source**: PA Images.

Although in this text we focus on three basic levels of analysis, scholars sometimes make finer distinctions that incorporate additional levels. Some, for example, highlight a regional level situated analytically between the state level and the international level (Tow 2009). Regional characteristics – for example, the existence or absence of well-established regional institutions like the EU – might help us to understand why some parts of the world are more prone to conflict than are others.

International relations are complicated, and what actually happens within them often blurs or cross-cuts the neat dividing lines between different levels. The levels-of-analysis framework can never fully capture the complexity of activity on the world stage. However it is a useful analytical tool and a starting point for helping us to make sense of that complexity.

The question 'what causes war?' is a large and important one in the study of international relations. In fact, it is what we call an **enduring question**. Enduring questions cast powerful light on some of the most important subjects in our field. In the next section, we introduce this additional and crucial analytical tool that we use to organize the material of this book.

## Recognizing Enduring Questions

It is natural to associate the study of international relations with current events. Daily and weekly news outlets bombard us all with reports on whether Israelis and Palestinians will be able to make peace, whether Iran will acquire nuclear weapons and how the international community will react if it does, whether the United States and China will maintain harmonious relations with each other, whether African countries

**Enduring questions**: Questions which have engaged and challenged generations of international relations scholars and students – large, challenging questions that have stood the test of time. This book is organized around these questions.

will prosper or face food shortages, and numerous other issues. This textbook will help you make sense of current international events. But international relations, and the effort to understand them, range far beyond analyses of the politics of the moment.

The *modern* international system dates from the creation of nation-states and the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2. But we can trace the systematic attempt to study international politics back considerably further, at least to the writings of a classic Greek thinker named Thucydides. Thucydides was an Athenian general who fought in the great Peloponnesian War, a conflict between two powerful Greek city-states, Athens and Sparta, and their respective allies, between 431 and 404 BCE.

But Thucydides was far more important as an observer and reporter than as a participant. He wrote a detailed account of this great war, and in addition to examining how it was fought and ended, he sought to understand why the war began, and what were its consequences. In writing this analysis, he said, 'My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever' (Thucydides, 1954 edition: 48). Although the term was not used commonly back then, Thucydides was in fact acting as a political scientist. He was interested not just in reporting on the war of his day, but in understanding more generally the problem of warfare, or why humans organize themselves into groups and engage in armed conflicts. He wanted to understand not just the Delian League, an alliance of city-states led by Athens, but why states enter into agreements with each other and why those agreements break down. Thucydides used the experience of the Greek city-states to ponder the ethical issue of whether 'might makes right,' or whether the more powerful groups in human society have the right to govern the weaker. He drew upon Athens' failed expedition to Sicily near the end of the war to question why powerful states make foolish errors in international relations, overextending themselves in ways that ultimately lead to the collapse of their own position of power. Thucydides wrote about a particular set of events at a particular time, but his larger goal was to illuminate what he considered to be the core problems of international relations.

Our book proceeds in a similar spirit. We believe that the best way to unravel the complexity of international relations is to focus on what we call enduring questions. Enduring questions in international relations are those questions that share the common characteristics of being recurring, unresolved, and consequential. Take, for example, the question we noted earlier, 'what causes war?' That question is *recurring*: it was as relevant in the city-state politics of ancient Greece, the dynastic struggles of early modern Europe, and the colonial wars of nineteenth-century Africa as it is in the politics of the contemporary global system. It is also an *unresolved* question. Some scholars believe wars occur because human beings are inherently evil. Some think war results because there are not enough scarce resources (like oil) to satisfy everyone's desires. Others argue that certain kinds of states are more war prone than others. There are many other reasonable answers, as you will find in Chapters 3 and 5. Scholars have made good progress addressing this enduring question, but have not resolved it to everyone's satisfaction. Finally, enduring questions are *consequential*. They matter greatly to people, states, and the international system as a whole. Solving the problem of why war occurs would potentially affect the lives of tens of millions of people.

We focus on enduring questions for several reasons. First, enduring questions allow us to separate what is significant and foundational in the study of global politics from


**◀ Map 1.2 Greece in the Era of the Peloponnesian War**

Four hundred years before Christ, Greek city-states interacted with each other as members of a local international system. Sparta was a powerful city-state on land, and Athens was a seafaring city-state. The Greek city-states also interacted and battled with outsiders, most importantly the Persian Empire, which was organized on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea.

what is trendy or simply the 'news of the day.' The insights you gain in an international relations class should remain relevant over long periods of time, rather than expiring when the issues that were hot topics when you took the class are no longer in the news. By now you are aware that there are dozens or even hundreds of particular events unfolding in the international arena at any given time. The enduring question approach offers a navigational strategy, a series of well-worn paths to help you make your way through the maze of information and events.

The second reason we focus on enduring questions is that it helps us more effectively understand the development and current status of the study of international relations. Focusing on the core problems in the field reveals what we know and do not know about international relations. In Chapter 3, we introduce the major schools of thought in the study of international relations. Each of these schools, or paradigms, is based on different assumptions about how the world works, and offers different interpretations and explanations of the knottiest problems in international politics.

