

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PERSPECTIVES, CONTROVERSIES AND READINGS



Fifth Edition

Keith L. Shimko



International Relations

Perspectives, Controversies & Readings

Keith L. Shimko
PURDUE UNIVERSITY



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

This is an electronic version of the print textbook. Due to electronic rights restrictions, some third party content may be suppressed. Editorial review has deemed that any suppressed content does not materially affect the overall learning experience. The publisher reserves the right to remove content from this title at any time if subsequent rights restrictions require it. For valuable information on pricing, previous editions, changes to current editions, and alternate formats, please visit www.cengage.com/highered to search by ISBN#, author, title, or keyword for materials in your areas of interest.

**International Relations: Perspectives,
Controversies & Readings, Fifth Edition**

Keith L. Shimko

Product Team Manager: Carolyn Merrill

Content Developer: Jean Findley

Associate Content Developer: Amy Bither

Product Assistant: Abigail Hess

Senior Media Developer: Laura Hildebrand

Marketing Manager: Valerie Hartman

Content Project Manager: Charu Khanna

Senior Art Director: Linda May

Art Director: Carolyn Deacy

Manufacturing Planner: Fola Orekoya

Senior Rights Acquisition Specialist: Jennifer

Meyer Dare

Compositor: MPS Limited

Photo Researcher: Hemalatha L

Text Researcher: Pinky Subi

Text and Cover Designer: Kathleen Cunningham

Cover Image: Left Photo: Dieter Spears/E+/

Getty Images; Middle Photo: Randy Plett/

Photonica World/Getty Images; Right Photo:

Felipe Reis/Getty Images

© 2016, 2013 Cengage Learning

WCN: 02-200-203

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

For product information and technology assistance, contact us at
Cengage Learning Customer & Sales Support, 1-800-354-9706.

For permission to use material from this text or product,
submit all requests online at www.cengage.com/permissions.

Further permissions questions can be e-mailed to
permissionrequest@cengage.com.

Unless otherwise noted, all items © Cengage Learning

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014943028

ISBN: 978-1-285-86516-4

Cengage Learning
20 Channel Center Street
Boston, MA 02210
USA

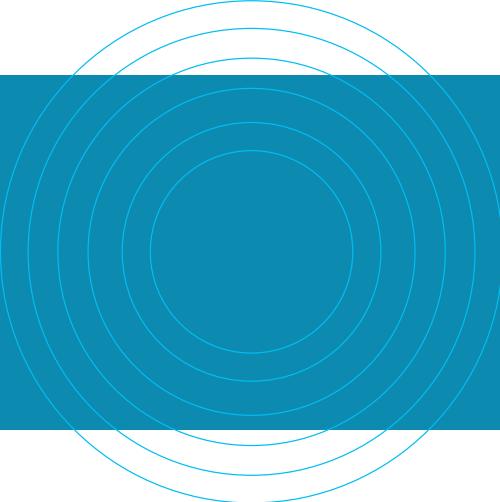
Cengage Learning is a leading provider of customized learning solutions with office locations around the globe, including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, and Japan. Locate your local office at www.cengage.com/global.

Cengage Learning products are represented in Canada by
Nelson Education, Ltd.

To learn more about Cengage Learning Solutions, visit www.cengage.com.

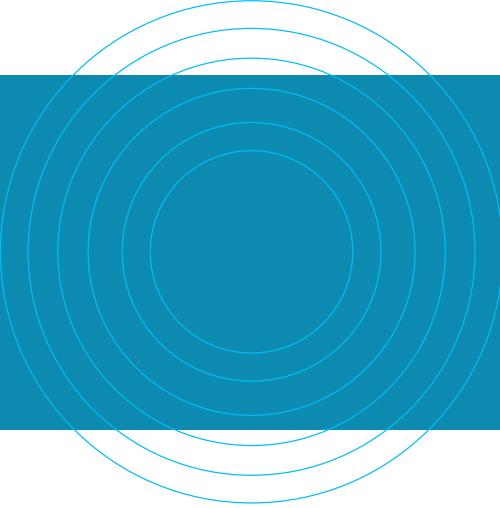
Purchase any of our products at your local college store or at our
preferred online store www.cengagebrain.com.

Printed in the United States of America
Print Number: 01 Print Year: 2014



Brief Contents

<i>Preface: For the Instructor</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction for the Student: Why Study International Relations?</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Chapter 1 Change and Continuity in International History	1
Chapter 2 Contending Perspectives on International Politics	33
Chapter 3 Power Politics	57
Chapter 4 War and Democracy	81
Chapter 5 War and “Human Nature”	107
Chapter 6 Free Trade	133
Chapter 7 The IMF, Global Inequality, and Development	161
Chapter 8 Globalization and Sovereignty	185
Chapter 9 International Law	211
Chapter 10 The United Nations and Humanitarian Intervention	237
Chapter 11 Nuclear Proliferation	265
Chapter 12 International Terrorism	291
Chapter 13 The Global Commons	317
Index	349



Contents

<i>Preface: For the Instructor</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction for the Student: Why Study International Relations?</i>	<i>xvii</i>

PART 1 History and Perspectives

Chapter 1 Change and Continuity in International History

1

Change and Continuity 1

The Emergence of the Modern State System 2

The Commercial Revolution 4 The Gunpowder
Revolution 5 The Protestant Reformation 5

The Age of Absolutism and Limited War (1648–1789) 6

The Age of Revolutions (1789–1914) 7

The American and French Revolutions 8 The Meaning of
Nationalism 10 The Industrial Revolution 12 The Road to
War 16

The Age of Total War (1914–1945) 16

The Road to War (Again) 19 The Next “Great War” 21

The Cold War (1945–1989) 22

The Cold War Begins: Conflict and Containment 23 The Cold War
Expands 24 Easing the Cold War 25 The Resurgence and End
of the Cold War 25 The Curious Peace of the Cold War 26

The Post–Cold War World 28

v

Chapter 2 Contending Perspectives on International Politics**33****Many Questions, Even More Answers 33****Realism 34****Liberalism, Idealism, and Liberal Internationalism 38****Marxism 41****Feminism 45****Constructivism 49****Perspectives and Levels of Analysis 51****Conclusion 51****PART 2 Controversies****Chapter 3 Power Politics****57****Key Controversy Does International Anarchy Lead to War? 57****Peace Through Strength? 58****There Is No Alternative to Power Politics 59**

Anarchy Leads to Power Politics 59 Power Politics I: The Balance of Power 60 Power Politics II: Balance of Threat Theory 62
 Power Politics III: Preponderance Theory 64 The Common Vision of Power Politics 65

Alternatives to Power Politics 65

World Government? 65 Collective Security 66 Security Amidst Anarchy 69

Conclusion 71**POINTS OF VIEW The Consequences of China's Rise 75****Chapter 4 War and Democracy****81****Key Controversy Are Democracies More Peaceful? 81****The Sources of Democratic Peacefulness 83**

What Is "Democracy"? 87 The Evidence 88

Are Democracies Really Any Different? 90

No Democratic Wars—So What? 90 Empirical Fact or Definitional Artifact? 90 Cause or Coincidence? 93 Democratization Versus Democracy 95

Conclusion 95**POINTS OF VIEW** Would Democracy Bring Peace to the Middle East? 100**Chapter 5 War and “Human Nature”****107****Key Controversy** Is War Part of Human Nature? 107**Aggression, Instincts, and War 108**

The “Functions” of Aggression 109 The Curse of Intelligence:
Weapons 110 The Curse of Intelligence: Abstract Thought 112

Culture, Social Learning, and War 114

Peaceful Societies 114 The Reluctance to Kill 115

War Is Violence, Not “Aggression” 116

Social Learning and Conditioning 118 Are People Peaceful? 120

Conclusion 121**POINTS OF VIEW** Are People (or Men) “Hard-Wired” for War? 126**Chapter 6 Free Trade****133****Key Controversy** Does Free Trade Benefit All? 133**The Liberal International Economic Order 134****The Case for Free Trade 135**

The Origins of Free Trade 136 Free Trade Within Nations, Free
Trade Among Nations 138 The Primacy of the Consumer 138
Contemporary Challenges to Free Trade 139

What’s Wrong with Free Trade 141

More Efficient, But So What? 142 Free Trade Within Nations, Free
Trade Among Nations 143 Consumers and the Nation 146
Fair Trade or Free Trade? 148

Conclusion 149**POINTS OF VIEW** Should Free Trade Be Replaced with Fair Trade? 154**Chapter 7 The IMF, Global Inequality, and Development****161****Key Controversy** What Are the Obstacles to Development? 161**From Decolonization to Structural Adjustment 162**

Structural Adjustment: Cure and Diagnosis 164

The IMF and Neoliberalism 164

Growth Is Possible: The Market and Development 166

The (Neo)liberal Vision 170

Neoliberalism as Neoimperialism 170

- The Political Economy of Dependence and Exploitation 171
 The Failure of Structural Adjustment 172 The Hypocrisy of Neoliberalism: Do as We Say, Not as We Did 174

Conclusion 175

POINTS OF VIEW Does Foreign Aid Promote Development? 180

Chapter 8 Globalization and Sovereignty

185

Key Controversy Is Globalization a Threat to National Sovereignty? 185**What Is at Stake 187****The Vision of a Borderless World 187**

- Ending the Tyranny of Location 188 The Mobility of Capital 189
 The Race to the Bottom 190

The Myth(s) of Globalization 193

- Location Still Matters 193 The Myth of a Borderless World 194
 The Myth of a Race to the Bottom 195

Conclusion 197

- Realist Skepticism 197 Liberal Optimism 199 Marxist Resistance 200 Hopes and Fears 201

POINTS OF VIEW What to Do About the Race to the Bottom? 205

Chapter 9 International Law

211

Key Controversy Does International Law Matter? 211**What Is International Law, and Where Does It Come From? 212****The Weakness of International Law 215**

- Vague and Conflicting Obligations 215 No Effective Legal System 216 Law and Power 219

The Enduring Value of International Law 220

- The False Lessons of Spectacular Failures 220 States Usually Abide by International Law 222 Why Do States Abide by International Law? 222 Liberalism and the Promise of International Law 224
 Constructivism, Law, Norms, and the National Interest 226

Conclusion 227

POINTS OF VIEW Should the International Criminal Court Deal with the Syrian Conflict? 231

Chapter 10 The United Nations and Humanitarian Intervention**237****Key Controversy** Are Humanitarian Interventions Justified? 237**Sovereignty and Human Rights 240**

The Growth of Human Rights Activism 241

The Case for Humanitarian Intervention 242The Limits of Sovereignty 243 A Right or Obligation to
Intervene? 244 Who Should Intervene? 245 Liberalism and
Humanitarian Intervention 247**The Case Against Humanitarian Intervention 248**The Problem of Moral Diversity 248 From Abstraction to
Action 250 The Problem of Power 251 The Limits of Moral
Action 253**Conclusion 254****POINTS OF VIEW** Humanitarian Intervention in Libya? 259**Chapter 11 Nuclear Proliferation****265****Key Controversy** How Dangerous is Nuclear Proliferation? 265**The Reality of Proliferation and Nonproliferation 266****The Case for Limited Proliferation 271**

The Case for Widespread Proliferation 272

Exactly What Are We Worried About? 274**The Case Against Nuclear Proliferation 275**The Gamble of Proliferation 275 Why Worry About Iran, But
Not Germany? 276 A Very Delicate Balance of Terror 277
Terrorists, Black Markets, and Nuclear Handoffs 278 Those Other
Weapons of Mass Destruction 279**Conclusion 280****POINTS OF VIEW** Should We Eliminate Nuclear Weapons? 285**Chapter 12 International Terrorism****291****Key Controversy** How Should We Respond to International Terrorism? 291**Terrorism: The Definitional Angst 292**

Terrorism or Terrorisms? 293 Frameworks for Understanding 296

The Cosmopolitan Response 297

The Intellectual Roots of a Cosmopolitan Strategy 299

The Statist Response 301

“It’s the Clash, Not the Cash” 302 States Still Matter 306

Conclusion 307

POINTS OF VIEW Did September 11 Reflect a Clash of Civilizations? 313

Chapter 13 The Global Commons**317****Key Controversy Is the Global Commons in Danger? 317****Too Many People, Too Few Resources 320**

The Population Explosion 320 Resources and the Environment 321 The Tragedy of the (Global) Commons 324
Garrett Hardin on Restricting the Commons 325

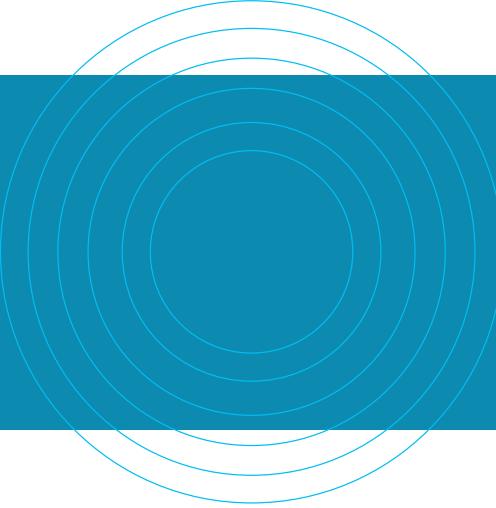
A World of Plenty 326

How Many People Will We Have? 327 Feeding the World 330
Fueling the World 331 The Problem of the Environment 332
The Good News 333

Global Problems, Global Solutions? 334**Conclusion 337**

POINTS OF VIEW Where Do We Go After Kyoto? 343

Index 349



Preface: For the Instructor

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, grows out of more than two decades of teaching the course for which it is intended—introductory international relations. I struggle to find the right balance of fact and theory, current events and historical background, as well as to provide breadth and depth of coverage in an accessible manner, without caricature or condescension. I constantly need to remind myself that even though the latest theoretical fad or methodological debate may interest me and my colleagues, it is usually of little interest or value to my students. Conversely, though many issues might be old and settled for those of us who have been immersed in the discipline for decades, they can still be new and exciting for students.

Goals

An introduction to international relations should accomplish several basic tasks: first, provide the essential information and historical background for an incredibly wide and diverse range of issues; second, instill the necessary conceptual and theoretical tools for students to analyze historical and contemporary issues from a broader perspective; and third, demonstrate the relevance of seemingly abstract academic theories and concepts for understanding the “real world.”

In providing the necessary information and historical background, the major obstacle is the sheer volume of material. Because there is so much history that seems essential and there are so many issues to cover, it is always easy to find material to add but nearly impossible to identify anything to eliminate. Every textbook author knows this problem well: reviewers inevitably offer numerous suggestions for additions, but few for deletions. Unfortunately, quantity is sometimes the enemy of quality. Presented with an endless catalog of facts, names, theories, and perspectives, students risk drowning in a sea of detail. In trying to teach everything, we run the risk that students end up learning nothing. Choices need to be made.

These choices should be guided by the fundamental objective of getting students to *think* about international relations, instilling an appreciation for ideas and argument. If students understand the arguments for and against free trade, for example, it is not essential that they know the details of every World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting or General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) round. Discussion of the WTO might be a useful entry point, but it is the ideas and arguments underlying the debate over free trade that are most critical.

Such ideas need to be presented in a manner that enables students to truly engage the arguments and grasp their implications. It is not enough that students are able to provide a paragraph summary of balance of power theory or the theory of comparative advantage: they need to understand the basic assumptions and follow arguments through their various stages, twists, and turns. This requires that ideas and theories must be developed at some length so that students can see how the elements come together. As a result, it may be better to present two or three theories and positions in some depth, rather than brief summaries of a dozen.

Since most undergraduates hope that the class will help them understand the realities of international relations, the challenge of demonstrating relevance is critical. This is often achieved by supplementing a traditional text with a reader organized in a “taking sides” format. Although readers can be useful, they are seldom designed to accompany a particular text. As a consequence, the fit between readers and texts is usually imperfect. An additional problem with the text/reader combination is that it requires the purchase of two books. This text offers a unique solution to both problems: each of the substantive chapters incorporates readings that would normally appear in a supplementary reader, creating a single volume that is *both* a traditional textbook and a reader. The benefit for the instructor and students is that the readings are chosen specifically to reflect the discussion in each chapter. The additional benefit for students is that there is no additional reader to purchase.

Approach

The format of *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings* reflects its approach to addressing these major challenges. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the basic historical and theoretical foundations for thinking about international relations. The remaining chapters are framed differently than in most other texts, in that each chapter revolves around a central question or debate embodying an important and enduring controversy in international relations:

- Does international anarchy inevitably lead to war? (Chapter 3)
- Are democracies more peaceful? (Chapter 4)
- Is war part of human nature? (Chapter 5)
- Does free trade benefit all? (Chapter 6)
- What are the obstacles to economic development? (Chapter 7)
- Is globalization a threat to national sovereignty? (Chapter 8)
- Does international law matter? (Chapter 9)
- Is humanitarian intervention justified? (Chapter 10)

- How dangerous is nuclear proliferation? (Chapter 11)
- How should we respond to international terrorism? (Chapter 12)
- Is the global commons in danger? (Chapter 13)

Once the question is posed and the essential historical/factual background provided, alternative answers to the question are developed. The questions and “debate” format provide focus, prompting students to follow coherent and contrasting arguments. The goal is to present sustained arguments, not snippets. Finally, to help students move beyond abstract debates, each chapter concludes with readings that bring to life the debates discussed in the chapter. For example, in Chapter 3, dealing with democracy and war, the “Points of View” documents debate whether more democracy would bring peace to the Middle East. Given the successful protests against authoritarian rule in the Arab world in 2011 (e.g., in Tunisia and Egypt) and the prospect of more democratic forms of government in the region, this should help students appreciate the real-world implications of theoretical arguments.

Features

Beginning with Chapter 3, students will notice a standard set of pedagogical features that will guide their studies of the enduring controversies in international relations:

- An **opening abstract** introducing students to the chapter and its central question.
- An **introduction** providing historical background.
- **Key terms** are boldfaced where they are first introduced in the chapter, defined in the margin, and listed at the end of the chapter.
- The **Points of View** section includes two readings related to the chapter’s issues, often presenting both sides of the debate. An introduction to the readings provides questions for students to ponder as they read the selections.
- A **chapter summary** provides a brief review of the chapter.
- **Critical questions** ask students to apply the concepts that they learned in the chapter.
- **Further readings** provide citations of additional sources related to the chapter material.
- Related **Web sites** give students the opportunity to explore the Internet for more information.

Highlights of This Fifth Edition

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, has been thoroughly updated. Key revisions include the following:

- New and updated “Point of View” sections. In Chapter 9, new readings focus on whether Syria (or Syrian leaders) should be referred to the International

Criminal Court for their actions against Syrian civilians in the country's ongoing conflict. In Chapter 11, new readings focus on the debate over the "Global Zero" initiative to abolish nuclear weapons. And although the topics remain the same, there are new "Point of View" readings included in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 10.

- Chapters are revised and updated; changes include debates about whether U.S. covert actions against democracies undermine democratic peace theory (Chapter 4), Stephen Pinker's thesis about human nature and declining global violence (Chapter 5), corruption as an obstacle to development (Chapter 7), Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons under customary international law (Chapter 9), Ukrainian denuclearization and its consequences for its crisis with Russia (Chapter 11), and updated information on issues of climate change and global resources, particularly the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report and the theory of peak oil (Chapter 13).
- Updated statistics throughout the book.
- New and updated Web links throughout to provide useful resources in exploring chapter-related issues beyond the text.
- New and updated end-of-chapter critical questions to prompt deeper student analysis and engagement with the concepts.