## Examples of Enduring Questions

There is no set number of enduring questions and no standard list on which everyone might agree. Different scholars would likely vary to some degree in the questions they consider to be the most enduring in the study of international relations. We have already mentioned what we consider to be one enduring question, the question of why states fight wars. Here are several other examples of enduring questions you will encounter in the chapters that follow. Box 1.1 provides a list of the particular enduring

## 1.1 Enduring Questions in International Relations

| | |
|---|---|
| Chapter 2 | How did a fragmented world become a global, integrated system of states for which order is an ongoing problem? |
| Chapter 3 | How do theoretical traditions in international relations differ on how to understand actors and their behavior on the global stage? |
| Chapter 4 | What factors most influence the foreign policies of states? |
| Chapter 5 | Why is war a persistent feature of international relations? |
| Chapter 6 | What factors make it more likely that states will resolve their differences and avoid war? |
| Chapter 7 | How have weapons of mass destruction, and in particular nuclear weapons, changed the practice of international relations? |
| Chapter 8 | How do politics shape the global economy? |
| Chapter 9 | How do governments use international economic relations to further national political objectives? |
| Chapter 10 | How does participation in the world economy help or hinder the economic development of poorer countries? |
| Chapter 11 | Can the state continue to overcome challenges to its authority? |
| Chapter 12 | How does the natural environment influence international relations? |
| Chapter 13 | Will the international system undergo fundamental change in the future? |

questions that we use to organize and motivate the study of international relations chapter by chapter.

How is a stable order among countries – one in which they avoid major conflict with each other – maintained in international relations? Thucydides observed that a key cause of the Peloponnesian War was the rise of Athenian power and the fear it caused in Sparta. As we discuss in Chapter 2, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a set of German city-states unified into a single powerful German nation-state which, in turn, challenged the dominant international position of Great Britain. The competition between these two countries contributed to the outbreak of World War I. But challenges to the great powers do not always end in war. Between 1880 and 1950, the United States increased its power and eventually overtook Great Britain. Did the two change positions peacefully because they were like-minded democratic allies, or because they perceived greater threats than each other? Today, new powers are rising, including China, India, and Brazil. We consider their prospects in Chapter 10. An understanding of why new powers rise and why existing powers accommodate them, restrain them, or fight wars with them is critical for assessing the prospects for peace and stability in the current and emerging international system.

To what extent have nuclear weapons fundamentally changed international politics? Before the nuclear era, pre-1945, the most powerful states settled their fundamental differences by fighting major, costly wars like World Wars I and II. But, as we will discuss in Chapter 7, nuclear weapons are so destructive that if two well-armed powers used them, they would likely destroy each other so thoroughly that no one could claim victory in a meaningful sense. It is remarkable that since 1945, the world's great powers have not fought each other in a major war. Is this because of nuclear weapons, or some other reason? What about conflicting states with smaller nuclear arsenals, or two states with nuclear arsenals of radically different sizes; are they more likely to be tempted to use them against each other? Even if countries with well-established governments do not use nuclear weapons, we might be concerned that non-

state actors, such as terrorist groups, might be more prone to use them if they managed to acquire them. It is harder to retaliate against a shadowy terrorist group than a country with an obvious population and territory. The existence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose an enduring problem for international politics, and the significance and implications of such weapons for diplomacy and warfare constitute enduring questions for students of international politics.

In later chapters we introduce you to **international political economy (IPE)**, which is the subfield of international relations that seeks to understand how politics and economics interact and shape one another in the international domain. In particular, we introduce you to enduring questions in the field of IPE, such as: Why are global economic relations sometimes characterized by cooperation and prosperity and, at other times, by conflict and economic deprivation? For about 200 years (1650–1850), the governments of European great powers tried to protect their own economies from what they viewed as the disruptive effects of international trade. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, these same governments were cooperating economically, trading more intensely with each other, investing in each other's economies, and connecting the European economies with economies in other parts of the world. The result was an increase in global prosperity, yet one in which some countries and groups within them benefited far more than others. But this first great age of **globalization**, or the process and attainment of heightened cross-border contacts through the movement of trade, money, and people, was brought to an end by the onset of World War I, between 1914 and 1918. After World War I, the leading states tried to resuscitate the global economy, and made some progress toward that end during the mid-to-late 1920s. But the era of global economic recovery was aborted by what came to be known as the Great Depression of 1929–33, during which there was a sharp, sustained contraction of economic activity, and a corresponding increase in unemployment. With major countries like the United States, Britain, France, and Germany closing their national markets to international competitors in a failed attempt to ward off the Great Depression, international economic relations became a source of conflict that eventually contributed to the outbreak of World War II.

**International Political Economy (IPE)**: The subfield of international relations that seeks to understand how politics and economics interact and shape one another in the international domain.

**Globalization**: The ongoing process of international economic and technological integration, made possible by advances in transportation and communication.

Today, the world economy is in the midst of a second great era of globalization, as goods, capital, technology, and ideas move relatively freely across international borders. The modern era of globalization has contributed to unprecedented levels of economic wealth but has also raised serious problems of inequality in developing nations and older industrial countries like the United States and Britain. The rapid movement of money across borders has contributed to financial crises such as the one that began in 2008. Some observers believe that globalization has a momentum that cannot be stopped, making a return to a world of economic conflicts and depression highly unlikely. Others see a prosperous but troubled world economy, whose political foundations are sufficiently fragile to make a global economic collapse a cause for concern. In Chapters 8, 9, and 10 we will explain how the world economy works and why global economic cooperation is important to achieve, yet difficult to sustain.

Why are states the central actors in world politics, and will they remain so? In Chapter 2, we will explain how the state and the nation-state system came into existence, and how it has preserved itself and expanded over time. Later, in Chapters 11 and 13, we will take up the question of whether and how the state system will persist as it faces challenges from non-state actors utilizing modern technology and communications.

Using enduring questions, along with the levels of analysis, as organizing frameworks will help to provide a path through the maze of modern global issues. In the next section, we introduce another important device to guide you through international relations – the ability to make a variety of analytical connections.

## Making Connections

A thorough understanding of international relations includes the exploration of regional and global context, common and differing interests among actors, and causal relationships that can affect outcomes. This kind of critical thinking requires that you make three types of connections in your study of the issues: between *theory and practice*, *past and present*, and *aspiration and reality*. You also must be able to identify and appreciate how different leaders, governments, and perhaps even whole nations can have differing perspectives on the same question.