International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings, Fifth Edition, offers the following ancillary materials:

Instructor Resources

TITLE: **Instructor Companion Web site** for *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings*, Fifth Edition

ISBN: 9781285865188

DESCRIPTION:

This **Instructor Companion Web site** is an all-in-one online resource for class preparation and testing. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, it features all of the free student assets, plus an instructor's manual and a test bank in Microsoft® Word®.

TITLE: CourseReader 0-30: International Relations

Printed Access card ISBN: 9781111480608

Instant Access card ISBN: 9781111480592

DESCRIPTION:

CourseReader for International Relations allows you to create your reader, your way, in just minutes. This affordable, fully customizable online reader provides access to thousands of permissions-cleared readings, articles, primary sources, and audio and video selections from the regularly updated Gale research library database. This easy-to-use solution allows you to search for and select just the material that you want for your courses. Each selection opens with a descriptive

introduction to provide context, and concludes with critical-thinking and multiple-choice questions to reinforce key points.

CourseReader is loaded with convenient tools like highlighting, printing, note-taking, and downloadable PDFs and MP3 audio files for each reading. CourseReader is the perfect complement to any Political Science course. It can be bundled with your current textbook, sold alone, or integrated into your learning management system. CourseReader 0–30 allows access to up to 30 selections in the reader. Please contact your Cengage sales representative for details.

Student Resources

TITLE: Student Companion Web site for Shimko, *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies, & Readings*, Fifth Edition

ISBN: 9781285865195

DESCRIPTION:

This free companion Web site is accessible through cengagebrain.com and allows students access to chapter-specific interactive learning tools, including flash cards, quizzes, glossaries, and more.

Acknowledgments

The process of writing an introductory international relations text has been a rewarding, yet at times frustrating, experience. I suspect that this is the case in any field. Although only my name is on the cover, this product involved the input of many people over the course of several editions. First and foremost are all those people who have read and commented on various drafts along the way. Many friends and colleagues at Purdue University, specifically Berenice Carroll, Harry Targ, Louis René Beres, and Aaron Hoffman, have made valuable suggestions for improving several chapters. Cynthia Weber of Leeds University provided useful input on my discussion of international relations theory, especially feminism. Although my debts to Stanley Michalak of Franklin and Marshall College go all the way back to my undergraduate days, for this text, he read numerous chapters that are now much better as a result of his insightful, considerate advice and friendly criticism. Stanley was also one of my main sources of encouragement at times when I wondered whether the world really needed another introductory international relations text. In addition, Randy Roberts also gave valuable advice on navigating the maze of textbook publishing.

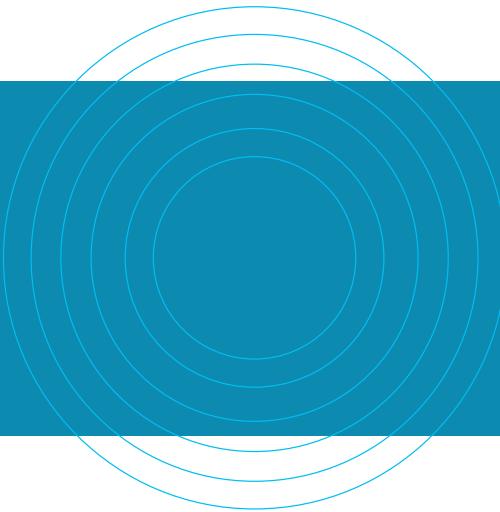
In addition to these friends, there is a list of reviewers for this edition arranged through my editors at Cengage:

Joel McMahon, Baker College Online
Aron Tannenbaum, Clemson University
Emily Copeland, Bryant University
Baris Kesgin, Susquehanna University

Although it was obviously not possible to incorporate all of the ideas and suggestions provided by these reviewers, I can honestly say that this is a much better book as a result of their input.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my mother and father, Riitta and Leonard Shimko. My mother passed away halfway through the writing of the first edition. Although she was not here to see the final product, I know she would have been happy that after many years of talking about it, I finally got off my duff and wrote it. I only regret that she was not here to see it. My father saw the first edition but passed away just before I wrote the second edition. I miss them both terribly.

Keith L. Shimko



Introduction for the Student: Why Study International Relations?

You and the World

There are times when international events dominate the daily news, displacing the more immediate domestic issues and economic concerns that usually occupy people's attention. Despite the continuing recession and persistently high unemployment, domestic issues were bumped from the headlines in the spring of 2014 as the crisis between Russia and Ukraine threatened war on the periphery of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). On television, YouTube, the blogosphere, and a host of social media outlets, the world was flooded with images of protests and troop movements. Talk shows and twenty-four-hour news channels were filled with policymakers and analysts arguing about the strategic, legal, humanitarian, and economic implications of the crisis. What some have characterized as the most significant conflict between the United States and Russia since the end of the Cold War appeared to come out of nowhere, overshadowing domestic and other international concerns.

But even in more tranquil times, when international affairs recede into the background, our lives are touched by events beyond our shores. Whether the United States is at peace or at war, almost 20 percent of your tax dollars goes to defend the nation's security. If you are a farmer or work for a company that exports its products, your livelihood may depend on continued access to international markets. As a consumer, you pay prices for food and clothes from abroad that are influenced by how much access other nations have to our markets. A crisis on the other side of the globe may require you to shell out more money for the gas that you pump into your car. And if you or a loved one is a member of the armed forces, international affairs can literally become a matter of life and death. Indeed, in the wake of September 11, 2001, Americans now know something that people in less secure parts of the world have always known—one need not be wearing a uniform to become a casualty. There may have been a time, before bombers, ballistic

missiles, and the global economy, when friendly neighbors and the isolation provided by two oceans allowed Americans to ignore much of what happened around the world. That world is long gone. Today, we are reminded at almost every turn that our lives are affected—sometimes dramatically—by what goes on thousands of miles from home.

International Relations

What is *international relations*? At first glance, this appears to be a relatively straightforward and easy question. In a narrow sense, international relations is the behavior and interaction of states. Those inclined to this somewhat restrictive definition often prefer the label *international politics* instead of *international relations*. Today, the more commonly used term *international relations* connotes a much broader focus. Although no one denies that state behavior is a focus (perhaps even the *central focus*) of international relations, few believe that this adequately defines the boundaries of the discipline. There are simply too many important actors (e.g., multinational corporations, religious movements, international organizations, and terrorist groups) and issues (e.g., climate change) that do not fall neatly into a state-centric vision of the world. But as we conceptualize international relations more broadly, it is hard to know where to stop. The line between domestic and international politics blurs as we realize that internal politics often influence a state's external conduct. The distinction between economics and politics fades once we recognize that economic power is an integral component of political power. In the end, it may be easier to specify what, if anything, does *not* fall within the realm of international relations. Indeed, according to one definition, international relations is “the whole complex of cultural, economic, legal, military, political, and social relations of all *states*, as well as their component populations and entities.”¹ That covers an awful lot of territory.

Fortunately, we need not settle on any final definition. Although it might be an interesting academic exercise, it serves no useful purpose at this point. It is enough that we have a good idea of the subjects included in any reasonable definition. It is hard, for example, to imagine a definition of international relations that would not encompass questions of war and peace, sovereignty and intervention, and economic inequality and development. As an introductory text, this book deals with perspectives and issues that almost everyone agrees fall well within the core of international relations.

Learning and Thinking About International Relations

This text is designed to help you think systematically and critically about international affairs in a way that allows you to understand today’s headlines as well as yesterday’s and, more important, tomorrow’s. Once you are able to see familiar patterns in unfamiliar situations, identify recurring puzzles in novel problems,

and recognize old ideas expressed in new debates, international relations ceases to be a disjointed and ever-changing series of “events.” The names and faces may change, but many of the fundamental problems, issues, and debates tend to reappear, albeit in slightly different form.

The first step in thinking systematically about international politics is realizing that our present is the product of our past. What happened today was influenced by what happened yesterday, and what happens today will shape what happens tomorrow. Even unanticipated and surprising events do not occur out of the blue: there are always antecedent developments and forces that produced them. The outbreak of World War I, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, cannot be understood apart from their historical roots. Understanding contemporary problems requires an appreciation of their historical origins. History is also essential for evaluating the significance of contemporary events. Without history, we would have no way of judging whether a proclaimed “new world order” is really new, or merely a mildly updated version of the old world order.

The second step in thinking systematically about international relations is moving beyond *description* to the more difficult task of *explanation*. The transition from description to explanation is rarely easy. Anyone who has ever taken a history class knows that agreement on “the facts” does not necessarily translate into consensus on the explanation behind events. Historians might be in total agreement about exactly what happened before and during World War I—who assassinated whom, which nation declared war first, and who won what battles—yet nonetheless disagree about what “caused” the war. These debates occur because historical facts do not speak for or explain themselves. Explanation requires that events be interpreted and linked, and there is always more than one plausible explanation or interpretation.

Competing interpretations are the result of preexisting beliefs and worldviews that act as lenses or filters enabling people to *look* at the same things, yet *see* them differently. As a result, understanding debates about international relations requires knowledge of not only “the facts,” but also the lenses through which people interpret and understand them. Only then is it possible to understand, for example, why some see the United Nations as an invaluable institution for creating a more civilized world, while others dismiss it as a pompous and ineffective debating society. International relations is marked not only by conflicts among nations, but also by conflicting worldviews.

In addition, an appreciation of these competing worldviews is an essential aspect of critical thinking, which necessarily entails looking at issues and problems from many perspectives. This is why students in debating clubs and societies are required to defend positions regardless of their personal opinions. Presenting and defending positions other than your own is an intellectual exercise that aids critical analysis, encourages you to think about the structure of argument and the nature of evidence, and makes you aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your own position. Someone who cannot understand or faithfully present an opposing point of view can never really understand his or her own.

Thus, in order to cultivate this sort of critical analysis, a textbook needs to accomplish at least three tasks. First, it must provide a foundation of knowledge that enables you to think about current events in a broader *historical context*. Second, it has to make you aware of the differing worldviews that influence analyses of international affairs so they can analyze events in a broader *intellectual context*. And third, it should examine issues from multiple perspectives so that you can get into the habit of seeing international relations from many different angles.

Plan of the Book

This text has two sections. The first provides the historical and theoretical foundation. It begins (Chapter 1) with a broad survey of the development of international relations, focusing on the emergence and evolution of what we call the “modern state system.” Although any attempt to summarize more than five centuries in a single chapter inevitably sacrifices much detail, it is still possible to convey the most significant elements of change and continuity. This historical survey is followed by an introduction to the major perspectives that offer alternative ways of explaining and understanding international relations (Chapter 2).

The second section, which forms the bulk of the text, is devoted to enduring and contemporary controversies in international relations. Individual chapters focus on a central international issue, ranging from the very abstract and theoretical (e.g., war and human nature) to the extremely concrete and policy-oriented (e.g., nuclear proliferation and terrorism). Whatever the specific issue, the format of each chapter is similar: A brief historical and factual introduction is followed by a discussion of competing perspectives or arguments.

Of course, it is impossible to do justice to every conceivable position on each issue. In the real world, there are never just two sides to an argument or debate. There are always nuances of emphasis and gradations of belief in academic and policy debates. But before we can deal with nuances, we need to appreciate the more basic and fundamental differences. Thus, rather than covering the full range of positions on every topic, the focus will be on two or three major positions reflecting differences on fundamental questions. This allows us to concentrate on the most significant points of disagreement, develop arguments, and discuss evidence in some depth.

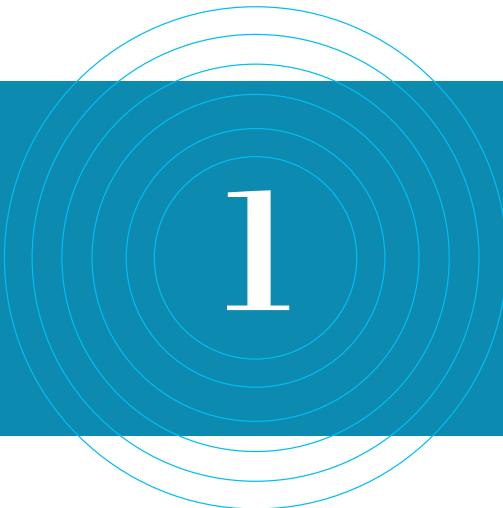
The transition from the classroom to the “real world” is provided by each chapter’s “Points of View” section, which includes an eclectic mix of official foreign policy statements, government documents, news stories, and editorials. What are you supposed to get from these documents? Sometimes they are intended to demonstrate that ideas, which can often appear very theoretical, have real-world consequences. Other documents require you to think outside the box a little by presenting positions that depart somewhat from those presented in the chapter. Finally, some documents are straightforward news stories providing real-world examples of various phenomena.

After the Final Exam

Few of you will make a career of studying international relations. This may be both the first and the last international relations course you will ever take (though hopefully not). But whether you like the subject or not, your life will be influenced by international affairs. Long after the exams and quizzes are an unpleasant memory, many of the issues and problems that you studied here will come up again. Even if you do not emerge with a burning interest in international relations and a passionate desire to learn more, I hope that you will come away with an appreciation of the important issues at stake, that you will listen to candidates and their proposed policies, and that you can identify and understand the assumptions and beliefs that inform them. You should be able to analyze arguments and evidence rather than accept them at face value. You should aim to become an interested, informed, articulate, and thoughtful citizen of a nation and world in which all of our lives and fates are increasingly intertwined and dependent.

NOTE

¹Cathal J. Nolan, *The Longman Guide to World Affairs* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995), p. 178.



1

Change and Continuity in International History

Change and Continuity

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, are the most recent in a series of events or crises considered critical turning points in international relations. Slightly more than a decade earlier, in 1989, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall signaled the beginning of the end of the Cold War, eliminating the conflict that had defined international relations for almost four decades. Some argued that the demise of communism removed the final obstacle to the eventual global triumph of liberal democracy. This optimism was reinforced in 1991, when a broad international coalition under the authority of the United Nations reversed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, prompting talk of a “new world order.” The horrors of war in the former Yugoslavia and genocide in Rwanda during the 1990s dispelled much of this optimism. If there was a new world order, it seemed little better than the old one. Then came the assessment that the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq had “changed everything.”

These events and reactions highlight a recurring problem for students of international relations: How do we evaluate the significance of events and changes in the world? In the abstract, the question of whether a new world order is emerging depends not merely on those aspects of international relations that are changing, but also those that are constant. What matters is the relative significance of changes compared to continuities. Unfortunately, continuities are often overlooked. Looking primarily at current and recent events, it is all too easy to focus on change because it is interesting and dramatic. The danger is that we will miss important elements of constancy. For this reason, it is important to approach current issues from a larger historical perspective, with an appreciation of the events and forces that have shaped the world in which we live.

The Emergence of the Modern State System

We take certain features of our world so much for granted that they fade into an unremarkable background. Some things are almost too obvious to mention. If asked what a friend looks like, we are unlikely to describe them as having two arms and two legs. That may simply be too basic, but it is no less important for being so. To avoid overlooking the obvious, it is sometimes useful to play a mind game and imagine how someone with no previous knowledge of our world might see it. An alien visiting planet Earth would notice first some of the basic features of our world that most of us take for granted. In terms of our planet's political order, most striking would be the division of all of the planet's inhabitants (some 7 billion of them) and all the world's territory (about 58 million square miles) into a relatively small number of large political entities called *states* or *countries* (about two hundred) that at least claim to be independent. There is no central political authority that unites these different political entities. In pointing out these facts, the alien would be describing the fundamental features of the **modern state system**: a relatively small number of relatively large, independent political units recognizing no higher political authority. But had the visitor arrived a thousand years ago, he would have seen a very different world, and if he returns a thousand years from now, it will certainly look different still. A good place to begin looking at the history of world politics is with how, why, and when the modern state system came into being.

The modern state system has been around (at least in the Western world) for about four hundred years. Some date the beginning of the modern state system to 1648, the year that the **Thirty Years War** (1618–1648) ended with the **Peace of Westphalia**. Although 1648 is a convenient dividing point, the modern state system did not just appear overnight in that year: The world of 1647 did not look much different from the world of 1649. The emergence of the modern state system was in reality a slow, gradual process driven by important economic, religious, and military developments that eventually undermined the feudal order and replaced it with a new way of organizing European politics. As European influence spread throughout the world in subsequent centuries, this new way of organizing things would come to characterize international politics on a global scale, for better or worse.

A tourist cruising down Germany's Rhine would see the remnants of the feudal order—picturesque castle ruins every few miles. Along the 120 miles from Cologne to Mainz alone, there are thirty-nine castle ruins. Mostly quaint tourist attractions today, in its day each castle was the center of one of the many small kingdoms and fiefdoms that dotted the landscape of feudal Europe. That there are so many castles so close together indicates that these political units tended to be quite small (see Map 1.1). Each unit was ruled by nobility—princes, dukes, or other potentates—who ran them largely as personal property. They did not enjoy formal independence; rather, they were connected to one another in a complicated, chaotic, and often confusing pattern of obligations. Even though one might look at a map of the period and see a few larger countries (e.g., France or England), their appearance is misleading. Political power was not as centralized as the maps suggest. Central governments and rulers were usually very weak and struggled

modern state system The international state system characterized by a relatively small number of relatively large independent or sovereign political units. Although the modern state system is the result of several complex economic, religious, and military changes, a convenient date for its foundation is 1648, when the Thirty Years War ended with the Peace of Westphalia.

Thirty Years War The name given to a series of bloody and devastating wars fought largely on German lands between 1618 and 1648. Although several complex causes and motivations fueled these wars, the conflict between Protestants and Catholics over the authority of the Catholic Church and the pope was a central issue.

Peace of Westphalia The agreement that officially ended the Thirty Years War; significant in that it marked the origins of modern principles of sovereignty.

MAP 1.1 Feudal Europe, 1300

This map of Europe in 1300 illustrates the political fragmentation of the medieval period.



Source: Periodical Historical Atlas of Europe, Euratlats-Nüssli, Copyright 2001, www.euratlas.com. Used by permission. © Cengage Learning.

constantly with lesser nobles over whom they supposedly held authority. In general, "the pattern of politics in medieval Europe was ... a crazy quilt of multiple and overlapping feudal authorities and reciprocal allegiances. ... Central governments, when they existed at all, were consequently very weak."¹

Holy Roman Empire The larger political entity that brought some political unity to medieval Europe under the authority of the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.

commercial revolution The revival of trade and commerce as Europe began to emerge from the stagnation that characterized much of the period after the fall of Rome in 476 CE. This was one of the forces for the creation of larger and more centralized political units, one of the essential features of the modern state system.

gunpowder revolution The dramatic military, social, and political changes accompanying the introduction and development of gunpowder weapons in Europe, beginning in the fourteenth century, made previous means of defense less reliable and placed a premium on land and larger political units.

Protestant Reformation Martin Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church in 1517 marked the emergence of a non-Catholic version of Christianity. The growing conflict between Protestants and Catholics was one of the major contributing forces to the Thirty Years War.