Because we believe these two organizing themes, making connections and recognizing different perspectives, are so important to an understanding of international relations, we emphasize them consistently throughout this book. In each subsequent chapter you will find five boxed features. Three of these features will help you make connections between theory and practice, past and present, and aspiration and reality. Two of them highlight different perspectives across individuals, groups, or countries on an important historical or contemporary international issue, and across theories of international relations which differ over how best to explain a significant international event.

### Connecting Theory and Practice

All students of international relations need to appreciate the links between theory and practice. As we suggested earlier, theories help us to describe and explain the world. They are analytical devices that make assumptions, put forward causal arguments, and offer predictions about the workings of the international arena. Theories are usually not completely right or wrong, but may be more or less useful. Any particular theory might be useful for some time, until it is disproved by new evidence or overtaken by a better theory that someone develops. In the sixteenth century, the Polish-born scientist Copernicus gave us a new and (after some of his supporters had the misfortune of being burned at the stake) better theory of astronomy. Using observations and mathematical calculations, he theorized that the sun was the center of the universe and the earth moved around it, challenging the long-standing geocentric theory that placed the earth and, by implication, human beings at the center of the universe.

The creation and testing of theories is an important part of any scientific enterprise. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, theories designed to explain how world politics works are usually grouped within broad schools of thought such as realism, liberalism, Marxism, and constructivism. Proponents within each school make a set of assumptions about what is really important, or what matters most, in international relations. Realists, for example, tend to emphasize that states use their power to pursue interests within a context of anarchy, in which no authoritative world government resolves disputes or compels the redistribution of resources from rich to poor states. Nation-states are ultimately on their own. Liberal thinkers see certain types of states as more con-

flict-prone than others, and also emphasize that economic interdependence brings states together and encourages peace and cooperation. Marxist thinkers view a state's economic system as the ultimate engine of its foreign relations, believing that the behavior of a capitalist state in the world arena is driven by the needs of its economic actors for markets and resources. Constructivist thinkers stress that ideas about how the world works shape or 'construct' international politics as much as money or armies do.

None of these approaches or the theories associated with them is a clear winner in explaining the complicated world of international relations. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, and its scholarly proponents and detractors. Although the realist approach became dominant after World War II, today many scholars find its assumptions and theories unsatisfying. Scholars of international relations approach their field from a wide variety of perspectives (Lebow and Risse-Kappen 1995). Part of the excitement of studying international relations is to participate in this ongoing contest of arguments and theories as we try to make sense of the world around us. As a student, you should be intellectually open to, but critical of, all theories, including those seemingly favored by your text book authors (who in their professional writings frequently disagree with each other!). Beginning in Chapter 3, in each chapter we use a boxed feature to showcase the ongoing conversation among different theoretical traditions in international relations.

One nice example of an international relations theory is Vladimir Lenin's theory of imperialism and war. We wouldn't normally consider Lenin a political scientist; he was the revolutionary leader of the Bolshevik movement that brought communists to power in Russia in 1917, beginning its transformation to the multinational empire of the Soviet Union. But Lenin, like Thucydides, analyzed international relations systematically, as a political scientist. He wrote a short book, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, that contains an elegant theory of international relations.

Lenin was trying to understand **imperialism** – the political domination of weaker countries by stronger ones. He argued that large banks and corporations in Europe and America at the end of the nineteenth century needed new markets to maintain their economic profits. After a while, profits declined at home so they had to look abroad, where capital was scarce and investments were more profitable. In order to capture new markets in places like Africa, the capitalists in Germany prodded the German government to conquer some African territories, giving them exclusive colonial control over the people and resources in these territories. The British banks and corporations got their government to take similar steps, and so did the American, French, and other capitalist powers. Lenin thereby explains the **scramble for Africa**, or the carving up of that continent by colonial powers after 1870, as a function of the simultaneous need of various capitalist countries to expand. When all the existing territory was taken, capitalist countries had no choice but to fight each other in order to redistribute the territory. This is how Lenin explained World War I, which was being fought when the Bolshevik revolution was carried out. Lenin also argued that capitalist countries would keep fighting each other until they exhausted themselves, allowing nation-states with economies that were less profit-driven (that is, socialist states) to take over.

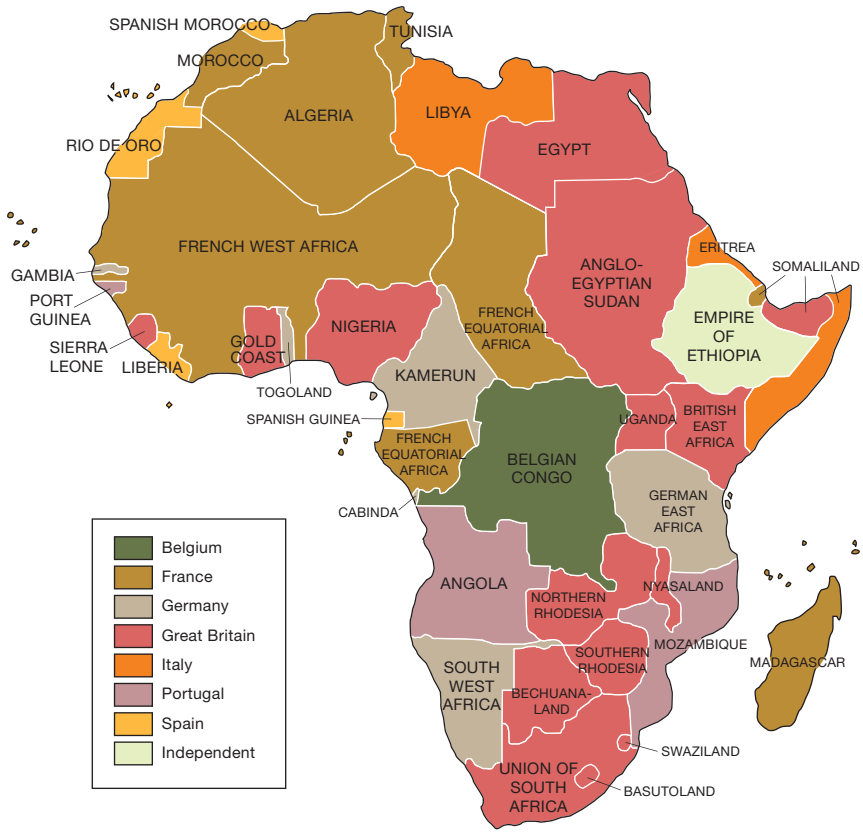
**Imperialism**: A state strategy in which one country conquers foreign lands to turn them into colonies.