As if this division of power were not messy enough, much of Europe was theoretically united under the **Holy Roman Empire**. The basis for unity was Europe's common Catholic identity. To make things even more complicated, the Holy Roman Empire had both religious and secular leaders (the pope and Holy Roman Emperor), and it was not always clear where their authority began and ended. Furthermore, the empire itself was a very weak entity in which local nobles and religious figures enjoyed substantial independence from the emperor and Rome. Thus, feudal Europe was a fragmented place of numerous small political entities entwined in a confusing and complicated mishmash of political authority.

Three major developments began to transform Europe beginning in the 1200s or 1300s (it is impossible to pick any specific date). These three “revolutions” would ultimately create much larger political units, organized on the basis of sovereignty and independence. First, the **commercial revolution** (not to be confused with the Industrial Revolution) provided a powerful economic impetus for the creation of larger entities. Second, the **gunpowder revolution** dramatically altered the requirements for defense in ways that gave substantial advantages to larger entities. Finally, the **Protestant Reformation** and the resulting Thirty Years War (1618–1648) destroyed the Catholic unity of Europe and led to the modern notion of sovereignty. Let us deal with each of these revolutions in turn.

The Commercial Revolution

Beginning in the 13th and 14th centuries, Europe began its slow emergence from the stagnation that had prevailed after the fall of Rome 700 years earlier. Part of this resurgence was the revival of commerce and the growth of a new commercial class whose livelihood lay not in production, but in trade. The commercial class faced obstacles because an extremely fragmented Europe was unable to provide many of the prerequisites for commerce. Law enforcement was weak, making the transport of valuable commodities very risky indeed. The infrastructure was in a terrible state of disrepair—roads, ports, and marketplaces had all deteriorated since the fall of Rome. Small fiefdoms did not possess the resources to build the infrastructure, and political fragmentation made coordination very difficult. Finally, systems of measurement and currency were unreliable.

All of these obstacles to commerce could be traced to the small size of political units. The emerging commercial class realized that larger political units with more effective central governments were essential. Ambitious rulers also desired larger kingdoms and increased power over local nobility. The result was a convergence of interests in favor of larger political units with more powerful central governments. A tacit alliance emerged between the commercial class and rulers who wanted to expand and centralize their authority. The commercial class provided resources in the form of taxes, and in return, the rulers provided the roads, ports, markets, law enforcement, and reliable currencies needed for trade. Thus, the economic imperatives of trade and commerce contributed to the emergence of larger political units with more effective central governments.

The Gunpowder Revolution

The weapons of the feudal age are familiar to us from movies about the period—knights in shining armor on horseback carrying swords, lances, and spears; and archers on foot wielding crossbows. War between kingdoms often turned into long sieges, with the attackers surrounding a fortified castle within which people sought safety. Once surrounded, the goal was to harass and starve the inhabitants until they surrendered. The military problem was that the attackers could do little about the thick castle walls—spears and arrows did not make much of a dent, though catapults might propel fireballs over the walls to wreak havoc within. This type of warfare began to change with the introduction of gunpowder from China. Gunpowder weapons (first cannons, and later handheld firearms) significantly altered the military equation. Most important, a kingdom could no longer resist attack by retreating behind castle walls because “from the 1430s onwards the cannons deployed by the major states of Western Europe could successfully reduce most traditional vertical defenses [i.e., walls] to rubble within a matter of days.”² Consequently, an adequate defense required much more complicated (and expensive) fortifications, enough land to absorb an attack, or both, while marshaling one’s forces to meet the attack and defeat it. A kingdom only 40 or 100 miles across, with a castle in the middle, was now extremely vulnerable. Only larger states had the land and wealth necessary to conduct war and defend themselves in the gunpowder age.

The Protestant Reformation

Until 1517, Christianity was largely synonymous with Catholicism. Because the Catholic Church was such a central feature in the social and political life of feudal Europe, the rise of Protestantism had a profound effect on European societies and politics. Martin Luther’s challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church marked the emergence of a Christian alternative to Catholicism that spread throughout Central and Northern Europe. The political problem was that many of the newly Protestant areas were located within the Catholic Holy Roman Empire. Protestants eventually sought freedom from the authority of the pope and Catholic rulers, resulting in a series of wars known collectively as the *Thirty Years War*. Though most of Europe was involved, the fighting occurred largely on German lands. By any measure, it was a war of unusual brutality and savagery. Estimates of the German population killed in the war range from 30 to 50 percent. Part of the barbarity and savagery of the war can be traced to its religious underpinnings: “Combatants on all sides thought that their opponents were, in a literal sense, instruments of the devil, who could be exterminated, whether they were soldiers or not. Indeed extermination of civilians was often preferred, precisely because it was easier to do away with civilians.”³ One need look no further than Martin Luther’s German translation of the Bible to see the depth of this hostility. The only illustrated section was the book of Revelation, which foretells the coming of the Antichrist. Illustrations made the identity of the Antichrist perfectly clear—the pope. After thirty years of devastating and unspeakably brutal warfare, not much of Europe’s sense of a common Christian identity survived.

The Thirty Years War ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, which solved the religious question by granting rulers the right to exercise authority over their territories. Rulers would now determine questions of religion on their territory. They no longer had to answer to any higher, external authority such as the pope. This new freedom, however, did not imply religious tolerance or freedom—rulers often brutally suppressed religious dissidents in their countries. What the treaty established was the modern notion of **sovereignty**—that rulers were not obligated to obey any higher, external authority.

sovereignty In international relations, the right of individual states to determine for themselves the policies that they will follow.

Thus, between the 1300s and the late 1600s, the commercial revolution, the gunpowder revolution, and the Protestant Reformation combined to alter the nature of European societies, states, and international relations. The first two revolutions helped usher in larger political entities, and the Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years War led to the notion of national sovereignty, creating the modern state system—a relatively small number of relatively large, independent political units. These features continue to define our world. This basic continuity does not imply the absence of important changes. Even though certain essential features of international politics have endured, the modern state system has evolved in many important respects. We need to understand not merely the emergence of the modern state system, but also how it has evolved over the past four centuries.

The Age of Absolutism and Limited War (1648–1789)

The period between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution (1789) was relatively uneventful compared to what came before 1648 and what was to come after 1789. There were no major continentwide wars or political revolutions. Though they occurred frequently, wars tended to be modest affairs—small, professional armies fighting limited wars for limited objectives, with limited casualties and destruction. This period is sometimes viewed as a golden age of diplomacy in which negotiation, compromise, and the balance of power prevented any repetition of the horrors of the Thirty Years War. This relative calm, however, depended on a certain political and social order that would not long survive the erosion of that order in the decades after the French Revolution.

absolutist monarchism The political order prevailing in almost all of Europe before the French Revolution, in which kings and queens claimed divine sources for their absolute rule and power unrestricted by laws or constitutions.

divine right of kings The political principle underlying absolutist monarchism in which God, not the people over whom leaders ruled, granted the legitimacy of rulers.

When people tour Europe today, they inevitably visit one of the grand palaces that make for beautiful postcards, such as the Palace of Versailles on the outskirts of Paris. Situated on massive estates with finely manicured gardens and dramatic fountains, these mansions have hundreds of rooms covered in gold and valuable art. They are the physical manifestations of the social and political order of **absolutist monarchism**. Between 1648 and 1789, monarchs claiming absolute power and authority ruled virtually every nation in Europe. They claimed authority under the doctrine of the **divine right of kings**, which held that their legitimacy was derived from God, not the people over whom they ruled.

The prevalence of absolutist monarchism helps explain the relative calm of the period. Domestically, this was not a form of government that fostered loyalty between rulers and their subjects. Indeed, the very term *subjects* hints at the critical point. People who lived in France during this period were not in any meaningful

sense “citizens” of France; they were “subjects” of the monarch. But even though their power was absolute, in reality monarchs made limited demands on their people. They did not, for example, expect their subjects to serve in the military and fight wars. For this task, monarchs maintained professional armies. Unlike volunteer armies of today, soldiers did not have to be from the countries in whose armies they served; these were mercenary, not volunteer, armies. On the eve of the French Revolution in 1789, for example, nearly a quarter of the French army consisted of foreign soldiers.⁴ Such armies were very expensive to maintain. Even the wealthiest rulers supported armies of only around 100,000 in peacetime, although this could swell to 400,000 in wartime. Given armies of this size, it was quite rare for battles to involve more than 80,000 soldiers.⁵

The professional and mercenary nature of European armies of the period reveals a reality in which most people were excluded from politics, which was synonymous with royal court scheming and intrigue, not elections, political parties, interest groups, opinion polls, and so on. In the absence of any emotional sense of loyalty and connection between people and their rulers, nationalism as we know it did not exist. It was an era of dynastic nationalism, not popular or mass nationalism. Wars during this period were not conflicts involving entire nations; they were conflicts among royal families. France *as a nation* did not go to war with Spain or Austria; instead, the Bourbons, France’s ruling dynasty, went to war with Austria’s Hapsburgs.

The absence of mass nationalism helped keep wars and conflicts limited. The major issues leading to war were territorial disputes, economic and commercial interests, and questions of dynastic and royal succession.⁶ Because European monarchs adhered to the same basic principles regarding how societies should be organized and ruled, wars were not waged over ideology. Consequently, “they were not concerned with religion as their seventeenth-century predecessors had been, nor political ideology as their post-1789 successors were to be.”⁷ The monarchs fought over *things*, not ideas, and wars over things are often less intense and bloody than wars over beliefs.

A final reason why wars remained limited affairs was the ability of European monarchs to maintain a balance of power through a constantly shifting pattern of allegiances and alliances. Throughout this period, there were usually five or six major powers in Europe—some combination of England, France, Spain, Prussia, Russia, Austria, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), Sweden, and the United Provinces (i.e., Holland)—that were successful in preventing any one power from becoming powerful enough to dominate all of Europe. Whenever one became too powerful or ambitious, the other major powers would align against it. Because the power of monarchs was absolute and they had no real ideological differences, allegiances could shift rapidly when the balance was threatened. Absolutism did have its advantages.

The Age of Revolutions (1789–1914)

As the 1700s drew to a close, few had any inkling of the dramatic changes about to transform European society, politics, and international affairs. Within a span of 120 years, Europe would cease to be a place where monarchs waged limited wars

with professional armies, becoming one in which popular governments fought wars with millions of men, resulting in casualties and destruction on an almost unimaginable scale. The story of how the comparatively genteel world of the 1700s gave way to the horrors of the trenches of World War I involves two interrelated developments. The first was the rise of modern nationalism, which altered the relationship between people and their governments, thus eroding the foundations of absolutist monarchism. And as absolutist monarchism faded, the international order that it supported began to change. The second development was the Industrial Revolution, which would alter the social and political character of European societies and increase dramatically the destructive potential of warfare. Modern nationalism would eventually combine with industrialism on the bloody battlefields of World War I. This is a complicated story that begins with two political revolutions, one in the new world and the other in the heart of monarchical Europe.

The American and French Revolutions

French Revolution The popular revolt against the French monarchy in 1789 that resulted in the establishment of the French Republic. Along with the American Revolution (which occurred around the same time, in 1776), it marked the emergence of modern nationalism.

popular sovereignty The principle that governments must derive their legitimacy from the people over whom they rule. Embodied in the French and American revolutions, this doctrine challenged the principle of the divine right of kings.

The American Revolution of 1776 and the **French Revolution** of 1789 signaled the introduction of a new idea that would in time unravel the political order of European societies. Before these revolutions, the rulers of Europe claimed divine sources of legitimacy: Louis XVI ruled over the people of France not because they wanted him but because God willed it. At the core of the American and French revolutions was the dangerous, indeed revolutionary, idea of **popular sovereignty**—the notion that governments needed to derive their authority and legitimacy from the people over whom they ruled.

The French Revolution did not start as a revolution, but merely as resistance to King Louis XVI's attempts to raise taxes (largely to pay off debts incurred when the French sided with the American colonists in their war for independence). The resistance eventually snowballed into a revolt against the monarchy itself, resulting in the overthrow of Louis XVI in 1792 and the establishment of the French Republic. A Reign of Terror eventually ensued, in which thousands of nobles and supposed enemies of the revolution met with a gruesome end, usually via the infamous guillotine. Even Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, were not spared the blade.

To grasp the significance of the French Revolution, we need to appreciate that the king of France was not just another king; he was *the* king, the most powerful and prestigious monarch in all of Europe. As a result, the revolution and overthrow of the French monarchy came to be seen as a threat to the entire system of absolutist monarchism. As one might expect, this was viewed as an undesirable development in the royal courts of Europe, though it did take a while for the enormity of what had happened to sink in. The initial reaction was not one of great alarm, perhaps because the revolution was seen as weakening France and unlikely to succeed in the long run. Thus, at first the response was largely to ignore and isolate revolutionary France.⁸

As it became apparent that the revolution would succeed, and maybe even spread, the monarchs concluded that they had a vested interest in crushing the revolt and restoring the French monarchy. The revolutionary government anticipated hostility and prepared to defend itself. France's first step was the creation

of a massive citizen army. The call went out for volunteers, with the appeal being made not on the basis of financial reward, but rather loyalty to the revolution and nation. When this failed to produce sufficient forces, the government instituted the **levée en masse** in 1793, conscripting all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 25 into military service. As a result of the *levée en masse*, “by the summer of 1794 the revolutionary army listed a million men on its rolls, of whom 750,000 were present under arms—a great force which, in terms of social class, occupation, and geographical origin, accurately reflected French society. It was the nation in arms composed of the best young men France could offer.”⁹ Unlike the pre-revolutionary French army, French citizenship was a prerequisite for service. This was now the *nation’s* army.

Although the citizen army of the French Republic successfully defended the revolution against its foreign enemies, the Republic had other problems. Constant fighting, some military setbacks, domestic political conflicts, and economic difficulties led to political instability. Exploiting domestic strife, Napoleon Bonaparte, an ambitious revolutionary general known for military brilliance and personal arrogance, staged a coup in 1799. Though he eventually crowned himself emperor, there was a critical difference between Napoleon and his monarchical predecessors. Echoing the ideals of the revolution, Napoleon maintained that his right to rule was derived from the French people. In claiming nearly absolute power while also insisting that his rule derived its legitimacy from the people, Napoleon became the first (but certainly not the last) populist dictator in modern Europe.

After consolidating power, Napoleon embarked on a program of conquest cloaked in the rhetoric and ideals of the French Revolution. The **Napoleonic Wars** (1802–1815) plunged Europe into another thirteen years of war. Given the unprecedented size of the French army, motivated by emotional appeals to spread the revolution, it was war on a grand scale. Napoleon’s forces swept across Europe until France controlled most of the continent. It was not until his armies reached the outskirts of Moscow in 1812 that the tide finally turned. Napoleon’s ambitions had gotten the better of him. His invasion of Russia proved to be a fatal mistake. A series of military defeats for France ended with the final failure at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

In many respects, the battles of the Napoleonic Wars looked very much like those of the 1700s—the soldiers and their weapons all looked the same. The major difference was scale. France’s ability to mobilize and conscript men by the hundreds of thousands forced the other nations of Europe to respond in kind. Before the French Revolution, a battle involving 80,000 troops would have been extremely rare. Such battles were dwarfed by the major clashes of the Napoleonic Wars. The Battle of Leipzig (1813) involved more than 200,000 French and another 300,000 Austrian, Russian, Prussian, and Swedish forces.¹⁰ With more than half a million troops on the field, the Battle of Leipzig involved at least five times as many men as a very large battle of the pre-revolutionary era. The scale of war had changed to the point where it was no longer just a different level of warfare but a fundamentally new way of preparing for and waging war.

This expanding scale of war was possible because people were increasingly willing to fight and make sacrifices for their governments—and governments were

levée en masse The mobilization (conscription) of all able-bodied French males to defend the French Republic from attempts by European monarchs to restore the French monarchy.

Napoleonic Wars The French wars of European conquest following Napoleon’s rise to power. Demonstrated the potential impact of modern nationalism through total national mobilization for war and widespread conscription.

more willing and able to ask people to make these sacrifices. The French Revolution was a turning point because it marked the beginnings of modern nationalism. The willingness of people from all levels of society to make sacrifices on behalf of their nation was a profoundly important development because “it was this psychological change—this popular sense of identification with the nation—that enabled the French to wage the new kind of war.”¹¹

After the Napoleonic Wars, the victorious monarchs of Europe formed the **Concert of Europe**, promising to resolve their disputes without resort to force and maintain a balance of power so that no one power would be tempted to dominate the whole continent, trying to recreate the order of pre-revolutionary Europe. But no matter how much they yearned for the days of absolute monarchism, professional armies and limited wars, a permanent return would prove to be impossible. The nationalism of the French Revolution and the knowledge of how to organize and fight wars on a grand scale could not be forgotten. Furthermore, Europe was poised on the brink of another revolution that would transform the domestic societies and international order that they sought to preserve.

The Meaning of Nationalism

modern nationalism A political creed with three critical aspects: a sense of connection and loyalty between people and their rulers or governments, the belief that governments must derive their legitimacy from the people over whom they rule, and a commitment to national or ethnic self-determination.

national self-determination The principle that each national or ethnic group has the right to determine its own destiny and rule itself.

multinational states A single state or government ruling over people of many distinct ethnic identities.

multistate nations A single ethnic group divided into several different, independent political units or states.

Born with the French Revolution, **modern nationalism** has three major components. First, nationalism entails an emotional or psychological sense of affinity among people who share an ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage. A French person who lives in Paris may never meet a compatriot from Lyon, but they nonetheless feel connected as part of a distinct social grouping. Second, modern nationalism embraces the doctrine of popular sovereignty, according to which the only basis for legitimate government is the will of the people. This was the essence of the French and American revolutions. Finally, modern nationalism places a high value on **ethnic** or **national self-determination**. Each ethnic or national group has a right to determine its own destiny, have its own government or state, and rule itself. Thus, nationalism has both domestic and international implications. Domestically, it defines what is considered a legitimate political order. Internationally, it demands that political boundaries coincide with ethnic or national boundaries.

The idea of national or ethnic self-determination was a political time bomb in nineteenth-century Europe because its political map did not reflect its ethnic composition and distribution. There were a few places, such as France, where political and ethnic boundaries overlapped fairly well. Even in this case, however, the fit was not perfect: there were small populations of Germans as well as Basques and others in parts of France. The ideal of self-determination is hard to meet in reality. More problematic were Europe’s major **multinational states** or empires, incorporating many ethnic and national groups within the boundaries of a single state. Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire, and the Russian Empire were the most prominent examples. Within Austria-Hungary, for example, there were at least ten different ethnic groups [Germans, Hungarians (also called Magyars), Romanians, Slovenes, Croats, Czechs, Poles, and so on; see Map 1.2]. In addition to the multiethnic empires, there were also several **multistate nations**, in which one national or ethnic grouping was divided into several states. The Germans were the

MAP 1.2 Distribution of ethnic groups, 1871-1908

This map showing the distribution of ethnic groups in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire illustrates the failure of political boundaries to coincide with ethnic boundaries.



Source: Design Pics/Newscom

most significant example of a multistate nation. Before 1871, no such country as Germany existed; the area that we know as Germany today was divided into several states (Prussia, Bavaria, Hanover, etc.). Nationalism would have a different impact depending on the particular ethnic or political configuration.

In the case of the Austrian-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, nationalism was a disintegrative force. As different ethnic groups demanded greater autonomy, power, and even independence, central governments found it necessary to expend resources and effort to suppress nationalist movements. The spread of nationalism would gradually weaken states composed of many different ethnic groups. But nationalism proved to have the opposite effect in places like Germany, where it contributed to the creation of new, larger, and more powerful political entities. The unification of Italy in 1861, and that of the German states in 1871, were logical

consequences of the doctrine of ethnic self-determination. Thus, nationalism was both a destructive, disintegrating force and a creative, integrating force. The weakening of some states and the creation of others altered the map of Europe, upsetting the balance of power in ways that would create new problems and lead Europe down the path to World War I.

Between 1864 and 1871, the Prussian general Otto von Bismarck waged a series of quick and decisive wars to unify the German states. This was a monumental geopolitical development. The unification of Germany in only seven years marked the almost overnight creation of a new great power in the heart of Europe. With its substantial population, industrial output, efficient government administration, and military power based on the renowned Prussian army, Germany was a force to reckon with, and German power only increased in the decades following unification.

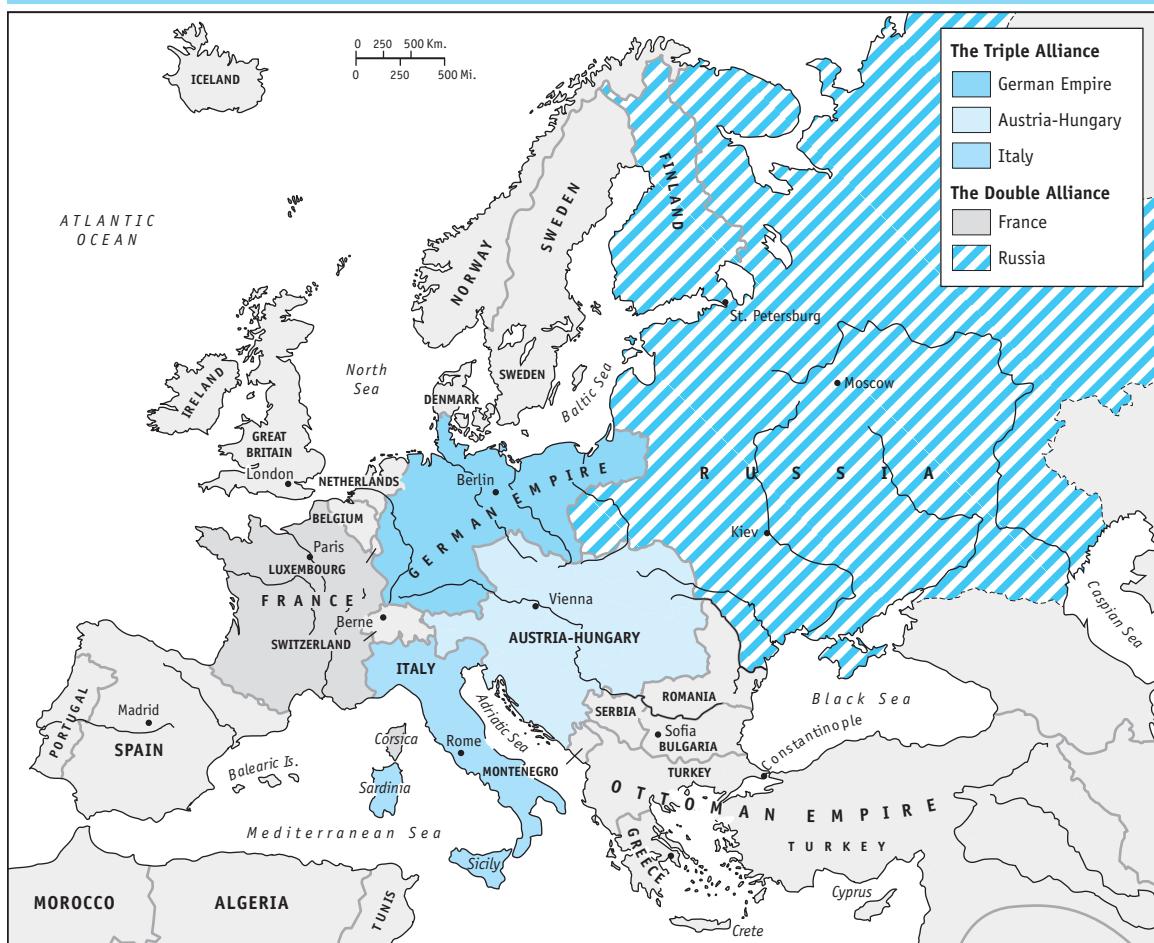
By the turn of the century, German industrial output had soared past Great Britain's. Within Germany, this led to demands for a more assertive foreign policy and the creation of sufficient military power to sustain it. Most troublesome, especially to Britain, was increasing German naval power, which was seen as a threat to British naval supremacy. Michael Mandelbaum explains the problem: "Germany's enormous growth was the disturbing element in European affairs. It was a development that could not be accommodated within the existing order. ... Although surpassing the other powers in military and economic terms, they lagged behind in what were supposed to be the fruits, as well as the sources of power: territorial possessions."¹²

The creation of this new power in the heart of Europe set in motion a dynamic of fear and insecurity. France in particular felt vulnerable after being replaced as the dominant continental power, and it sought allies to balance Germany's growing power. Germany's neighbors also increased their military power to counter the new danger, prompting an arms race on the continent. Germany, in turn, feared "encirclement" by hostile powers (France to the west, Austria-Hungary to the south, and Russia to the east). Germany hoped to keep France isolated by forging alliances with Austria-Hungary and Russia. This proved to be very difficult because Russia and Austria-Hungary were often in conflict over issues in the Balkans (the southern part of Eastern Europe). Eventually, Germany formed an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy in 1882. After years of searching for a partner, France finally formed an alliance with Russia in 1892. This basic division of Europe remained intact until the outbreak of World War I (see Map 1.3).

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution changed so much about the way people lived that it is almost impossible to know where to begin or end a discussion of its impact. In terms of understanding the evolution of international relations, three aspects of the Industrial Revolution are critical. First, the Industrial Revolution changed European societies in ways that reinforced many of the developments associated with nationalism, particularly the erosion of monarchical rule and the rise of mass politics. Second, the Industrial Revolution allowed the production of commodities cheaply and in vast quantities. Not just clothes, canned goods, and

MAP 1.3 Europe on the eve of World War I



Source: © Cengage Learning

railroad cars poured off the assembly lines, but also guns, cannons, ammunition, and military uniforms. Third, the wealth, weapons, and technology created during the Industrial Revolution widened the power gap between Europe and the non-Western world, contributing to the expansion of European influence to all corners of the world.

Before the mid-1800s, European societies were primarily agricultural. But with the spread of industrialism, people began leaving farms and pouring into cities to work in factories. Just as important as urbanization, the Industrial Revolution also created new economic and social classes—a small elite of wealthy industrial barons; a substantial middle class of managers, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers; and an ever-increasing and organized urban working class. As these new groups increased in size and power, they demanded a greater voice in government and politics. The monarchs of Europe were increasingly confronted with a dilemma: how to preserve

the existing political order in the face of such dramatic social and economic changes. In the long run, they failed to resolve the dilemma. As the nineteenth century progressed, the power of monarchs gradually eroded as the power of more representative political institutions increased. Although very few European countries could be considered genuinely democratic by the end of the century, there were also very few genuinely absolutist monarchs. The force of nationalism, the requirements and strains of industrial society, and demands for wider political inclusion slowly transformed European societies from elitist, absolutist monarchies to polities characterized by mass political inclusion and involvement.

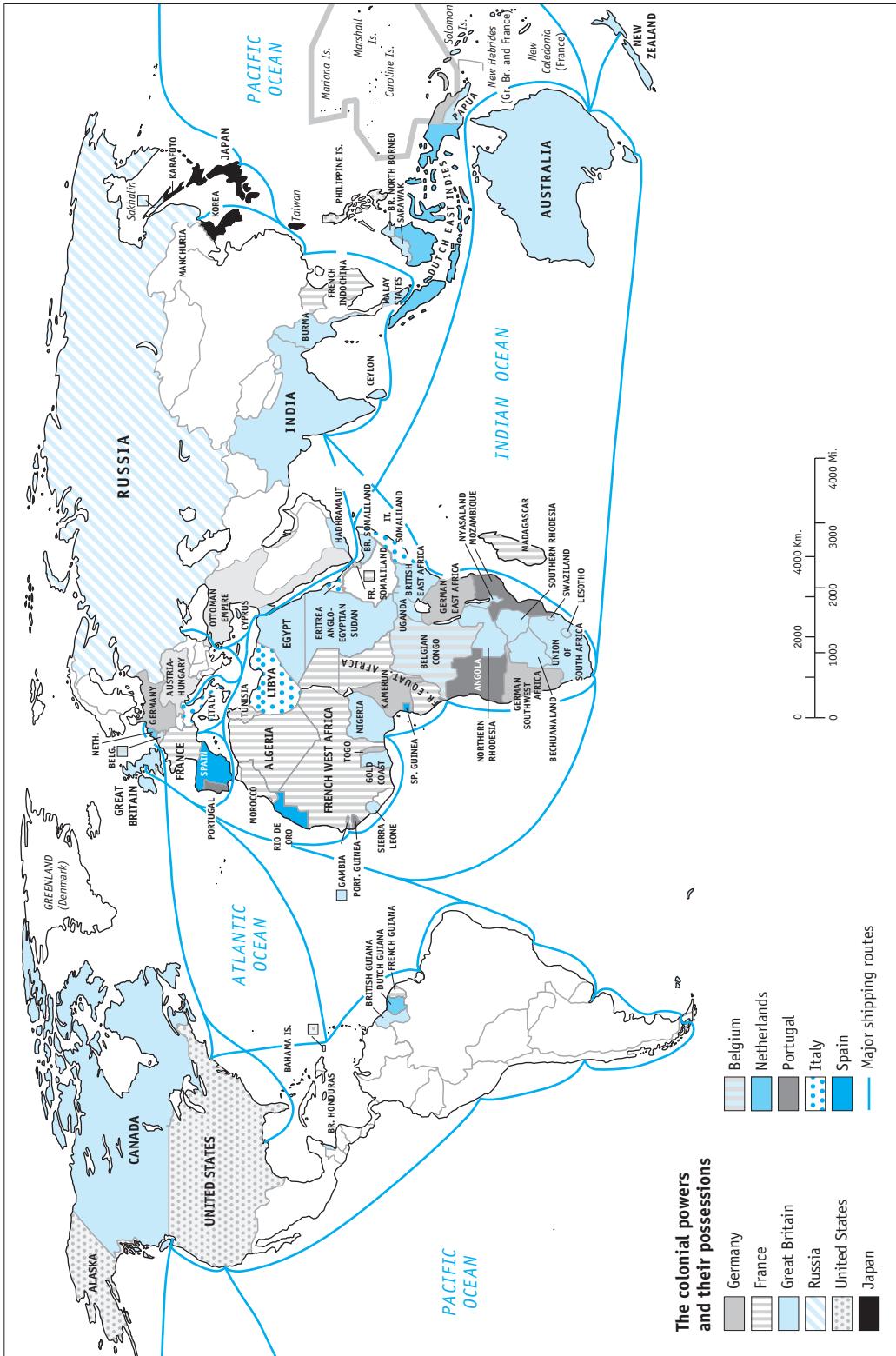
One of the clearest manifestations of the dilemma that monarchs faced was the exclusion of people from political power while asking them to sacrifice on behalf of the state. The most onerous sacrifice was military service. Conscription was practiced in virtually every nation, some demanding up to six or eight years of service. Only Britain among the major powers refrained from conscription. By the end of the nineteenth century, European powers maintained peacetime armies that dwarfed even the wartime armies of the previous century. But despite the tremendous social and political changes of the nineteenth century, the period between 1815 and 1914 was deceptively calm. Other than the Crimean War (1854–1856), war among major powers was avoided. The most devastating war, the American Civil War (1861–1865), occurred on the other side of the world. Despite the apparent calm, however, every major power in Europe lived in a state of nearly permanent war readiness by the end of the nineteenth century.

Globally, increasing European wealth and military power combined with improvements in naval technology and communications to create a scramble for overseas colonies during the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1900, very few areas of Asia or Africa were free of European domination (see Map 1.4). England's Queen Victoria could accurately claim that the Sun never set on her empire. This was the second major wave of European imperialism. The first, immediately following the discovery of the new world in the 1500s and 1600s, was concentrated on North and South America.

Historians differ on what forces drove the second wave of imperialism. Some argued it was industrial capitalism's need for overseas markets and access to cheap raw materials, resources, and labor. Others saw imperialism as a primarily cultural phenomenon, motivated by notions of ethnic, racial, and religious superiority that led Europeans to conquer the "backward" parts of the world in a missionary attempt to spread the virtues of Christianity and Western culture. Whatever the driving force, "Europe's domination of the world ... reflected the ability of sophisticated weapons and advanced techniques to overcome the inherent advantages of native populations. ... The machine-gun was only the most concrete military expression of the tactical superiority enjoyed by European armies in Asia and Africa."¹³ European wealth and weapons "vastly increased the gap between the West and the Rest, making it easy for a handful of Europeans to conquer much of Asia and Africa."¹⁴

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the world had been transformed. The age of absolutist monarchism was on its last legs. The spread of nationalism was reconfiguring the map of Europe, creating new powers while weakening old ones.

MAP 1.4 European overseas empires in 1913



Source: © Cengage Learning

Nationalism and the Industrial Revolution allowed governments to create war machines capable of unparalleled destruction. European political and military power had spread to even the most remote corners of the world. On the surface, things remained calm, but the calm would not last long.

The Road to War

The division of Europe into rival alliances almost guaranteed that a war involving anyone would eventually involve everyone. The only question was which conflict would bring the precarious peace to an end. The chances were good that a general war would emerge from the conflicts in the Balkans in Southeastern Europe. It was here that the power of the Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires intersected in political waters muddied by the conflicts of nationalism. One of the most volatile conflicts was between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Recall that there were substantial populations of Serbians living within the borders of Austria-Hungary (see Map 1.2). Consistent with the sentiments of nationalism, powerful forces within Serbia called for the creation of a Greater Serbia incorporating all the Serbian people, something that did not sit well with Austria-Hungary. When a Serbian nationalist extremist assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary (next in line to the throne) in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, the first step on the road to war was taken. What followed was a dizzying round of threats and ultimatums that failed to resolve the crisis. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Russia, which generally supported Serbia, mobilized its army on July 30, setting off a chain reaction in Germany and France. By August 4, all of Europe was at war, with Britain joining France and Russia. The peace that had lasted since the defeat of Napoleon was over.

The Age of Total War (1914–1945)

When the Great War (as World War I was known before there was any need to number such conflicts) finally came, most expected the troops home by Christmas. Men flooded into recruiting stations to get in on the big adventure. Enthusiastic crowds saw the trainloads of men off to war. This was still an age in which romantic images of chivalrous war clouded the popular imagination. The enthusiasm did not long survive the realities of industrial warfare. Instead of the glorious battles of war novels, the soldiers found a bleak, bloody, and impersonal battlefield. The war that was supposed to be over by the holidays dragged on for four indecisive years, turning into a horrific war of attrition that destroyed and scarred an entire generation. Machine guns, artillery, massive quantities of ammunition, poisonous gas, and muddy trenches robbed war of glamour and romance.

Whereas the Battle of Leipzig a century earlier represented war on an unprecedented scale because it involved 500,000 *soldiers*, during World War I, it was not uncommon for single battles to result in more than 500,000 *casualties*. At the Battle of Verdun (1916), over 400,000 men were killed or wounded. The British lost almost 20,000 men on the very first day of the Battle of the Somme (1916).

Given the population of Britain at the time, this would be the equivalent of 100,000 Americans dying on the first day of the 2003 Gulf War. Proportionally, the British lost more men in one day at the Battle of the Somme than the United States did during all fifteen years of the Vietnam War. In the end, British casualties exceeded 400,000 at the Somme. At the Battle of Passchendaele (1917), the Allies and the Germans suffered over 600,000 casualties. Such casualties are even more astounding given the modest gains achieved. At the Somme, the British captured a mere 120 square miles of territory.¹⁵ Industrial total war also transformed the manner of death. James Sheehan relates the grim fact that 100,000 of the 379,000 French casualties at Verdun were classified as “missing” because “the majority had been interred in the mud or simply blown to bits by artillery fire, their bodies unrecovered or unrecognizable.”¹⁶ This was not what the enthusiastic recruits of 1914 expected.

If it was the enthusiasm of nationalism that brought men to the battlefields, it was the factories of the Industrial Revolution that supplied them with a seemingly endless supply of guns, bullets, cannons, and artillery shells. People not fighting the war on the battlefields worked at home in factories supplying the soldiers. To wage war on this scale, governments mobilized entire populations and seized control of industry. War bonds were sold; prices and wages were controlled; consumer goods were rationed; new taxes were imposed; women came out of the home to work in the factories; and even children collected scrap metal to be turned into weapons and ammunition. World War I became the first **total war**, in which every element of society and every aspect of national life were consumed by the conduct of war.

Total war represented the coming together of the two developments transforming European societies and politics over the previous century—nationalism and industrialism. Nationalism allowed governments to make unprecedented demands of their citizens. Industrialization provided the material to equip, transport, and sustain armies on a vast new scale. Bruce Porter explains how: “The feverish nationalism that engulfed Europe in 1914 attested to the status that the nation-state had attained as the supreme claimant on human loyalty. ... The nationalism of the war and its consequent unifying effect enabled states to mobilize their human resources on a scale previously unthinkable.”¹⁷ When combined with the ability of industry to produce limitless quantities of weapons and ammunition, the result was slaughter as “all the technological and organizational genius of the industrial age culminat[ed] in the mass production of mass destruction.”¹⁸

total war A war in which participants mobilize all available resources, human and material, for the purpose of waging war.

The carnage continued for three years, and by 1917, the nations and armies of Europe were close to exhaustion. Three pivotal events finally brought the war to an end. First, the armored tank, a new weapon introduced by the British in 1917, offered a way out of the stalemate of trench warfare. Tanks provided protection, enabling soldiers to advance across battlefields and through barbed wire. Second, largely because of the devastation of the war, the demoralization of the army, and the weakness of the government, the Bolsheviks (the communists) seized power in the Russian Revolution of November 1917 and quickly made good on their promise to withdraw Russia from the war. Third, although peace with Russia seemed like good news for Germany, this was offset by the U.S. entry into the war on the side of France and Britain. German submarine warfare against U.S. ships crossing



Trench warfare during World War I. German troops try to advance (top) while a British soldier peers onto the battlefield. Glorious visions of war did not long survive the harsh realities of industrial warfare: barbed wire, machine guns, fire from distant artillery day and night, and life in a muddy ditch shared with corpses and vermin.

Source: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

the Atlantic with supplies for Britain finally enraged the United States sufficiently to bring it into the war in April 1917. The tide turned against Germany by August 1918, and Germany was defeated by November. The tragedy of the Great War was over. The troops, psychologically and physically scarred by the bleak horrors of industrialized warfare, limped home. It was now up to the diplomats to pick up the pieces and create a world in which the Great War might be the last one, the “war to end all wars,” as it was referred to optimistically at the time. In the end, it is hard to disagree with Simon Schama’s assessment of World War I as the “original sin” of the twentieth century, a horror from which a host of other horrors, including Adolf Hitler and another world war, would soon follow.¹⁹

The Road to War (Again)

Two major-power wars within a single generation are unusual in international history. That Europe would again be plunged into war, merely two decades after World War I, suggests a connection between the conflicts. World War II cannot be understood without an appreciation of the previous war's impact on both the victors and the vanquished. World War I cast a long, dark shadow. It is impossible to exaggerate the impact of the war on European societies. The legacy of the war was not uniform, however. For some, the horrors of World War I forged a determination to avoid a repeat at any cost. Modern war had become so terrible that nothing could justify another war. For others, the perception that the Great War's settlement was unfair and unjust fueled resentment. These contrasting views of the war proved a dangerous mix.