**Scramble for Africa**: The carving up of Africa by colonial powers after 1870.

Lenin's theory is important because it tries to make sense of two big outcomes in international relations: imperialism and great-power war. Theories are most useful

**▶ Map 1.3 Imperialism and Colonialism in Africa on the Eve of World War I**

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, European great powers engaged in a 'scramble for Africa'. Their motives were political, strategic and economic; Lenin emphasized the economic motive in crafting his theory of imperialism.




when they are connected to practice, or when they help us understand otherwise puzzling things about the world we observe. In this text, we will not ask you to learn and debate theories for their own sake, even though some political scientists may do that. We are interested in theories in so far as they illuminate the complex world of international relations.

So, how useful is Lenin's theory? Evidence accumulated over time suggests strengths and weaknesses. Many of the overseas investments of the capitalist powers during his era were directed to other capitalist powers, rather than to capital-scarce areas like Africa. This is puzzling for a theory that emphasizes the economic incentives of conquest. Also, historians have come up with a variety of non-economic reasons for late nineteenth-century imperialism, including the propositions that colonies were a source of prestige in a great-power competition and some governments believed they had a civilized obligation to control and modernize what they considered to be backward parts of the world. In other words, there are other reasonable ways to explain what Lenin was trying to explain. Lenin's supporters could say capitalist powers did fight each other in World Wars I and II, as he expected. However, at least thus far they have not exhausted themselves in a series of wars, but have found ways to cooperate with each other – something that Lenin did not expect.

On the other hand, Lenin's theory provided crucial insights that shaped the subsequent study of our field. It has led scholars to explore the 'law of uneven develop-


**◀ Map 1.4 Africa Today**

Today's Africa is composed of sovereign states – there are no longer any colonial powers formally in charge of African territories, as there were in 1914. The impact of colonialism remains, however, in the location of borders, politics and administration, and patterns of economic dependence between African and more powerful countries in Europe and North America.

ment,' or the tendency for countries to grow their power at different rates, thereby putting pressure for change on the international system (Gilpin 1981). It has sparked ongoing debates about the influence of corporations over the foreign policies of capitalist states. And it reminds us that global capitalism is both an engine of growth and its own worst enemy in that it creates periodic crises that threaten international prosperity and peace. Subsequent chapters will explore these themes in more detail; the point for now is that theories need not be completely correct in order to be useful.

## Connecting Past and Present

Why should you care about history? Why seek connections between the past and the present? An understanding of the past affects how people, including policy makers in different countries, think about and act in world politics. For example, in 1930 the United States passed a piece of international trade legislation popularly known as the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act (after its sponsors, Senator Reed Smoot and Representative Willis Hawley). The act raised US tariffs, or taxes, on about 20,000 goods coming into the United States from other countries. This legislation outraged other governments, many of which responded by increasing their own tariff levels. This all happened on the eve of the Great Depression, and many economists believe that the Smoot-Hawley tariff was an important reason why the depression of the 1930s was so deep and catastrophic for the global economy.

After World War II, policy makers in the United States and Western Europe learned the lesson of Smoot-Hawley. They sought freer trade, or lower taxes on goods coming into their countries from abroad. As we shall see in Chapter 8, in difficult economic times countries are often tempted to raise barriers to imported goods in order to protect jobs at home. In the United States and elsewhere, even today, the specter of Smoot-Hawley and the Great Depression is raised in political debates as a warning to resist that temptation because in a global economy, any effort to protect one market usually leads to efforts to protect others, leaving all countries worse off than when they began. In short, understanding the past experience of trade policy, and how it has been interpreted by leaders over the decades, helps give us the proper context for understanding contemporary debates about foreign economic policy and global trade.

Consider a second example. The international relations thinking of a generation of American leaders was shaped by the experience of the Vietnam War of 1965–73. Before that war, the United States seemed willing, in the words of President John F. Kennedy, to 'pay any price, and bear any burden' to defend freedom worldwide. But for almost three decades after Vietnam, the memory of that protracted and costly conflict shaped the reluctance of US policy makers to intervene militarily around the world. The lessons American policy makers drew from the failure in Vietnam included 'don't get bogged down in other people's civil wars,' 'don't fight a war without an exit strategy,' and 'don't fight without the clear support of the American people.' The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that began in 2002 and 2003 were the first since Vietnam in which the United States made a sustained commitment of military force over several years, despite suffering significant casualties. Future historians will almost certainly point to the tragic experience of September 11, 2001 as having created a new historical memory for a generation of Americans, with profound effects on the thinking and behavior of American foreign policy makers.