Major wars always pose the problem of creating a postwar order, a task that usually falls to the victors. The first step in this direction was the **Treaty of Versailles** (1919), which spelled out the final peace terms. The treaty was in many senses a quintessential "victor's peace"—harsh on the losers, easy on the winners. Germany was required to accept conditions that applied to no one else—loss of territory, restrictions on its armed forces, and payment of huge reparations. Most important, Germany was forced to accept sole and total blame for the war. This provision was particularly galling and humiliating for the Germans, who came to feel that they had been unfairly singled out for harsh treatment simply because they were the losers. As a result, "all German parties and statesmen ... took it for granted that the Treaty of Versailles required drastic revision."²⁰ A decade later, Hitler and the Nazis were able to take advantage of and exploit these sentiments during their rise to power.

In Great Britain and France, the war's legacy was somewhat different. Although they won, victory came at a staggering cost. From their perspective, the overriding priority was avoiding another war. During the 1970s in the United States, people often spoke of a "Vietnam syndrome," referring to a supposed hesitance to use force abroad for fear of becoming bogged down in another Vietnam. But if we compare the human and economic costs of the Vietnam War to the costs of World War I, there really is no comparison. The casualties suffered by Britain in World War I (adjusted for the differences in population) were 80 times greater than those of the United States in Vietnam. Imagine the impact of Vietnam if the United States had suffered 4 million casualties instead of 50,000.

Many yearned for the creation of a postwar order that might prevent another war, and U.S. president Woodrow Wilson attempted to provide one. The cornerstone of his concept of postwar order (and another key part of the Treaty of Versailles) was the **League of Nations**, which was meant to provide a collective, international response to future threats to peace. The league eventually proved ineffective. Several obstacles doomed it. First, despite the organization's connection to Woodrow Wilson, the United States failed to join when the U.S. Senate refused to ratify Versailles. Second, the Soviet Union retreated into isolation. Third, and most important, the league's members were unwilling to do what was necessary to respond to threats to peace. The league was a voluntary organization of states, not a world government. It did not have its own military forces. If it were to

Treaty of Versailles Codified the terms on which World War I was concluded. These terms were particularly harsh on the loser, Germany. In addition to requiring the payment of reparations, restrictions on German armed forces, and territorial concessions, the treaty stated that Germany bore full responsibility for the war. Germans across the political spectrum viewed this stipulation as one-sided and unjust.

League of Nations An international organization created in the aftermath of World War I; tried to ensure that there would be a collective, international response to any future threats to peace.

mount a credible response, it would need to convince its members to do so. In the end, they were unwilling to respond when needed.

As the 1920s drew to a close, a dangerous brew was already simmering—Germany was dissatisfied with the terms of Versailles; Western European nations were weary of war and determined to avoid any repetition; and the principal post-war institution designed to preserve the peace was not living up to expectations. The Great Depression made things worse, creating economic hardship and political turmoil everywhere. Hitler and the Nazis exploited German resentment and the hardships of the Depression to expand their political appeal. Many forget that although the Nazis quickly destroyed German democracy, they came to power initially through democratic means. Fascist, military-oriented dictatorships emerged in Italy, Japan, and Spain as well. These regimes provided the final tipping point that plunged the world into war for the second time in a generation.

Traditional accounts date the start of World War II to Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, although Japan's takeover of Manchuria (part of China) in 1931 or its invasion of China in 1937 can also mark the starting point. As Japan was expanding its empire in Asia, Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. Ravaged by the Great Depression and limited by the Treaty of Versailles, Germany remained too weak in the early years of Nazi rule to cause much trouble. By 1935, however, the German economy was recovering, and Hitler began to implement his plan to restore and expand German power. Conscription was resumed and a new German air force (the Luftwaffe) was unveiled. Although both actions violated the Treaty of Versailles, Germany's neighbors did nothing. Hitler's first major international move occurred in 1936, when German forces reentered the Rhineland (German territory on the border with France), violating the Treaty of Versailles. Again, Germany's neighbors did nothing.

Hitler became increasingly bold. Between 1936 and 1938, German military spending increased dramatically and went largely unmatched and unchallenged. Instead of resisting these initial German moves, Western nations engaged in a policy of **appeasement**. Rather than risk war over demands that could be seen as legitimate, France and Britain acquiesced. Though a few lonely voices, such as Winston Churchill in Britain, expressed alarm, the policy of appeasement was popular in part because the idea of another war was unthinkable. The most infamous act of appeasement occurred in the fall of 1938. The problem (or pretext) was the presence of ethnic Germans living in a part of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. With the encouragement of Hitler and the German government in Berlin, the Sudeten Germans demanded to be unified with Germany. As the situation approached war, a conference was held in Munich in which France and Britain (without the consent of the Czechs) gave Hitler what he wanted. Upon his return home, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain waved the agreement aloft, proclaiming that it ensured "peace in our time." A few months later, in March 1939, Germany surprised the world again by invading and capturing the rest of Czechoslovakia. The **Munich Agreement** had not satisfied Hitler. Now it was clear to all that his goals went well beyond revising the Treaty of Versailles. Few could escape the conclusion that war would come again. But when?

appeasement A policy in which nations deal with international conflicts by giving in to the demands of their opponents. The term acquired an extremely negative connotation as a result of attempts to appease Hitler and Nazi Germany in the years before World War II.

Munich Agreement Often cited as the most egregious example of appeasement, this was an agreement in which France and England allowed Germany to take over the Sudetenland (a portion of Czechoslovakia where many ethnic Germans lived).

The Next “Great War”

Europe did not have to wait long for an answer. After signing a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, German troops invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany. After making quick work of Poland, Hitler turned westward, conquering Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and most of France, leaving Britain virtually alone to prevent total German domination of Western Europe. Though the United States provided critical supplies to Britain, internal isolationist sentiment kept it out of the war. The Germans bombed London and other parts of Britain, which many feared was a prelude to an invasion. Although the bombing caused substantial damage and hardship, the anticipated invasion never came.

In 1941, two developments altered the course of the war. In June, Hitler broke his nonaggression pact with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. Then, in December, the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, leading the United States to declare war on Japan. In response, Japan’s ally, Germany, declared war on the United States, bringing the United States into the European conflict as well. The United States and the Soviet Union were now allies with Britain in the struggle against Germany (Stalin promised to join the war against Japan shortly after Germany was defeated).

Although the United States declared war on Germany, the vast majority of European fighting between 1941 and 1944 took place on the eastern front between Germany and the Soviet Union. Stalin pressured Churchill and U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt to relieve the burden of fighting on the Soviet Union by opening a “second front” in Western Europe, but this would not happen until June 1944. In the meantime, the Soviet Union suffered massive casualties. Whereas previous estimates of Soviet casualties (military and civilian) were around 20 million, “new research growing out of the more open atmosphere in recent years has been pointing to figures closer to, and possibly in excess of, 25 million deaths.”²¹ It is impossible to overstate the level of devastation and its impact on the Soviet Union. Even though the United States shouldered the burden of fighting Japan in the Pacific, its casualties were modest in comparison, totaling approximately 330,000 in Europe and the Pacific combined, less than 2 percent of Soviet casualties. The experience of the countries that emerged from World War II as the two major world powers was strikingly different.

The invasion of France on the beaches of Normandy on June 7, 1944, opened the long-awaited second front, requiring Hitler to fight on two fronts. As Allied troops advanced on Germany from the west and Soviet troops closed in from the east, the eventual outcome of the war in Europe became clear. In June 1945, U.S., British, and Soviet troops met in Berlin, and Germany’s defeat was final. The war against Japan continued for a few months after the German surrender, with the U.S. use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945 finally triggering Japan’s surrender (just in time to prevent Soviet entry into the war against Japan, a fact that some believe to be more than coincidence).²² The second total war in a generation had come to its conclusion.

The Cold War (1945–1989)

After two wars in the span of thirty years, with combined casualties approaching 100 million, the obvious concern was avoiding yet another war. As World War II ended, it was still unclear what sort of world would emerge from the wreckage. Would the victors be able to create a postwar order that could avoid a descent into World War III? Would they be able to construct an international organization that might fulfill the failed promise of the League of Nations? Could the world finally learn to avoid the calamity of total war?

Although no one knew the answers, most realized that everything depended on whether the United States and the Soviet Union would be able to build on the cooperative relationship established during the war. Everyone knew that these two countries would emerge from the war as the dominant powers, and the general character of any international order is usually defined by the nature of relations among its major powers. Before World War II, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union had been strained; the United States had refused even to recognize the Soviet government until 1933. Nonetheless, some hoped that their wartime alliance might form the basis for a better relationship. Others remained doubtful, seeing the wartime alliance as a product of a common threat in Nazi Germany. Once that threat was eliminated, conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union were expected to resurface.

During the war, there were indications of future trouble. One can look to the U.S. atomic bomb program, the Manhattan Project, for one sign of the problems to come. Even though Great Britain was kept informed about the project's progress, Britain and the United States decided not to share the information with the Soviet Union, though Stalin certainly knew about the project from spying. Despite the alliance, Roosevelt "saw no reason to take the Soviets into American confidence about a weapons system of potentially great significance in the post-war years."²³

Keeping the atomic secret was only one sign that the Soviet Union was not viewed as an ally in the same sense as Britain. Another sign of trouble was disagreements about the postwar fate of Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland, Romania, Hungary, and others). The military reality was that at war's end, Soviet forces would control these countries. The United States insisted that Stalin hold free elections in Eastern Europe after the war. In fact, Stalin signed the Declaration on Liberated Europe (1945), which called for free and open elections. Stalin, however, wanted governments friendly to the Soviet Union. Given Soviet losses in World War II, Stalin thought that this was a reasonable demand to protect Soviet security in the future. Unfortunately, these two objectives could not be met simultaneously: freely elected governments in Eastern Europe would not have been friendly to the Soviet Union. As John Lewis Gaddis explains, "F.D.R.'s superficial knowledge of Eastern Europe kept him from fully recognizing the contradiction between freely elected and pro-Russian governments."²⁴

The secrecy surrounding the Manhattan Project and disagreements about the future of Eastern Europe were not the only sources of tension between the two allies (the delayed opening of the second front in Europe was another), but they are enough

to indicate that the United States–Soviet alliance during World War II was more a product of a common threat than of broader common interests and outlooks. To use a familiar adage of international politics, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. It is more accurate to view the United States and Soviet Union as co-belligerents in the war against Germany, not allies in any deeper sense of the term.

The Cold War Begins: Conflict and Containment

U.S.–Soviet relations deteriorated rapidly after the war. The impossibility of reconciling the Western desires for free elections in Eastern Europe with Soviet expectations of friendly regimes became obvious as Stalin moved to impose communist governments. It was increasingly clear that Stalin had no intention of abiding by the democratic provisions of the Declaration on Liberated Europe. Political dissent throughout Eastern Europe was ruthlessly crushed. Soviet actions prompted Winston Churchill's famous warning that "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent."²⁵

In response to these developments, an American diplomat in Moscow, George Kennan, composed an analysis of Soviet policy. Conveyed to Washington as a diplomatic telegram in early February 1946, it was later published in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* under the title "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (signed only as "X"). Kennan argued that the United States needed to understand the expansionist nature of Soviet policy and the threats that it posed to U.S. interests. The sources of Soviet expansion, he argued, were deeply rooted in Russia's historical insecurity, Stalin's paranoid personality, the communist regime's need for external enemies, and the imperatives of Soviet ideology. Although in the long run, these expansionist tendencies could be modified or tamed, the only immediate option available to the United States was a policy of **containment**. The United States needed to use its power—political, economic, and military—to prevent further expansion of Soviet influence. Kennan's analysis struck a chord in Washington.²⁶

Because of political pressure to bring U.S. troops home from Europe as soon as possible, many feared a military threat from the Soviet Union. But even those who were less concerned with a direct military attack worried that postwar economic hardship would provide fertile ground for communist parties loyal to the Soviet Union to come to power. Virtually everyone agreed that the economic reconstruction of Western Europe was vital. The primary instrument for recovery was the **Marshall Plan**, announced in May 1947. The Marshall Plan, named for U.S. secretary of state George Marshall, offered massive economic aid to all the countries of Europe (including the Soviet Union) that were devastated by the war. The Soviet Union refused the aid because the conditions were deemed incompatible with its socialist economy. The Soviet-imposed governments in Eastern Europe were pressured to do likewise. In the end, the Marshall Plan was a stunning success where it was accepted. By 1952, Western Europe's productive output was almost double its prewar levels.

At roughly the same time, the United States also became concerned about a civil war in Greece because the British indicated that they could no longer give assistance to the Greek government combating a communist insurgency. In a speech to Congress explaining his decision to aid the Greek government (as well as the

containment The U.S. policy of resisting the expansion of Soviet/communist influence during the Cold War.

Marshall Plan The program of economic assistance to rebuild the nations of Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

Truman Doctrine Announced by President Harry Truman in 1947, this policy committed the United States to assist foreign governments threatened by communist forces. It represented an expansive vision of the policy of containment.

Cold War The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that spanned from the late 1940s until the late 1980s (the fall of the Berlin Wall) or early 1990s (the collapse of the Soviet Union).

domino theory The belief (and fear) that the spread of communism to one country almost automatically threatened its expansion to neighboring countries.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) The Cold War alliance, including the United States, Canada, and many Western European nations, against the Soviet Union and its allies. It has survived the end of the Cold War, even expanding to include many former Soviet allies in Eastern Europe.

decolonization The achievement of political independence by European colonies, especially in Asia and Africa, in the two decades following World War II.

Turkish government), President Harry Truman laid out his policy goals in broad and grandiose terms: “I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.”²⁷ This pronouncement, embodying an expansive vision of containment, was dubbed the **Truman Doctrine**. Thus, by the end of 1947, the hope for a cooperative superpower relationship was dead. The **Cold War** had begun in earnest.

The Cold War Expands

Despite the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine suggesting that the United States would assist *all* “free peoples,” it was unclear whether containment would apply everywhere, or only in strategically significant parts of the world. It was also unclear what types of aid would be provided and whether the United States was prepared to go to war to contain communist influence. The fall of China to the communists in 1949 and the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950 would have the effect of expanding the scope of containment well beyond Europe. The United States decided to take military action under the aegis of the United Nations to prevent the expansion of communism into South Korea. The Korean War, which eventually involved China as well, lasted four years at the cost of more than 50,000 American casualties. The net effect of the Korean War was to globalize containment. Even if a given country was not strategically very significant, the fear was that if any country fell, others were sure to follow. This became known as the **domino theory**. The Korean War also shifted the emphasis of containment. Now the threat and response were seen increasingly in military terms, with one result being the creation of a military alliance, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, in Europe.

The logic of containment and the domino theory would be most severely tested in the Third World. World War II had seriously weakened the colonial powers of Britain and France, and the immediate postwar years witnessed the rise of independence and national liberation movements throughout Asia and Africa. The process of **decolonization**, however, was not free of conflict: sometimes the colonial power tried to hold on, usually in vain. But conflicts continued after independence as different groups, including communists, struggled for power.

The most important such conflict occurred in Vietnam. A former French colony, Vietnam was divided between the communist north, supported by China and the Soviet Union, and the noncommunist (though hardly democratic) south. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a communist insurgency supported by North Vietnam threatened the regime in South Vietnam. U.S. policymakers were determined to support the South Vietnamese government, first in the form of aid and military advisers. It was not long before the United States was actively involved in fighting, and by 1968, there were over 500,000 soldiers on the ground. Despite repeated promises that victory was at hand, the war dragged on year after year, as public support eroded and protests spread and grew. Despite more than ten years of fighting, the world’s most “powerful” nation was unable to prevail. In 1975, communist forces captured Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, and television screens were filled with scenes of desperate people climbing to the roof of the U.S. embassy to reach helicopters carrying the last people out before the communist victory was total.²⁸

Easing the Cold War

Even as the Vietnam War was being waged, there were attempts to ease the superpower conflict. Elected president in 1968, Richard Nixon and his chief foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, embarked upon a policy of **détente** toward the Soviet Union. They believed that the United States possessed tools that could be used as leverage to moderate Soviet behavior. There were things that the Soviet Union wanted from the United States. The Soviet Union sought recognition as a power on par with the United States and greater opportunities for trade. In return, the United States wanted greater respect for human rights and restraint in support for communist governments and insurgencies in the Third World. Détente was based on the assumption that these different interests and objectives of the two powers could be “linked” in order to create a relationship based not only on conflict, but also on cooperation.

Détente was controversial, even within Nixon’s own party. A group of conservative Republicans and Democrats, including former governor of California Ronald Reagan, were convinced that détente was a one-way street. They pointed in particular to a dramatic increase in the Soviet nuclear arsenal during the 1970s. To make matters even worse, the promised benefits of détente failed to materialize, as the Soviet Union continued to expand its influence in the Third World, including Latin America. Détente had merely lulled the United States into a false sense of security. Whatever the merits of this argument, the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 seemed to lend it credence. The invasion was the death knell for détente, an end further ensured by Ronald Reagan’s election to the presidency in 1980.

détente A policy and period of relaxed tensions between the United States and Soviet Union during the 1970s.

The Resurgence and End of the Cold War

Reagan was convinced that détente allowed the Soviet Union to surge ahead of the United States in military power and expand its political influence in the Third World while the United States naïvely waited for Soviet moderation. His administration pursued policies that many viewed as a return to the coldest days of the Cold War, including an ambitious increase in military spending in both the conventional and nuclear areas. Nuclear arms control with the Soviet Union was placed on hold. The administration increased assistance to anticommunist governments and insurgency movements in Third World countries. Most controversial was aid to the “contras,” a number of groups fighting to overthrow the communist government in Nicaragua. Opponents in the United States feared that Reagan’s policies risked an expensive and dangerous arms race with the Soviet Union, as well as possible military intervention in another Vietnam-like conflict in the Third World. Administration supporters claimed that these policies were a necessary demonstration of U.S. power to deter an ambitious Soviet Union. Some may have even hoped that the Soviet Union, suffering from severe economic problems, could never afford to stay in a renewed arms race.

Soviet leadership was in a state of transition during Reagan’s first term. Leonid Brezhnev, in power since the 1960s, died in 1982. He was followed by two geriatric remnants of the old guard before a much younger and more vibrant figure, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, appeared on the scene. In 1984, Gorbachev impressed Prime Minister

Mikhail Gorbachev The leader of the Soviet Union from 1985 until its dissolution in 1991.

perestroika Mikhail

Gorbachev's reforms during the second half of the 1980s, aimed at reforming the Soviet economic system.

glasnost Mikhail Gorbachev's political reforms in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1980s, allowing for greater freedom of expression and dissent.

Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain as someone she could “do business with.” People realized quickly that this was a new type of Soviet leader. Not only were he and his wife relatively young and outgoing figures, but he also appeared determined to reform the stagnant Soviet system through his twin policies of **perestroika** and **glasnost**. *Perestroika* (restructuring) involved market-oriented reforms to loosen government control over the economy. *Glasnost* (openness) entailed political reforms to open the Soviet system to greater dissent and discussion of the problems that plagued Soviet society.

Much to the dismay of many conservatives in the United States, Reagan, like his friend Margaret Thatcher, became convinced that Gorbachev was for real. Chummy summits, complete with smiling photo ops, followed. Progress was made in nuclear arms control talks for the first time in over a decade. But despite the reduction in tensions, the question of how Gorbachev would respond to a real crisis or challenge remained. If “openness” got out of hand, would Gorbachev move to crush dissent, as past Soviet leaders had?

By the end of the 1980s, Gorbachev faced a dilemma at home and in Eastern Europe: *Glasnost* was a smashing success, whereas *perestroika* was a dismal failure. The result, as David Reynolds explains, was that “[a]s the economy collapsed, freedom to protest grew. Reconstruction became deconstruction.”²⁹ As economies foundered and domestic criticism mounted, the communist regimes in Eastern Europe grew increasingly fragile. How would Gorbachev respond when pro-Soviet regimes found themselves on the wrong end of *glasnost*?

The answer came in East Germany, one of the most hard-line regimes in Eastern Europe. East Germany’s leader, Erich Honecker, viewed Gorbachev and his reforms with alarm—and with good reason, because Honecker, his cronies, and the infamous secret police (the Stasi) were despised by the East German people. When Gorbachev visited in October 1989, crowds chanted “Gorby” as Honecker, utterly clueless, stood smiling at his side. Within weeks, opposition to Honecker’s regime led to his ouster and desperate attempts to prevent an outright revolution. It was clear that Gorbachev was not going to save the East German regime from the wrath of its own people. By the middle of November, Honecker was long gone, and the Berlin Wall lay in ruins.

Although Gorbachev did not order the wall torn down, he did not prevent it. The world watched in amazement as Berliners streamed back and forth under the Brandenburg Gate between East and West Berlin, celebrating, where they would have been shot days before. The same forces that unraveled communism in Eastern Europe would eventually do the same in the Soviet Union. By 1991, the Soviet Union itself joined the list of former communist nations when Boris Yeltsin, Gorbachev’s successor, declared communism dead and the Soviet Union disintegrated.

The Curious Peace of the Cold War

Students of international relations spend a lot of time trying to understand things that actually happened, but sometimes it is just as interesting to consider those things that did not happen. The peace of the Cold War provides a good example

of just such a “nonevent.” For more than forty years, two of the greatest military powers in history, divided by an intense ideological rivalry, struggled against each other across the globe. But despite the intensity of the conflict, they never went to war. In many ways, this is a very curious outcome: It is unusual in international history for two great powers to compete against one another on such a scale and never fight. If any “nonevent” cries out for an explanation, it is the curious peace that was the Cold War.

Why did the Cold War never turn hot? Explanations for nonevents are by their very nature speculative. In thinking about what one scholar has called the **long peace**, a variety of possible explanations have been put forward.³⁰ John Mearsheimer highlights two factors, the presence of only two major powers (**bipolarity**) and nuclear weapons.³¹ His argument is simple: The chances for war increase when there are more than two major powers because this increases the number of avenues through which war might break out. If there are five major powers, a war could break out between any two of them. When only two major powers are present, there is only one route to war. The more opportunities there are for something to happen, the more likely it will. Furthermore, the fact that the two countries had enough nuclear weapons to annihilate each other made them extremely cautious in their dealings with each other. Many scholars, however, remain skeptical that nuclear weapons were critical in preventing war from breaking out. John Mueller argues that conventional war had become so destructive that this alone was enough to make the two powers extremely hesitant to risk war.³²

A balance of power between the two superpowers is also sometimes credited as the basis for peace. Because the countries were roughly equal in military strength, neither side could be confident of victory in war. As a result, neither side was tempted to start one. Turning this argument somewhat on its head, Stephen Walt sees the peace as resting on a dramatic *imbalance* of power, claiming that the combined power of the United States and its allies (Japan, West Germany, France, Britain, etc.) was substantially greater than that of the Soviet Union and its allies (Poland, Hungary, Romania, etc.).³³ Given this imbalance, it was never necessary for the United States to resort to war. Soviet leaders realized their inferiority and never challenged genuinely vital U.S. interests, thus avoiding any direct confrontation. Whatever the reason, the absence of war between the United States and the Soviet Union is certainly a remarkable (and a very fortunate) feature of the Cold War and its end.



The citizens of East and West Berlin converge to tear down the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

Source: Jan-Peter Boening/Zenit/Laif/Redux Pictures

long peace The “peace” or absence of war between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

bipolarity The existence of two major powers in international politics; usually refers to the structure of the Cold War.

The Post-Cold War World

In the first few years of the post–Cold War period, expectations about the future of international relations diverged. Some expected a more stable world marked by the triumph of liberal democracy, economic prosperity, peace dividends, and the reduction of war and conflict. Others lamented the Cold War’s passing, fearing that its stability and predictability would be replaced by national and ethnic conflict, rogue regimes, and nuclear weapons proliferation that would be more dangerous than the superpower rivalry. More than two decades into the post–Cold War era, these debates continue. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some general observations about the shape of international politics in the post–Cold War era to which most, if not all, would subscribe. An evaluation of the post–Cold War world is an exercise in examining and judging the relative significance of changes and continuities. Thus, we can approach the post–Cold War era by asking ourselves two questions: What changed since the end of the Cold War? What remained unchanged?

The demise and eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union was unquestionably a major event that transformed critical aspects of international relations, especially in Europe. Germany is unified again for the first time since 1945. Former allies of the Soviet Union are now members of NATO. The division of Europe has ended; the iron curtain lifted. Outside the confines of Europe, the United States and Russia retain only a fraction of the nuclear weapons that they possessed at the height of the Cold War, and this number is set to go lower still. One cannot underestimate the importance of these transformations.

But the end of the Cold War did not change everything, and the world of 2013 would not look totally unfamiliar to someone who had been asleep for twenty years. As John Ikenberry explains, “Only a part of the post–World War II order—the bipolar order—was destroyed by the dramatic events of 1989–1991.”³⁴ There are still significant elements of continuity, especially in terms of the U.S. influence in the world and the perpetuation of the institutions created under U.S. tutelage during the Cold War.³⁵

Indeed, the ending of the Cold War did not bring any fundamental alteration in the scope of U.S. military power and commitments throughout the world. U.S. forces remain in Japan, South Korea, and Europe, though in somewhat smaller numbers, just as they were at the height of the Cold War. The passing of the Soviet military alliance in Europe, the Warsaw Pact, has not brought an end to NATO. The 1991 Gulf War, considered at the time a possible harbinger of a “new world order,” demonstrated the continuing centrality of the United States. Although the war involved an international coalition with the sanction of the United Nations, it was fundamentally a U.S. enterprise. A handful of other nations contributed military forces, money, and military bases, but the outcome was determined by the military power of the United States. The 2003 Iraq War was, with the significant exception of Great Britain, almost entirely a U.S. undertaking. No other nation possesses the necessary combination of capability and willingness to challenge the military power of the United States. Indeed, in 2012, the United States accounted for

almost 40 percent of the world's military expenditures, more than four times its nearest competitor, China, at 9.5 percent.³⁶ It spends more than next eleven countries (China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Britain, France, Japan, Germany, India, Brazil, South Korea, and Australia) combined. The United States has ten aircraft carriers to project military power; the rest of the world combined has one. Whether one wishes to refer to this as U.S. "hegemony," "dominance," or "unipolarity," the basic point remains the same. As Christopher Fettweis notes, "the United States is by far the strongest actor in the post-Cold War world, towering over the other members in every tangible and intangible category of power." Indeed, "it "remains far more powerful in a comparative sense than any country has ever been."³⁷ In addition to its military might, the United States continues to be the world's largest and most powerful economy (see Table 1.1). Some initially thought that economic integration in Europe may have created a single economic unit that would rival the United States. A series of economic crises in 2010 in countries that use the common European currency (the euro), especially Greece and Ireland, have since dampened these expectations. The greatest economic challenge to the United States is now more likely to emerge from Asia. Although some thought two decades ago that Japan might overtake the United States, today it is the rapid growth of India and China that poses a long-term challenge to U.S. economic dominance. A potential milestone in the post-Cold War era may have occurred in 2010, when China finally surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy. Consequently, even though the U.S. economy is still almost three times larger than China's and the average American almost ten times wealthier than the average Chinese, some see a possible transformation of the broader post-Cold War order resulting from China's rapid economic growth, particularly if the pace of that growth continues and is translated into military capabilities and political influence.

The world, however, is a big place, and we must remember that for the vast majority of the world's people, life continues much as it did before the end of the Cold War or September 11. The passing of the Soviet Union has not narrowed the gap between the world's rich and its more numerous poor. Large portions of humanity go to bed hungry every night and have no access to the basic necessities of life. The global environmental problems that were emerging before the Cold War's end remain as pressing as ever. Deadly national and ethnic conflicts throughout the world continue to rage. In the second part of this book, we will focus on a range of issues, many of which highlight possibly important changes in our world, such as globalization, terrorism, and the spread of democracy. But as we appreciate and try to understand the significance of these changes, we should not lose sight of the perhaps equally important things that remain the same.

TABLE 1.1

2012 IMF Ranking of World's 10 Largest Economies (and the European Union)

World	62,909,274
European Union	16,673
1 United States	16,244
2 China	8,221
3 Japan	5,960
4 Germany	3,429
5 France	2,613
6 United Kingdom	2,476
7 Brazil	2,253
8 Russia	2,029
9 Italy	2,014
10 India	1,841

GDP (Gross domestic product) measured in billions of U.S. dollars.

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database October 2013: Nominal GDP list of countries. Data are for the year 2012.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The modern state system, characterized by a small number of relatively large sovereign political units, gradually took shape as Europe began to emerge from the medieval period around 1300. The economic pressures of the commercial revolution and the military dynamics of the gunpowder revolution contributed to the creation of larger and larger political units. The Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) brought the origins of the modern conception of sovereignty as embodied in the Peace of Westphalia (1648).
- The period between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution (1789) was a time of relative calm, in which wars and conflicts tended to be limited, modest affairs. This calm was rooted in the nature of European societies and politics, particularly absolutist monarchism, the lack of any strong sense of loyalty or connection between people and their rulers, and the absence of ideological conflict.
- The American and French revolutions marked the beginning of modern nationalism and its doctrine of popular sovereignty. Over time, this idea contributed to the erosion of absolutist monarchism and the international order that it sustained.
- At the same time, the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s transformed European societies in ways that had a profound effect on international politics. Increasing wealth and advances in technology solidified European dominance of the globe. Nationalism and the Industrial Revolution combined to create the “total war” of World Wars I and II.
- In the aftermath of two devastating wars in the span of a single generation, the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dashed hopes for a more peaceful world order based on cooperation among the great powers. Although the Cold War never resulted in direct military conflict between the superpowers, it did bring several smaller wars as the United States and Soviet Union engaged in sometimes-fierce competition for influence throughout the world, including the recently decolonized nations of Africa and Asia.
- The superpower conflict, political conflict in postcolonial societies, and the policy of containment would eventually lead the United States to war in Vietnam.
- Attempts to moderate the Cold War and control the growth of nuclear arsenals lead to détente and several arms limitation agreements during the 1970s. This thaw in the Cold War was short-lived. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 ushered in a period of renewed hostility and conflict between the superpowers.
- By the mid-1980s, the stagnation of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe prompted a new generation of leaders, particularly Mikhail Gorbachev, to conclude that radical reforms were essential. His policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, however, ultimately doomed the very communist system that they were designed to save. The unraveling of communism was most vividly displayed in Berlin, where the city’s citizens demolished the wall between the east and west halves in late 1989. This event marked the end of the Cold War.
- Although we have experienced several crises since the end of the Cold War (e.g., the 1991 Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Iraq War that began in 2003), the fundamental nature of the post–Cold War world remains in doubt.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of international relations have changed the most and least over the last 350 years?
2. In what sense might the end of the Cold War be seen as a major turning point in international politics? In what sense might it be seen as a relatively minor historical event?
3. One of the most important developments of the past 200 years has been the rise and spread of nationalism. In what ways has nationalism changed international relations? Do you think that nationalism remains as important and powerful as fifty or one hundred years ago?

4. One of the enduring questions in international relations concerns the linkage between domestic and international politics. Historically, how have changes in the domestic character of states altered international relations?
5. Is it possible to judge the significance of an event such as September 11 or the end of the Cold War at the time it occurs, or does this sort of assessment require the benefit of hindsight?

KEY TERMS

absolutist monarchy, 6	domino theory, 24	modern nationalism, 10	Peace of Westphalia, 2
appeasement, 20	French Revolution, 8	modern state system, 2	<i>perestroika</i> , 26
bipolarity, 27	<i>glasnost</i> , 26	multinational states, 10	popular sovereignty, 8
Cold War, 24	gunpowder revolution, 4	multistate nations, 10	Protestant Reformation, 4
commercial revolution, 4	Holy Roman Empire, 4	Munich Agreement, 20	sovereignty, 6
Concert of Europe, 10	League of Nations, 19	Napoleonic Wars, 9	Thirty Years War, 2
containment, 23	<i>levée en masse</i> , 9	national self-determination, 10	total war, 17
decolonization, 24	long peace, 27	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 24	Treaty of Versailles, 19
détente, 25	Marshall Plan, 23		Truman Doctrine, 24
divine right of kings, 6	Mikhail Gorbachev, 25		

FURTHER READINGS

A classic work on the rise of the modern state system that emphasizes the military aspects is John Herz, “The Rise and Demise of the Territorial State,” *World Politics* 9 (July 1957): 473–493. Two more recent treatments are Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State* (New York: Free Press, 1994), especially chapters 2 and 3; and Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

For the period between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, few works surpass the classic account by Edward V. Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

The rise and impact of nationalism have been the focus of a very large body of literature. Good starting points include Ernest Geller, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

The events leading to the outbreak of World War I are given a very straightforward treatment in Laurence LaFore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I* (New York: J. P. Lippincott, 1971). A more recent account is Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

An interesting discussion of the legacies of World War I is provided in Porter, *War and the Rise of the State*, chapters 5 and 6.

Not surprisingly, there are many works on the origins and course of World War II. Perhaps the best and most accessible overview is Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On U.S. policy during this period, see Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1979). An excellent book on the war against Japan is Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

A widely respected examination of the early years of the Cold War is John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). A more imposing treatment is Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). For a more general overview of the Cold War, see Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917–1991* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998). The Vietnam War is covered in

Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941–1975* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997). The end of the Cold War is covered in Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold*

NOTES

¹John Weltman, *World Politics and the Evolution of War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 21.

²Geoffrey Parker, “The Gunpowder Revolution, 1300–1500,” *Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 107.

³Weltman, *World Politics and the Evolution of War*, p. 24.

⁴Bruce Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 124.

⁵See John A. Lynn, “States in Conflict, 1661–1763,” *Cambridge Illustrated History of Modern Warfare* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 164–185.

⁶Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order, 1648–1989* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 83–102.

⁷John Owen, “The Canon and the Cannon: A Review Essay,” *International Security* 25 (Winter 1998/99): 161.

⁸Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 68–69.

⁹John A. Lynn, “Nations in Arms, 1763–1814,” *Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 193.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 207.

¹¹Weltman, *World Politics and the Evolution of War*, p. 42.

¹²Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 40.

¹³Hew Strachan, “Military Modernization, 1789–1918,” *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe*, ed. T. C. W. Blanning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 75.

¹⁴Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), p. 13.

¹⁵Casualty figures drawn from Williamson Murray, “The West at War, 1914–1918,” *Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*, pp. 284–288; and Weltman, *World Politics and the Evolution of War*, p. 93.

¹⁶James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), p. 75.

¹⁷Porter, *War and the Rise of the State*, p. 170.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁹Adam Hochschild, “I Tried to Stop the Thing,” *The American Scholar* (May 6, 2010). Accessed at: www.theamericanscholar.org/i-tried-to-stop-the-bloody-thing.

²⁰Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 5.

²¹Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 894. About one-third of the casualties were military and two-thirds civilian.

War (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994). An excellent place to begin making sense of the Cold War’s aftermath is Ian Clark’s interesting yet theoretically rigorous *The Post–Cold War Order* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²²For the argument that the decision to use the atomic bomb was based on a desire to scare or impress the Soviet Union, see Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). A more recent account that denies the bomb’s importance in prompting Japanese surrender is Ward Wilson, *Five Myths About Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Mariner Books, 2013).

²³Ibid., p. 573.

²⁴John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 173.

²⁵Ibid., p. 308.

²⁶“X” [George F. Kennan], “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25 (July 1947): 566–582. The best discussion of Kennan’s view of containment can be found in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapter 2.

²⁷Gaddis, *United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, p. 351.

²⁸For details on the Vietnam War, see Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941–1975* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997). An insightful explanation of the reasons for the U.S. defeat is presented in Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,” *World Politics* 27 (1975): 175–200.

²⁹David Reynolds, “Europe Divided and Reunited, 1945–1995,” *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe*, ed. T. C. W. Blanning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 299.

³⁰John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987).

³¹John Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War,” *The Atlantic* (August 1990): 35–50.

³²John Mueller, “The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World,” *International Security* 13 (Fall 1988): 55–79.

³³Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 274–278.

³⁴John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraints, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 215.

³⁵This point is emphasized effectively in Ian Clark, *The Post–Cold War Order: The Spoils of Peace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁶See www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/Top%20Table%202012.pdf.

³⁷Christopher Fettweis, *The Pathologies of Power: Fear, Honor, Glory, and Hubris in American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 18 and 176.



2

Contending Perspectives on International Politics

Many Questions, Even More Answers

Students of international relations are often frustrated by the absence of precise answers to questions and problems. On one level, this frustration is justified: it's not like a calculus book, where problems have concrete solutions at the end of the text. On another level, the problem is misidentified: frustration emerges not from the absence of answers but from their proliferation—too many answers, not too few. The problem is not that we lack an answer to the question of why nations go to war, but rather that we have five, six, seven, or more answers.

This existence of alternative and competing paradigms, theories, philosophies, and worldviews characterizes all social sciences: international relations is no different. As a general rule, different perspectives have two interrelated components: an analytical component explaining why things work the way they do, and a prescriptive element dictating what should be done. The prescriptive element should flow from the explanation: what someone thinks needs to be done to reduce armed conflict (the prescription) depends on why he or she thinks we have war in the first place (the explanation).

Students of international relations disagree intensely about explanations for, and possible solutions to, critical international problems. They may even disagree on what the most critical problems are. Disagreements about specific issues usually reflect deeper differences about the nature of international relations, which are often unarticulated in debates on concrete issues. As Stephen Walt explains, “Everyone uses theories—whether he or she knows it or not—and disagreements about policy usually rest on more fundamental disagreement about the basic forces that shape international outcomes.”¹

This chapter introduces the major perspectives on international relations that will be reflected in specific debates throughout the remainder of this book. These differing views of the nature and dynamics of international relations are themselves rooted in more fundamental social and political philosophies. That is, they

represent the application of more general ideas and assumptions about the nature of people and society to the specific realm of international politics. In order to fully appreciate debates about international relations, we will examine the underlying social or political theory or philosophy upon which each perspective is based, as well as the application of those ideas to international relations.