Different people may draw different lessons from major historical experiences. For some Europeans, the key lesson of fascism's rise during the 1930s was that dictators like Germany's Hitler or Italy's Mussolini needed to be confronted with military force rather than appeased though diplomacy. For other Europeans, the lesson is that economic distress leads to political extremism. Far-left and far-right political movements take power when economic cooperation breaks down and jobs vanish. For some Americans, the lesson of September 11 may be 'better safe than sorry' – it is better to pre-emptively attack a potential enemy now than wait and risk a more costly conflict in the future. This kind of thinking influenced American policy makers who argued in 2002 that the

**▼ Photo 1.4 Vietnam War Memorial**

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was completed in 1982 and declared a national monument in 1984. 'The wall,' as it is commonly known, contains in chronological order the names of over 58,000 US service personnel who gave their lives during the Vietnam War.

**Source**: © vmbfoto – istockphoto.com.

United States should invade Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein before he developed a nuclear weapons capability. For other Americans, the lesson of September 11 might be 'come home America' – the idea that the United States is overextended and its global military presence is creating a target for terrorists worldwide. The point is not to debate the correct lesson, but to appreciate that different understandings of the experiences of the past give us insights into why states behave as they do in the present.

History gives us perspective not only on a particular country's behavior, but on the nature and evolution of the international system as a whole. An understanding of the past helps reveal which features of the present international order are truly novel. However, an appreciation of the past may also reveal remarkable continuities in the practice of international relations alongside large-scale changes. Consider the following news account provided by a contemporary observer of the events:

> The Athenians also made an expedition against the island of Melos. They had thirty of their own ships … The Melians are a colony from Sparta. They had refused to join the Athenian empire like the other islanders, and at first had remained neutral without helping either side … Now [the Athenians], encamped with the above force in Melian territory and, before doing any harm to the land, first of all sent representatives to negotiate.
>
> *Athenians*: We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire and we want you to be spared for the good both of yourselves and of ourselves.
> *Melians*: And how could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?
> *Athenians*: You, by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster; we, by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.
>
> The Melians, left to themselves, reached a conclusion … 'We are not prepared to give up in a short moment the liberty which our city has enjoyed from its foundations for 700 years.' … The Athenian representatives then went back to the army and the Athenian generals, finding that the Melians would not submit, immediately commenced hostilities … Siege operations were carried on vigorously, and the Melians surrendered unconditionally to the Athenians, who put to death all the men of military age whom they took, and sold the women and children as slaves. Melos itself they took over for themselves, sending out later a colony of 500 men.

The observer, of course, was Thucydides, and the events took place around 416 BCE (Thucydides, 1954 edition: 400–08). By today's standards, the diplomacy in this famous 'Melian dialogue' is brutally frank and the resolution – separating the men from women and children, then killing all the men and enslaving the women and children – is a form of barbarism that we associate with the distant past in human civilization. No one came to help the Melians, and Thucydides leads us to believe that what happened over Melos was not out of the ordinary.

Today, slavery and genocide are outlawed by international agreements. Colonialism is a thing of the past. We would expect that other states would react to the kind of raw aggression exhibited by the Athenians with outrage, and victims could reasonably

count on members of the international community to try to deter the aggressor and come to the aid of victims if aggression took place.

But, before proclaiming our modernity and moral superiority too hastily, consider this second news account:

> Bosnian Serb forces had laid siege to the Srebrenica enclave, where tens of thousands of civilians had taken refuge from earlier Serb offensives in north-eastern Bosnia …
>
> They were under the protection of about 600 lightly armed Dutch infantry forces. Fuel was running out and no fresh food had been brought into the enclave since May.
>
> Serb forces began shelling Srebrenica …
>
> The Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic entered Srebrenica… accompanied by Serb camera crews. In the evening, General Mladic summoned Colonel Karremans to a meeting at which he delivered an ultimatum that the Muslims must hand over their weapons to guarantee their lives …
>
> Buses arrived to take women and children to Muslim territory, while the Serbs began separating out all men from age 12 to 77 for 'interrogation for suspected war crimes.' It is estimated that 23,000 women and children were deported in the next 30 hours …
>
> Hundreds of men were held in trucks and warehouses. In the five days after Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica, more than 7,000 Muslim men are thought to have been killed. (BBC News and Rohde, 1997)

As you might have known, the tragic events of Srebrenica took place not in ancient times but in 1995, during the Bosnian war that followed the collapse of the former multinational state of Yugoslavia. Neither the United Nations forces on the ground, the United States, nor members of the European Union came to the aid of the Bosnians, who were separated and slaughtered in much the same way that the Athenians dealt with the Melians more than 2,000 years earlier. Unlike their Athenian counterparts, the Serbian aggressors were put on trial and convicted of various war crimes, including genocide, at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. On March 30, 2010, the Serbian parliament adopted a resolution that condemned and apologized for the war crimes that took place at Srebrenica, and subsequently the President of the Republic of Serbia wrote a public apology as well (Tadec 2010). The norms of the current international system certainly differ from those of the ancient Greek system; what was considered 'normal' practice back then is viewed as reprehensible and even criminal today. Nonetheless, and apology notwithstanding, the

**▼ Photo 1.5 Tragedy in Srebrenica**

A Bosnian woman weeps over her cousin's grave at the Memorial Center, Potocari, near Srebrenica in Bosnia. In July 2013 a mass was held for the burial of 409 newly identified victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

**Source**: PA Images.

exercise of power by political actors in pursuit of their interests was tragically similar in Melos and Srebrenica.

## Connecting Aspiration and Reality

The tragedy of Srebrenica reminds us that there is a profound difference between how the world is and how we might like it to be. It is natural to approach world politics with a particular set of values or aspirations. Different people have different values, and it would be difficult to identify a set of universal values upon which everyone across time, place, and culture would agree. Nonetheless, it is probably fair to assume that most people prefer peace to war and would welcome the eradication of global poverty. Many people believe in some notion of equality for the world's population. Some people believe that countries, especially wealthy or powerful ones, have an obligation not only to their own citizens, but to people living beyond their borders as well.