Over the past two centuries, three dominant philosophies have framed debates about social, economic, and political issues: conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism. Each rests on a set of assumptions or ideas that provides a general intellectual framework for understanding how the social world works, and each has also been applied to understanding the dynamics of international relations. But these three perspectives do not exhaust the range of potential worldviews, and in recent years, alternative approaches, particularly feminism and constructivism, have begun to challenge these traditional perspectives.

Realism

realism A conservative perspective on international politics emphasizing the inevitability of conflict among nations, the centrality of power, and the ever-present threat of war.

The most influential perspective on international relations, especially in the United States since the end of World War II, is **realism**, an approach with intellectual roots in conservative social and political philosophy. If we want a deeper understanding of realism as an outlook on the world, we need to appreciate its conservative foundations. Although conservatism, like all the philosophies that we will examine, is a rich and complex system of thought developed over centuries, and there are dangers in summarizing an entire philosophy in a few pages, we can highlight several of conservatism's central beliefs and assumptions.

The first critical element of a conservative social and political philosophy is a *pessimistic view of human nature*. The conservative worldview sees people as flawed, imperfect, and imperfectible creatures. Human nature is a mix of good and bad features, and the latter can never be completely eliminated. Conservatives of a more religious orientation emphasize the notion of original sin traced to the biblical story of Genesis and humankind's fall from grace with God in the Garden of Eden. This is why Christians who attend church every Sunday pray for forgiveness of their sins. The minister or priest does not ask just those who have sinned in the past week to pray; the assumption is that no one in attendance made it through an entire week free of sin. The Christian view of people as tainted by original sin is one of humans as flawed creatures. More secular versions of conservatism emphasize that even though people are capable of rational, thoughtful, and ethical behavior, they are also motivated by the less noble impulses of lust, passion, and greed. As Edmund Burke (1729–1797), the so-called first conservative, noted, “politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reason, but to human nature, of which reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part.”²

The second critical element of conservatism is a view of people as social creatures, meaning that people have a deep-seated need to identify with and belong to social groups. People do not want to be isolated, unattached beings. People are not individualists; they derive a necessary sense of belonging and comfort from group and social identities. Family groups, social groups, political groups, and so on define

who we are and allow us to feel like we are part of something larger than ourselves. In and of itself, this impulse is not a bad thing. The problem is that group identity entails both inclusion and exclusion. Groups are defined not merely by whom they include but also by whom they exclude. A group to which everyone belongs is not really a group at all, at least not one that provides any special sense of belonging. This is why social groups almost always exist in opposition. How many colleges or universities have only one sorority? Why do so many religions spend as much time talking about the nonbelievers outside the group as they do the believers in the group? The tendency for people to form group identities has the inevitable consequence of dividing human societies. But even this might not be necessarily bad. More problematic is the almost irresistible tendency for people to view themselves and their groups as not merely different but also as superior. We refer to this as **collective** or **group egoism**. How many people view themselves as belonging to one religious group while thinking another religion is actually the true one? How many people believe that their fraternity or sorority is the worst on campus? It is very difficult for people to see themselves consistently as different, but in no sense superior to others. This sets the stage for all sorts of problems and conflicts.

The third critical element of conservatism is a belief in the *inevitability of social conflict*. Why is conflict inevitable? Social conflict has both *rational* and *irrational* bases. Group or collective egoism is one of the irrational sources of conflict. When people and groups believe that they are not merely different, but also better than others, this is a recipe for conflict. But conflict does not result solely from irrational impulses. Conflict also results from the impossibility of creating a social, economic, and political order that benefits all equally. In every society, there are people and groups that benefit from the status quo and others that would benefit from a change in the status quo. Those who would benefit from changing the status quo will always come into conflict with those who benefit from the existing order. This is the essence of social, economic, and political conflict. Politics is about managing social conflict, not a utopian quest to eliminate conflict. There may be more or less effective ways of managing social conflict, but social conflict has always existed and always will. American theologian and social commentator Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) provided the most succinct statement on the inevitability of social conflict: “[T]he easy subservience of reason to prejudice and passion, and the consequent persistence of irrational egoism, particularly in group behavior, make social conflict an inevitability in human behavior, probably to its very end.”³ Here, we see the three critical elements of conservatism: flawed human nature, group identity and egoism, and the inevitability of conflict.

Realism originated as an application of these conservative insights to the study and understanding of international relations. Although it has been traced as far back as the ancient Greek historian **Thucydides** (c.460–c.400 BCE), a number of twentieth-century thinkers have exerted a more profound and direct impact on the development of realism, including British historian Edward Hallet Carr (1892–1982), political scientist **Hans Morgenthau** (1891–1976), and the American diplomat **George Kennan** (1904–2005). Carr, Morgenthau, and Kennan are often considered *classical realists*, whose ideas are more explicitly conservative in orientation than many contemporary realists. This distinction can be seen most dramatically in

collective or group egoism

The tendency of social groups to view themselves as not only different from other groups, but also better in some respect. An element of conservative or realist thought particularly important for understanding the dynamics of social conflict.

Thucydides A Greek historian whose writings represent some of the earliest expressions of realist thoughts.

Hans Morgenthau One of the most influential exponents of a realist approach to international politics.

George Kennan An American diplomat and Russian/Soviet expert. In policy terms, was influential in shaping the U.S. Cold War policy of containment. Intellectually, one of the leading figures of the realist school of international politics.

the classical realists' view of human nature. Hans Morgenthau wrote, "It is the ubiquity of the desire for power which ... constitutes the ubiquity of evil in all human action. Here is the element of corruption and sin which injects itself into the best of intentions at least a drop of evil and thus spoils it." It is this inevitable element of power lust and sin that accounts for "the transformation of churches into political organizations, of revolutions into dictatorships, [and] love of country into imperialism."⁴ George Kennan wished that he "could believe that the human impulses which give rise to the nightmares of totalitarianism were ones which providence had allocated to other people and to which the American people had graciously been left immune." Unfortunately, "the fact of the matter is that there is a little bit of totalitarian buried somewhere, way deep down, in each and every one of us."⁵ Although some classical realists placed greater emphasis on flawed human nature than others, the conservative view of humans as imperfect and imperfectible creatures was clearly central to their view of international relations. In Morgenthau's words, "the world, imperfect as it is from a rational point of view, is the result of forces inherent in human nature."⁶

Similarly, realists see group identity and conflict as essential to understanding international relations. According to Robert Gilpin, "Realism ... holds that the foundation of political life is what Ralf Dahrendorf has called 'conflict groups.' ... This is another way of saying that in a world of scarce resources and conflict over those resources, human beings confront one another ultimately as members of groups, not as isolated individuals."⁷ At the international level, the primary group identity is the nation-state, although it has not always been and will not always be such. For realists, contemporary international relations is fundamentally about the interactions and conflicts between and among states. Certainly, realists recognize the existence of other identities and actors. Such groups and actors can sometimes be important and influential. But for realists, they have yet to replace the nation-state as the key actor. The nation-state has been and remains the major actor, or *conflict group*, at the global level.

Finally, realists argue that just as conflict is an inevitable feature of social life, so is it among nations. The reasons why are straightforward extensions of the irrational and rational sources of social conflict in a more general sense. First, feelings of national, ethnic, and cultural superiority are sources of irrational international conflict. Second, there is no such thing as international order that benefits all nations equally. E. H. Carr warned that it was dangerous wishful thinking to ignore "the unpalatable fact of a fundamental divergence of interest between nations desirous of maintaining the status quo and nations desirous of changing it."⁸ The central conflicts of international politics are those between *status quo* states—that is, those that derive benefits from the existing international order—and *revisionist* states—that is, those states that would benefit by revising the existing order. As Stanley Michalak put even more simply, "Like all politics, international politics involves conflicts between those who want to keep things the way things are and those who want to change them."⁹

The fact that conservatives and realists view social or group conflict as inevitable does not mean that we must simply throw up our hands in despair. Although conflicts are inevitable, there are ways to manage them to minimize the chances of their becoming violent. At the national level, governments manage conflict through

laws, police, and the courts. This leads us to what realists see as perhaps the most critical feature of international relations—international **anarchy**, which means the absence of a central authority or government. Although many realists, especially *neorealists*, have abandoned the classical realist emphasis on human nature, all realists place international anarchy at the center of their understanding of international politics. Anarchy is not to be confused with chaos and a lack of order—there is a lot of order in international relations. It is the absence of government on a global level that distinguishes international politics from domestic politics. E. H. Carr was succinct on this point: “In domestic affairs it is clearly the business of the state to create harmony if no natural harmony exists. In international politics, there is no organized power charged with the task of creating harmony.”¹⁰ This, according to Michalak, is “the first fact of life about international politics: The international system is a system without government.”¹¹

To understand why anarchy is so important for our understanding of international relations, we need only consider all the things that our government does for us. The most important function of government is to provide protection. If you see an armed band of thugs coming down the street toward your home, you call the police; people do not rely on neighbors with whom they negotiated previous alliances for mutual aid. Upon receiving your call, the police do not sit around at the station for hours debating whether it is in their interest to come and help. It is their job—and their obligation—to protect you.

Although the absence of a world government means that states are not obligated to obey any higher authority, it also means that no state can rely on others to come to their aid. As Kenneth Waltz, perhaps the most influential neorealist, observes: “Citizens need not prepare to defend themselves. Public agencies do that. A national system is not one of self-help. The international system is.”¹²

International anarchy in turn creates a **security dilemma** in which states “must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated” by other states. As states acquire the power and means to defend themselves, “this, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since no one can ever feel entirely secure in a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious cycle of power accumulation is on.”¹³ The dilemma that nations face is how to increase their security without making others less secure. On the domestic level, the police provide security to all simultaneously; as a result, one person’s security does not come at the expense of others. This is not the case for nations. For realists, the anarchic nature of international relations and the resulting security dilemma are the cornerstones for understanding how and why states behave as they do.

How, then, do realists propose that we manage international conflict? Create a world government? At a theoretical level, realists concede that this would be a solution to the security dilemma, although they are skeptical that this theoretical solution can be translated into reality. Historically, realists have focused on more modest solutions, such as the balance of power. When nations find themselves in conflict, realists have traditionally argued that the chances for war are lessened if the parties are relatively equal in power. The reasoning is quite simple. We assume that nations start wars because they expect to win, not lose. Nations are more likely

anarchy The absence of a central governmental or political authority.

security dilemma The problem that nations face when the actions taken to make one nation feel more secure inevitably make other nations feel less secure.

to anticipate victory when they are more powerful than their opponent. Thus, when two sides are relatively equal, neither side will be confident of victory, so neither is likely to initiate war. There is some debate about this point among realists—some argue instead that peace is actually more likely when there is a great *imbalance* of power. The logic here is also simple: A very powerful nation need not resort to war to get what it wants, and much weaker states avoid war because they recognize how futile it would be. Despite these differences among realists (which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter), there is general agreement that the management and distribution of power is critical for realists when they think about international conflict and the chances for war.

Realism presents us with one way of understanding the world that grows out of conservative assumptions about the nature of people and human societies. It is a vision of world politics in which states interact and manage conflicts without the benefit of a central authority to do for them what governments do for their citizens. It is a world in which some states benefit from the existing world order and find themselves in conflict with others who would benefit from changing the existing order. Although conflicts of interest are common, violent conflict among nations remains relatively rare. Nevertheless, the anarchic nature of international politics drives nations to prepare for and occasionally fight wars. Robert Gilpin provides a very succinct expression of the realist point of view: “the fundamental nature of international relations has not changed over the millennia. International relations continues to be a recurring struggle for wealth and power among independent actors in a state of anarchy.”¹⁴

Liberalism, Idealism, and Liberal Internationalism

liberalism Social, political, and economic philosophy based on a positive view of human nature, the inevitability of social progress, and the harmony of interests.

idealism An approach to international politics based on liberal assumptions and principles. Its more optimistic (or utopian) versions envision a world in which law, institutions, and diplomacy replace power competition and the use of force.

liberal internationalism Another term, along with *idealism*, for the application of liberal assumptions and principles to international relations.

The dominant alternatives to conservatism and realism are **liberalism** and **idealism**. In some sense, the latter term is unfair because it suggests that people who hold “idealistic” views are woolly-headed dreamers devising fanciful plans for world peace while ignoring the hard realities of world politics. Although this may have been the case for some of the more utopian idealists between the world wars, who hoped that international treaties could outlaw war, it is generally an unfair characterization. Idealism is merely a different way of understanding the world that grows out of different beliefs and assumptions than those underpinning realism. It is better to label this alternative to realism as **liberal internationalism** or, more simply, *liberalism*, which refers to the political and philosophical tradition from which it emerged.

Liberalism is a social and political philosophy that began to flourish as Europe emerged from the medieval world that existed from the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE until the beginnings of the Renaissance in the 1300s and 1400s. The Renaissance was a period of scientific, artistic, intellectual, and cultural revival that ended the stagnation of medieval times. It was a period of renewal, and liberalism provided a more optimistic outlook that challenged conservatism. Among the thinkers influential in the development of liberal thought were John Locke (1632–1704), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), although the historical roots of liberal thought can be traced to the ancient Greeks.

Like conservatism, liberalism is a rich and varied intellectual tradition not easily reduced to a few paragraphs. Having said that, there does appear to be a core set of beliefs that define a liberal worldview and set it apart from a conservative outlook. “In simplest terms,” David Sidorsky explains, liberalism is “first, a conception of man as desiring freedom and capable of exercising rational free choice. Second, it is a perspective on social institutions as open to rational reconstruction in the light of individual needs. It is, third, a view of history as progressively perfectible through the continuous application of human reason to social institutions.”¹⁵ Liberalism, thus, parts company with conservatism on almost every critical point. In contrast to conservative philosophy, liberalism views people as essentially rational, ethical, and moral creatures capable of controlling their baser impulses. No doubt people have often behaved in irrational and immoral ways, but this is not seen as the inevitable result and manifestation of a flawed human nature. Liberals usually see such behavior as being the result of ignorance and misunderstanding, which can be overcome through education and reforming social and political institutions.

In addition to possessing a more optimistic view of human nature, liberals are much less inclined to view social and individual conflict as inevitable. Liberals believe that it is possible to create a social, political, and economic order that benefits everybody—an order that maximizes individual freedom and material/economic prosperity. This element of liberal thought is sometimes referred to as the **harmony of interests**. The harmony of interests, for example, is the cornerstone of the liberal belief in the free market: When people are left alone to pursue their individual economic interests, the long-term result is growth and prosperity benefiting everyone. Yes, Bill Gates has become a multibillionaire, but his wealth did not come at the expense of anyone else’s well-being. In fact, his creations and inventions have improved the lives of others. There is no conflict between his interests and mine. Much of what we see as social conflict results not from an inevitable clash of interests, but from the failure to recognize deeper mutual interests.

Thus, when realists look at the world, they tend to focus on conflicts of interest and the clashes that result; liberals are more drawn to the common interests that people and nations share and the prospects for cooperative activities that will realize these interests. Liberals see the realist emphasis on international conflict and war as a distortion of reality. The overwhelming majority of interactions among nations are cooperative, or at least nonconflicting. Certainly wars occur, but the vast majority of nations spend the vast majority of their time at peace, for reasons that have little to do with balances of power. Is it a balance of power, liberals would ask, that preserves peace between Finland and Sweden, the United States and Mexico, or Argentina and Chile? Emphasizing conflict and war in trying to understand international relations while paying less attention to cooperation and peace would be like trying to understand New York City by focusing on the several hundred people murdered every year while ignoring the other 8-plus million who get along without killing one another. Not that wars and murders should be ignored; it is a matter of looking at such things in the context of the totality of relations. International relations is not all about conflict and war; in fact, it is not even mostly about conflict and war.

harmony of interests A central element of liberal thought emphasizing the existence of common interests among people and nations. This contrasts with the conservative assumption of the inevitability of social conflict.

Finally, and perhaps most important, liberals believe in the possibility—perhaps even the inevitability—of human progress. The human condition is better today than it was two hundred years ago, and it is likely to be better still two hundred years from now. Why? In part, the reason is that people are essentially rational creatures who learn more about their physical or natural world (e.g., the causes of disease), as well as their social world (e.g., the causes of poverty, prejudice, and violent conflict). As people learn more, they use their knowledge to solve problems. Human history is a story of the application of reason and knowledge to the solution of problems. There are, of course, temporary setbacks (e.g., no one argues that Nazi Germany constituted “progress” over what came before), but the general trend of human history is one of scientific, social, and moral progress.

Those who follow politics in the United States can be forgiven if they are slightly perplexed by this discussion of liberalism and conservatism. The confusion stems from the fact that the labels *conservative* and *liberal* are used somewhat differently in everyday political debate than in discussions of political philosophy. For example, in American political discourse, we categorize free market capitalism and limited government as conservative principles, with liberals favoring greater regulation and big government. Philosophically, however, free markets and limited government are central tenets of liberalism. What we have in the United States is really gradations and variations of liberalism. Ronald Reagan may have been a conservative president and Edward (“Ted”) Kennedy may have been a liberal senator, but both embraced the more fundamental and basic assumptions of liberalism.

In the realm of international relations, this belief in progress is central to the liberal view of the world. Although realists argue that the main features and dynamics of international politics are relatively enduring, liberals believe that we are in the midst of profound changes that reduce the importance of force and war in relations among states while increasing the significance of such things as human rights into major concerns. One such change is the spread of democratic institutions around the world. Not only is this a good thing for the people within newly democratic states, it is also good news for international relations.

Democratic liberalism argues that democracies are more peaceful than are nondemocracies, particularly in their dealings with one another. As a result, a more democratic world will also be more peaceful.

The spread of democracy has also been accompanied by another trend—the growth of economic interdependence. This interdependence takes many forms—from the more obvious and recognizable growth in trade among states to the somewhat less obvious increase in investments that people and corporations make in other countries. According to **commercial liberalism**, trade and interdependence are forces for peace. The logic is simple—greater economic interdependence means one nation’s well-being depends on another nation’s well-being, creating common interests. As Steven Pinker argues, “Another pacifying force has been commerce, a game in which everybody can win. As technological progress allows the exchange of goods and ideas over longer distances and among larger groups of trading partners, other people become more valuable alive than dead.”¹⁶

The growth of international institutions has also helped ameliorate many of the conflicts and insecurities that traditionally characterized international politics.

Democratic liberalism A strain of international liberal thought that claims democracies are more peaceful than are nondemocracies, especially in their relations with each other.

commercial liberalism A version of liberal international thought that stresses the importance of interdependence in trade and investment as a force for peace.

One of the dilemmas that states have historically faced is the difficulty of cooperating, even when they have common interests, because of the lack of trust in an anarchical environment. According to **liberal institutionalism**, international organizations can help states by sharing information to overcome uncertainty about what other states are up to and building trust. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in Europe. Whereas suspicion, rivalry, conflict, and war were once normal among Europe's major powers, war among Germany, France, and Britain today would be ludicrously unimaginable, in large part because post-World War II institutions such as the European Union (EU) have helped nurture and sustain peace, cooperation, and commerce. The citizens of modern Europe no longer live in a state of perpetual readiness for war as their grandparents and great-grandparents did.