These values are often frustrated in world politics. War and poverty are all too common. International relationships are characterized by great inequalities in power and wealth. Some people have excellent life opportunities, while others are virtually imprisoned by the difficulty of their circumstances, depending on the country or region they inhabit. The governments of wealthy countries express good intentions to share wealth and combat oppression outside their borders, and they sometimes follow through. But all too often, as we will see in Chapter 10, they fail to meet their commitments on foreign aid to poorer countries. They also often look the other way in the face of human suffering in foreign countries, as evidenced by the world's slow reaction to the humanitarian tragedies in Bosnia and Rwanda during the 1990s, in the Darfur area of Sudan during the early 2000s, and in Syria in 2013.

International relations must, in the first instance, entail the study of the world not as it should be but as it actually is – keeping in mind that scholars and observers may not always agree on what constitutes the world 'as it is.' Our primary concern must be to describe how states actually behave and explain why they behave as they do, even if we find that behavior repulsive from our own political or moral vantage point. Explanation and prescription are separate tasks, and should be treated that way. But they are also connected; understanding why states behave the way they do is a necessary first step for anyone seeking ways to change that behavior. Consider, for example, various explanations for the problem of war. If international relations research shows that democratic states are less likely than non-democratic states to fight wars in general and with each other, then the transformation of non-democratic states into democracies is a worthwhile though potentially difficult strategy in pursuit of peace. But if wars are more likely caused by other factors, such as excessive nationalism, resource scarcities, overpopulation, or competing territorial claims, then different prescriptions are in order.

In this section, we have highlighted three types of connections: between theory and practice, past and present, and aspirations and reality. This book will prompt you to make other connections as well; you will encounter two others regularly in the chapters ahead. One is the connection between international politics and international economics. Although economics is a separate academic discipline from political science, an understanding of international relations requires a familiarity with the basic concepts of economics and the substance of international economic issues. We highlight the interplay of politics and economics in our examination of the history, theory, and practice of international relations. Another important connection is between domestic and international politics. The external or foreign policies of states

are significantly affected by the internal or domestic politics of states. Domestic politics, in turn, are influenced by what happens in the international arena. Any successful student of international relations must also be a student of domestic politics. In Chapter 4, we explore the connections between domestic and international politics by focusing on the determinants and consequences of foreign policy behavior.

Recognizing enduring questions and making connections are critical analytical tools to help guide you through the maze of international relations. In the next section we discuss something equally valuable – the ability to view world politics from multiple perspectives.

## Viewing the World from Different Perspectives

Do we believe the current international order is desirable, or would we like to see it changed? The answer to that question depends critically on who 'we' are. If we are the governing authority and citizens of a rich and powerful country like the United States, we might consider the contemporary international order – where we perceive our own country as at the top of the international hierarchy – as desirable and perhaps just. But from the perspective of countries that lack power or desire more influence, the international order probably looks much less attractive, and also less fair. Perspectives vary across nation-states and within them as well.

It is critical to consider world politics from multiple perspectives. The study of international relations seeks to understand the behavior of states and people across borders, and that behavior is influenced by how people – and collections of people within nation-states – view the international arena and their place within it. Some years ago, the political scientist Graham Allison captured this reality with an important phrase, 'where you stand depends on where you sit' (Allison 1971). Allison was referring to relations between different parts of the US government, but his aphorism applies more widely. In other words, how you think about a particular issue in world politics is likely affected by the particulars of your own situation: whether you are an American, Russian, Egyptian or Indonesian; rich or poor; male or female; and a member of the majority in a country or a racial or ethnic minority.

The same holds true for nation-states. The *national perspective* of a country is affected by a variety of factors, including historical experience. A former great power will view the world differently from a former colony of a great power. The Chinese, who for centuries enjoyed the position of political and cultural leader of Asia, have a different world view than their neighbors, the Vietnamese, who were occupied by and resisted occupations by the Chinese, French, and Americans. The national perspective will also be shaped by racial, ethnic, and religious characteristics; a nation-state like Japan that is relatively homogeneous ethnically will likely have a different perspective on immigration, for example, than a multi-ethnic Indonesia or a nation-state with strongly entrenched religious factions (Christian and Muslim) like Lebanon. Size and relative power shapes perspective; the larger a nation-state is and the more power it enjoys, the more likely it is to try to shape or alter its international environment, instead of simply reacting to it. Geographic position matters as well. Whether a country views the international system as benign or threatening depends at least in part on whether it is landlocked and surrounded by larger states, or situated securely behind natural barriers like oceans or mountain ranges.

In the chapters that follow we will continually remind you of the importance of viewing world politics from multiple perspectives. We begin that process here by drawing your attention to two important features of international relations.

## Recognizing Great-Power Centrism

Sensitivity to multiple perspectives will help you guard against the tendency – a natural one if you happen to live in a wealthy nation such as, for example, the United States or Germany or the United Kingdom today – to view international relations solely or largely from the perspective of the relatively powerful and prosperous. Historically, the so-called great powers receive a lot of attention in the study of international relations because they wield disproportionate influence on the global stage. The United States, in possession of exceptional military and economic resources, finds itself in that position today. Although citizens from other countries do not vote in US elections, they are profoundly affected by the outcome of those elections. An American corporate presence and the influence of American popular culture can be found almost anywhere one travels around the world.

What is wrong with viewing international relations from the perspective of the powerful? Nothing – as long as it is recognized as such and juxtaposed to other perspectives. Americans, just as citizens of any powerful and wealthy country, must recognize, for example, that most of the people in today's world are not American, and the United States is only one of 196 countries in the global system. The rich variation in history, geography, identity, culture, and aspiration that characterizes the global landscape affects international relations. If we proceed from the explicit or even implicit assumption that one country's values, ideals and institutions are universal, or that the rest of the world is simply an imperfect replica of that country, then we are going to miss the critical insights that the study of international relations offers.

This point was driven home – painfully to Americans – in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. One immediate reaction of many ordinary US citizens to these tragic events was to ask 'who are these people, and why do they hate us?' Understanding the answer requires an appreciation of the differences between organized, non-state terrorist entities like Al Qaeda, the much larger group of Muslims living in the Middle East and Southwest Asia who may both admire and resent the United States, but are not drawn to violence to express their sentiment or advance their interests, and non-democratic regimes, like that in Saudi Arabia, who have cooperative relations with the United States but do not command the support of large segments of their own populations. Americans have also come to understand that the United States is resented by some simply because it is so powerful; by others because it represents an all-pervasive, modern consumer culture; or also due to the fact that US foreign policies have traditionally supported repressive governments in the region and have favored the interests of one party in a conflict in the Middle East, Israel, over the interests of other parties, such as the Palestinians.

One of the great students of international relations, Hans Morgenthau, proposed after World War II his four fundamental rules of diplomacy. One rule directed every nation-state to 'look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations' (Morgenthau 1985). His advice may be tempting to ignore if you happen to live in stable, influential, prosperous, and secure countries. But most people do not, and thus it is vital for students of international politics to recognize and analyze the subject from multiple vantage points.

## Recognizing Cleavages within the International System

**Developed countries**: Wealthy countries with advanced economies.

**Developing countries**: Poor countries with small economies whose residents have not, on average, attained the living standards typically enjoyed on average by residents of wealthy countries.

Sensitivity to multiple perspectives will also allow you to recognize that there are always key divisions, or cleavages, within any international system. In the current international system, for example, there persists a division between rich and poor, or **developed** and **developing countries**. Since developed countries tend to inhabit the northern hemisphere and less developed ones are generally found in the southern hemisphere, you will sometimes see references to *North–South* divisions in world politics.

There is a general difference in perspective between developed and developing countries on international economic issues. In developed states, where standards of living are higher, people worry that jobs are and will continue to be lost in international trade to developing states, where labor is much cheaper. American workers worry about competition from China, while German and French workers worry about competition from labor in Greece or Turkey. Northern countries also feel that southern countries, as they develop, should do their part to advance international economic cooperation by opening their markets to the products of the North. The view from the South is different. Southern states point out that it is difficult to develop in a world economy dominated by established, rich states. Developing economies want special exceptions in international trade and they want access to Northern markets, like agriculture, even if the Northern countries do not have symmetrical access to their markets. These debates, discussed in Chapter 10, are played out in various international forums, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

There are, of course, different perspectives within developed and developing countries as well. In the United States, people tend to believe the government should play a more modest role in influencing the international or domestic economy than is typically expected in European countries and Japan. In the less developed world, countries that are primarily agriculture exporters (like Ghana, which exports cocoa) view the world economy differently than oil producers and exporters (like Venezuela or Kuwait). Exporters of manufactured goods, like South Korea or Taiwan, will have a different perspective on trade negotiations as well.

There are also North–South divisions on environmental issues. The United States refused to ratify a global agreement on carbon emissions, the Kyoto Protocol, because it felt the burden of reducing emissions was not shared equally among all countries, including big developing countries like China. Developing countries argue that the existing rich countries developed without worrying about the natural environment, and now expect today's poorer countries to inhibit their own development due to environmental problems (which poorer countries see as caused by the more industrial North). Developing countries like India and China also demand aid and technology from the North to assist them in limiting emissions and adapting to the impact of climate change. These debates will be discussed in detail in Chapter 12.

There *used* to be an important cleavage in international relations between East and West. During the Cold War (1945–89), the world was divided between communist and non-communist countries. The Western countries viewed themselves as defending the rights of the individual and political and economic freedoms. The communist countries, generally located in the eastern part of Europe but also in Asia and Central America, viewed capitalism as exploitative and saw themselves defending social values, such as full employment and a more equitable distribution of income and wealth. As Chapter 2 states, each side in this conflict viewed the other as a threat and tried to enlist

the support of neutral countries to its cause. The East–West division in world politics ended in 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leader of the Eastern side.

The existence of cleavages or divisions among states within any international system leads us to what historically has been a vexing problem in international politics, that of **dissatisfied states**. These states may remain frustrated, patiently build their power, or become aggressive in an effort to advance their relative positions. Germany, Japan, and Italy after World War I are classic cases of dissatisfied states. Italy desired colonial possessions befitting its self-image as a great power. Germany sought respect and influence after what it considered the humiliation of the settlement that ended World War I. Japan, a vulnerable island economy, desired economic security, which its leaders believed could be best achieved by occupying its resource-rich neighbors. The dissatisfaction of these states and their determination to rectify it was an important cause of World War II.

**Dissatisfied states**: States who feel that their influence, status, and material benefits should be higher than what they are actually achieving.

A dissatisfied state is potentially dangerous, but it is not always easy to recognize. States may act aggressively because they are dissatisfied and intent on transforming the international system, or because they feel threatened and insecure. During the Cold War, policy makers and analysts in the Western countries continually debated whether the Soviet Union was a dissatisfied state intent on world domination, or a troubled and insecure great power that needed to control its immediate neighborhood because it felt threatened by a more technologically advanced set of Western countries. The debate was important. If the Soviet Union was primarily aggressive, it needed to be contained; if it was primarily insecure, then reassurance and cooperation might be the more appropriate foreign policy. The failure to contain an aggressive country could lead to trouble if that country believed itself free to dominate others. But an aggressive response to an insecure country could be provocative, reinforcing fear and insecurity and leading to a conflict that perhaps neither side wanted. International relations scholars refer to this general problem as the security dilemma.

Although it is not always easy to distinguish dissatisfied states from defensive states, it is important to do so because the stakes are very high. In today's international system, many analysts are debating the extent to which China is (or will become) a dissatisfied state that will eventually disrupt world order, a defensive state mainly seeking to resolve its internal problems and command a degree of international respect, or a satisfied state content to accept the current rules of the international order. A similar debate is taking place at a regional level, concerning the intentions and aspirations of Iran. To some, Iran is a disruptive force seeking weapons of mass destruction to threaten Israel and Sunni-controlled regimes (Iran is controlled by Shiites) in the Gulf region. To others, Iran is an insecure middle power that feels threatened by the world's dominant power, the United States, and its powerful regional ally, Israel. The United States today is closely associated politically and militarily with Iran's traditional enemy, Iraq. Iran and Iraq fought a costly and bloody war throughout the 1980s. The appropriate foreign policy depends, to some extent, on whether one has a clear understanding of the perspective of the country in question.

## Looking Ahead

The rest of this textbook is divided into four sections. In Part I, Chapter 2, we provide the historical background necessary to appreciate enduring questions and give context

to contemporary international politics. In Chapters 3 and 4, we introduce the basic theories and concepts in the study of international relations. This provides a 'toolbox' that will help you make sense of the practice of international politics described and analyzed in subsequent chapters.

Part II is devoted to an introduction to the issues of war and peace, or what is known in international relations as the subfield of security studies. In this section, Chapters 5 and 6, we discuss the causes of war, and the mechanisms in the international system that leads states to resolve disputes peacefully. In Chapter 7, we analyze the special problem of weapons of mass destruction, and their impact on the theory and practice of international relations.

Part III turns to the relationship between international politics and economics. In Chapter 8, we provide the basic building blocks of the world economy, focusing in particular on trade and money and the global institutions of the world economy. This basic background is critical for students to grasp before diving more deeply into how politics and economics interact. In Chapter 9, we examine foreign economic policy, and how governments use international economic relations to further their political objectives. Chapter 10 investigates the special problems and opportunities developing countries encounter as they seek to associate with, but not be overwhelmed by, the global economy.

Part IV looks at emerging challenges to the international system and world of nation-states. In Chapter 11, we examine the role of non-state actors, such as terrorists, war lords, and drug dealers, who have *privatized* political violence and, in some cases, challenged the authority of sovereign states. We also explore the obligation of the members of the international community to protect people whose human rights are threatened by their own governments, or who are the victims of war or natural disaster. We then turn in Chapter 12 to international environmental problems and the response of states, individually and collectively. In conclusion, Chapter 13 challenges you to draw on what you have learned and think creatively about the future of international relations. We provide summary observations and explore six alternate visions of the future world order.

Each chapter also pays particular attention to the major themes introduced above – the enduring question, the levels of analysis, making connections, and viewing world politics from multiple perspectives. We will remind you throughout each chapter of the enduring questions that anchor your understanding of global politics. We will illustrate the need to make connections and view the world from multiple perspectives with special features in each chapter. We also constantly challenge you with discussion questions, which we hope will help you structure your thinking about the material we cover in the text. As you explore the enduring problems and contemporary texture of international relations, we invite you at each step to engage the material with a critical eye. We ask you to challenge yourself by drawing your own conclusions about the problems of peace and conflict in international relations, as well as the opportunities for cooperation and the attainment of international peace in this, your twenty-first century.

Visit **www.palgrave.com/politics/Grieco** to access extra resources for this chapter, including:

- Chapter Summaries to help you review the material
- Multiple Choice Quizzes to test your understanding
- Flashcards to test your knowledge of the key terms in this chapter
- Outside resources including links to contemporary articles and videos, that add to what you have learned in this chapter.

## Study Questions

1. In what ways do you think international relations affect your life?
2. What do you most want to learn about as you read this book and take what is likely to be your first and possibly only course in international relations?
3. From your viewpoint, which of the enduring questions about international relations discussed in this chapter, and pursued throughout this book, are the most interesting and important? Why?
4. What perspective do you think you are bringing to this course and the study of international relations? That is, when you think about international relations, do you do so from the viewpoint of a citizen of a particular country, as a young person, or as a male or female? What are the stakes and interests you bring to your study of international relations? How might that perspective be influencing the way you approach the field?

## Further Reading


Axelrod, Robert (2006) *The Evolution of Cooperation*, rev. edn (New York: Basic Books). This is a classic social science study that has direct implications for international relations. Axelrod examines how cooperation emerges among self-interested actors – and how they resist the temptation to cheat each other – even when there is no central authority to police their behavior.

Drezner, Daniel (2011) *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). This is an unusual and irreverent introduction to international relations theories. Drezner goes through a variety of the leading theoretical traditions in international politics and shows how each might help us explain and react to the threat of a zombie invasion. An easy way to digest theory!

Gilpin, Robert (2001) *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). This is a recent international relations classic that examines the problem of managing international change peacefully. Gilpin uses a variety of approaches to illuminate great-power transitions from ancient Greece to the present day.

Jervis, Robert (1976) *Perception and Misperception in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). In this classic study of foreign policy and international relations, Jervis explains when and why the perceptions of world leaders diverge from reality. The consequences of misperception may be conflict and sometimes inadvertent war.

Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink (eds) (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). This book nicely illustrates the importance of non-state actors in international relations. Keck and Sikkink and their contributors show how and why coalitions form across borders to address problems such as slavery, women's suffrage, human rights, and environmental degradation.

Mahbubani, Kishore (2004) *Can Asians Think?* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish). This book of essays is a nice application of the need to view the world from multiple perspectives. Mahbubani is critical of the idea that the values of Western civilization are universal, and argues that other civilizations make important though at times underappreciated contributions to the human endeavor.