A final positive development is the growth of international ethical and moral norms. In particular, the way that people view war has changed dramatically over the previous two centuries. John Mueller argues that this transformation has been so profound that war is rapidly becoming obsolete in large parts of the world. It is difficult for many to imagine that only two hundred years ago, people tended to view war as noble, invigorating, exciting, and romantic. This view did not long survive the horrors of World Wars I and II. War then came to be viewed as a regrettable necessity in certain circumstances, not something to be valued and welcomed. Increasingly, the prevailing view of war is shifting to something more resembling our current view of dueling or slavery—a barbaric and outdated institution. Mueller explains that “dueling finally died out not so much because it became illegal, but because it became ridiculous—an activity greeted not by admiration or even grudging acceptance, but by derision and contempt.” Similarly, “when the notion of war chiefly inspires ridicule rather than fear, it will have become obsolete. Within the developed world at least, that condition seems to be gradually emerging.”¹⁷

We can see in these liberal perspectives on international relations the more basic elements of liberal philosophy—assumptions of basic human rationality and morality, the belief in reforming institutions as solutions to problems, and, most important, a belief in human progress. Liberals reject the realist assumption that the dynamics and fundamental realities of international relations remain unchanged. People are rational enough to know that certain things (e.g., war) are irrational and undesirable, and they are capable of learning how to eliminate these practices. Robert Gilpin noted that realism “is founded on a pessimism regarding moral progress and human possibilities.”¹⁸ In contrast, “the key element of liberalism is its focus on cooperation.... liberalism is generally understood as a set of arguments that expect either increasingly or at least potentially greater cooperation in the modern world.”¹⁹

Liberal institutionalism A version of liberalism that stresses the positive role of international organizations and institutions in promoting cooperation and peace.

Marxism

It can be difficult to talk about a **Marxist** approach to international relations, largely because Marx himself had relatively little to say about it. Marx was mainly concerned with describing and analyzing the internal dynamics of capitalist societies. Rather than being the product of Marx himself, the Marxist view of international

Marxist A social theory emphasizing the importance of class conflict for understanding social relations, including international politics.

relations is largely the result of attempts by subsequent thinkers—some Marxists, some merely influenced by Marx—to apply his basic ideas and concepts to the realm of international relations. Some prefer other labels, such as *radicalism* or *globalism*. But whichever label we choose, the foundations can be found in Marx's basic assumptions about the nature and dynamics of capitalism. It is ideas, not labels, that really matter.

Karl Marx A German philosopher whose writings form the basis for the social, political, and economic theory that bears his name, Marxism.

Understanding Marxism requires an appreciation of the times and conditions in which Marx lived. **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) lived and wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century, the early years of industrial capitalism. Indeed, it was Marx who coined the term *capitalism*. He spent most of his life in England, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. Here, he saw a world that bears little resemblance to the capitalist societies that we live in today. It was a world of 60- and 70-hour workweeks, where children toiled alongside adults for low wages. Workers lived in slums and tenements, not comfortable suburbs. There were no child labor laws, no overtime, no paid vacations. It was a world without laws and regulations to ensure that factories had fire exits and clean drinking water. It was a world without health insurance, from either government or employers. There was no unemployment insurance, no workers' compensation, no retirement accounts and 401Ks. It was a world in which the vast majority of people worked long hours for little reward, living lives of nearly unending misery and drudgery. But amidst the hardship and squalor of the masses, others enjoyed great affluence and comfort: mansions with fifty or one hundred rooms for families of only five or six people, littered with expensive artwork and glitzy bric-a-brac; summer villas; and private schools for children dressed in fancy clothes riding ponies and swimming in private lakes. What made this disparity of living conditions even worse in Marx's eyes was that the labor of those in misery made it possible for others to live in opulence. The lifestyles and wealth of the elite relied upon the labor and effort of the impoverished.

Given the world in which he lived, it is not surprising that Marx saw class conflict as the defining feature of capitalist society, although this was not unique to capitalism. All previously existing societies were class-based societies, but the nature and basis of these class divisions change over time. The classes that defined capitalism were the **bourgeoisie** (i.e., the capitalist class) and the **proletariat** (i.e., the working class), distinguished by their different relationship to the means of production. This simply means that the bourgeoisie control the means of production (i.e., the land, mines, factories, banks, etc.), whereas the proletariat earn their income by selling labor for wages to the bourgeoisie. Marx argued that the relationship between the classes was not merely unequal, but also exploitative because the workers produce all the goods and services, but only a portion of the value in wages. The capitalists take the remainder as profit. This inequality and exploitation forms the basis of a fundamental conflict of interests. So long as some people exploit other people, conflict will result.

bourgeoisie Karl Marx's label for the economic class that controls the "means of production"; more colloquially known today as the *capitalist class*.

proletariat Karl Marx's label for those people who sell their labor to those who own the means of production (i.e., the bourgeoisie or capitalists); more colloquially known today as the *working class*.

Marx viewed all aspects of capitalist society—art, culture, literature, religion, and politics—in the context of class conflict. A society's economic structure, or *base*, forms the foundation for everything else, the *superstructure*. Religious doctrines telling people that wealth and material well-being in this world are



In 2001, Germany was among the first nations to adopt the euro, which replaced the German mark. German citizens had to be educated about the transition and convinced that it would be beneficial.

Source: Sean Gallup/Getty Images News/Getty Images

unimportant because it is spiritual health and the afterlife that really matter are actually part of the system of class domination. Ideas and doctrines that encourage people to accept the inequalities of capitalist society have the effect of supporting and perpetuating capitalism. This is why Marx characterized religion as the “opiate” of the masses, a drug that prevents them from seeing the world around them for what it really is.

Just as religion cannot be understood apart from class conflict, neither can politics because control of economic resources brings political power and control of political institutions. The state or government in capitalist society is controlled by and serves, protects, and advances the interests of the capitalist class. This concept is referred to as the **nonneutrality of the state**. The government is not a neutral actor—it is systematically biased in favor of the dominant economic class. As Gabriel Kolko explains, “the essential, primary fact about the American social system is that it is a capitalist society based on a grossly unequal distribution of wealth and income ... *political power in America is an aspect of economic power* [emphasis added].”²⁰

nonneutrality of the state

The Marxist assumption that the state or government inevitably serves, protects, and advances the interests of those with economic power.

Consequently, the actions and policies of capitalist governments, domestically and internationally, can be understood only in the context of class interests. Take, for example, social welfare programs that appear to benefit the working classes. Marxists view such reforms as minor crumbs placating the working class to prevent revolution. Although social welfare programs seem to undermine the logic of capitalism, their actual effect is to uphold and sustain an unequal and exploitative system. Eventually, Marx believed that the misery of the working class and the inequality inherent in the capitalist system would increase to such extent that the proletariat would revolt.

When these basic insights are applied to international relations, the result is a very different view of the world than that offered by realists or liberals. At the level of individual states, Marxism emphasizes the significance of their internal class structure. One cannot understand the policies of the United States without recognizing that it is a capitalist society whose government pursues policies to protect and advance the interests of its economic elite. Whether one is trying to understand why the United States was at war in Vietnam or the Persian Gulf, or why it enacted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), we must trace policies to the class interests that they advance. This is very different from either a realist or a liberal perspective. A realist account of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam might not even mention the fact that it is a capitalist system, whereas for Marxists, this is the essential starting point for analysis.

But Marxist analysis goes beyond this. Not only are the policies of individual states understood in terms of economic and class interest, but the international system as a whole is also conceptualized in class terms. The international system is first and foremost a capitalist system. Like domestic capitalist systems, it is based on inequality, exploitation, and class conflict. Whereas realists and liberals look at the world and see roughly two hundred sovereign states interacting with one another, Marxists see its defining feature as the division of the world into the powerful **core** of states that control economic resources and use their power to exploit the states and people of the weak and powerless **periphery**. Whether one labels the division as core versus periphery, North versus South, haves versus have-nots, or First World versus Third World, the underlying reality of inequality remains the same.

core and periphery Terms that refer to the division of the world into classes that are somewhat analogous to Marx's bourgeoisie and proletariat. The **core** is the small group of wealthy and powerful states exploiting the larger group of weak and impoverished states (i.e., the **periphery**).

This vision of the world leads Marxists to a different set of concerns from those that normally animate realists and liberals. Despite profound philosophical and theoretical differences, realists and liberals usually focus on questions of war and peace. They may disagree about whether or not democracies are more peaceful, but the problem of war and conflict is at the core of both liberal and realist thought. Marxists focus on understanding the institutions and processes that sustain what they see as an unequal, exploitative, and unjust international order. Whether it is states (through military intervention or imperialism), quasi-state actors [such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF)], or non-state actors (such as multinational corporations), Marxist analysis always returns to the central reality and problems—understanding the role that these actors play in maintaining and perpetuating an unequal and exploitative global capitalist order.

Feminism

Feminist and Marxist approaches share at least one thing in common: the belief that the dominant approaches of realism and liberalism ignore the most significant variable for understanding social reality. For Marxists, that variable is economic class. For feminists, it is gender. When Marxists look at the world, they think that it is obvious that inequality and class conflict are critical for understanding how that world works. When feminists look at the world, they think that it is obvious that gender inequality and male dominance are, if anything, even more pervasive. Indeed, there are few areas where male dominance is more pronounced than international relations: One can count on a few fingers the women who have led their nations in the past fifty years (e.g., Britain's Margaret Thatcher, Israel's Golda Meir, India's Indira Gandhi, and Germany's Angela Merkel). How one can possibly understand international relations while ignoring this fact is incomprehensible to feminists. A final similarity is that Marxism and most varieties of **feminism** are self-consciously emancipatory perspectives, in that both seek to create a social order free of the inequalities, domination, and injustices that characterize the contemporary world.

Although there is no single feminist theory of international relations, there is a core of concerns and beliefs that unites a variety of feminist perspectives. Feminists of all stripes agree that traditional approaches have systematically ignored women and issues of concern to them. For example, the literature on war in international relations could fill a large library. There are endless studies on whether war is more likely when there are one, two, three, or more major powers. However, the studies on how war affects the lives of women could fit on a very small shelf. Discussions of human rights in international relations focus on political rights such as free speech and extrajudicial executions, but much less attention is paid to the widespread and systemic violation of the rights of women, whether it be sexual slavery, genital mutilation, the denial of access to education, or the acceptance of violence against women. The imprisonment of political opponents prompts governments to protest and people to write letters, but the failure of governments to prosecute honor killings is written off as a cultural peccadillo. Whatever their differences, feminists of all persuasions decry the exclusion of women and issues that affect women from the agenda of international relations scholars. But feminist perspectives go much further than simply demanding a greater focus on women.

In her article “Well, What Is the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?” Marysia Zalewski explains that “there is an easy and a difficult answer to such a question. The easy, but no less important, answer is to look at what is happening to women in Bosnia. No one can deny that women suffer in gender specific ways in wartime.”²¹ Here, Zalewski is talking about an empirical focus on women’s experiences, such as the systematic use of rape as a weapon of terror in ethnic cleansing. But she goes on to note that “this, at first sight easy, answer feeds immediately into the difficult one.... Changing the empirical focus ... make[s] us start questioning how beliefs and myths about gender play an important role in creating,

feminism A perspective on social phenomena focusing on issues of concern to women while theoretically emphasizing the importance of gender.



Angela Merkel, Germany's first woman chancellor, is one of the few women to lead a major nation.

Source: AP Images/Bundeswehr, Michael Schulze

maintaining and ending war, including the one in Bosnia.”²² That is, one should not stop with detailing how certain practices and institutions affect women. The more fundamental question is how and why such practices and institutions came into being and are perpetuated. This requires that we look not only at women, but also at gender and the gendered nature of all social relations, including international relations.

If feminist approaches to international relations are marked by their empirical focus on women, feminist theories are distinguished by their focus on **gender**. This may seem a little confusing since in everyday language, people often use the words *sex* and *gender* interchangeably. Feminists draw a distinction between the two. A person’s sex is biological: The nurse could tell, with a few rare exceptions, whether you were a boy or a girl the moment you were born. *Gender*, on the other hand, refers to behavioral traits that we associate with “masculinity” and “femininity.” People *are* men or women, but they *behave* in masculine or feminine ways. When we say that someone’s “manhood” is being questioned, we are not doubting that someone is a man in a strictly biological sense. His masculinity, not his sex,

gender Socially constructed categories and traits of “masculinity” and “femininity.”

is being questioned. *Gender* refers to socially constructed notions of what a “man” or a “woman” should be and how they should behave. As Steve Niva explains, “gender does not refer to biological differences between men and women but to a set of socially constructed and defined characteristics, meanings, and practices associated with being a man (masculinity) and being a woman (femininity).”²³

Although a few feminists see behavioral differences between men and women as biologically based, most assume that there are virtually no inherent or essential differences between men and women beyond the biological variations associated with procreation. The dramatic differences in social roles and power between men and women cannot be the result of these relatively minor differences. They result instead from socially formed conceptions of what it means to be a man or woman. Most of the traits or behaviors that we commonly associate with men or women (e.g. men are aggressive, women are nurturing) are not biologically determined, but rather socially constructed.²⁴ This can be demonstrated anecdotally by the fact that we can all think of men who seem to embody many feminine traits and women who exhibit masculine traits.

Feminists go on to observe that masculine and feminine traits are typically defined in opposition to one another—that is, men are competitive, women are cooperative; men are aggressive, women are peaceful; men are rational, women are hysterical; and women are nurturing, men are emotionally distant. To be a man is not to be a woman, and vice versa. Furthermore, societies have systematically placed greater value on traits associated with masculinity. A woman who displays masculine behavior will be more accepted than a man who is considered feminine because masculine traits are preferable to feminine traits. Being a “tomboy” is better than being a “sissy.” Social reactions to boys who engage in typically feminine behaviors are more judgmental than reactions to girls engaging in typically masculine behaviors. When a woman politician, such as Margaret Thatcher, is combative, competitive, and confrontational, this is often seen as a good thing, as if she had overcome her femininity. A male politician displaying feminine traits, on the other hand, is considered a wimp.

These socially constructed definitions infuse all aspects of social, political, and economic life and result in a myriad of gendered practices and institutions that effectively perpetuate male dominance. Take, for example, one of the gendered dualisms that has been part of our culture for centuries, if not millennia: that of *private* versus *public*. The idea that home and family life (the private sphere) is the natural domain of women, whereas politics and commercial life (the public sphere) is the natural domain of men has had a profound impact on the status of women. The most glaring example was the exclusion of women from the right to vote in every democracy until the first quarter of the twentieth century—although even in the first part of the twenty-first century, women are still wildly underrepresented in these areas. When one combines socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity with the exclusion of women from the institutions of public power, this inevitably means that the institutions and practices of the public sphere will reflect masculine traits. If men are supposed to be competitive, aggressive, and rational, then the institutions dominated by men will reflect these traits. In this way, institutions and practices become gendered.

There is no reason to think that the processes and dynamics of international relations are immune to the impact of gender. The nature and conduct of international relations is profoundly shaped by the effective exclusion of women and prevailing social constructions of masculinity. Feminists would ask us to explore both the reasons for, and the consequences of, the exclusion of women. When masculinity is socially defined as competitiveness, lack of empathy, self-reliance, aggressiveness, and power seeking, it should come as no surprise that a realm of activity dominated by men will reflect these values and characteristics. Socially constructed notions of masculinity are projected onto world politics. But feminists maintain that there is nothing inevitable about this state of affairs because neither male dominance nor social constructions of masculinity are unchangeable.

But it is not merely the “real world” that reflects this male dominance. Our philosophical and theoretical thinking about international relations has also been shaped almost completely by men. This affects how we think international relations works. When male theorists portray international relations as a naturally competitive realm marked by conflict and strategic rationality and calculation, they are treating as inevitable and universal something that is actually the consequence of socially constructed conceptions of gender and the exclusion of women. Feminists have been particularly critical of realism in this area because they see it as a theory of international relations of, by, and for men. Realism sees the world through a masculine lens but pretends to provide an “objective” portrait of how the world works. Realism treats a world shaped by men and permeated to its core by masculine gender assumptions as a genderless and universal reality.

A common misperception of feminist theories is that they are only about women. Given the label *feminist theories*, this is understandable. In reality, the focus on gender norms and their impact is just as much about men as it is about women. Although the empirical focus on women naturally leads to an emphasis on how women are adversely affected by these gendered norms, men are also frequently harmed as well. After all, if war is a consequence of the gendered nature of international politics, the millions of men who died on the battlefields of World War I were hardly the beneficiaries of gendered practices.

Many find feminist approaches to international relations difficult to grasp. The main problem is that feminism presents a way of looking at international relations that is so different from the perspectives to which we have become accustomed. It requires us to look at something—the consequences of male dominance—that is so obvious and pervasive that it often escapes our notice. What is staring us in the face is often the very thing that we overlook. Although feminist approaches may appear difficult to grasp at first, the basic elements that shape a feminist approach are quite simple. First, the empirical fact is that men have dominated the institutions of public power; perhaps nowhere is this dominance greater than in those areas that have traditionally been the focus of international relations—foreign policy, diplomacy, and the military. And male dominance has consequences in terms of the conduct of international relations. Second, male dominance is no less absent among scholars who have shaped our theoretical thinking about international relations, whether it be realism (Morgenthau), liberalism (Kant), or Marxism

(Lenin). This dominance has consequences for how we have traditionally thought about international relations. Third, there is no doubt that socially constructed gender roles and norms remain a central feature of our social and political life. Thus, to assume that the reality of male dominance and social conceptions of gender can be ignored in our attempts to understand international relations is simply untenable.

Constructivism

Feminism, which stresses the socially constructed nature of gender, segues well into a discussion of the final approach to thinking about international relations, **constructivism**. For feminists, most of the behaviors that we associate with masculinity and femininity are social constructions, not biological inevitabilities. They are social norms that shape behavior because people view them as appropriate. That is, men and women learn what it means to behave like a man or woman and usually act accordingly, and those who do not often face some form of social sanction (e.g., ridicule, ostracism, or discrimination).

Constructivists apply this basic insight to international relations, but they frame it more generally: Any actor's behavior is shaped by socially transmitted and reinforced beliefs, norms, and identities. Being a "man" or a "woman" is only one social identity. "College professor" is another. A professor's behavior is also shaped by prevailing beliefs, norms, and conceptions about what it means to be a professor and how professors should behave. The way that professors relate to students (and vice versa) are shaped by their mutual identities and conceptions of how they should behave toward each other. Thus, when we look at why people behave as they do, there is no escaping the overwhelming importance of beliefs, social norms, and identities.

Constructivists attempt to apply this basic insight to understanding international relations. Daniel Thomas explains: "According to ... constructivist theories of international relations, actors [states] seek to behave in accordance with the norms relevant to their identities ... [which are] definitions of the self in relation to others that provide guidance for how one should behave in a given context."²⁵ The focus is on how actors (in this case largely policymakers and elites) view themselves, others, and the norms of appropriate behavior. Richard Rosecrance explains that "one reason why no single theory of international politics has ever been adequate is that nations modify their behavior in face of experience and theory. If statesmen believe that the balance of power must determine their policies, then they will act in such a way as to validate the theory." And "because leaders and statesmen have been acting on different and contrasting theories of international politics," no single theory will be able to capture all of international politics.²⁶

Rosecrance states the point so casually that its significance might be lost. Most theories of international relations, and especially realism, assume the existence of an objective reality that they seek to reveal. The preeminent realist Hans Morgenthau claimed that "political realism believes that politics, like society in

constructivism A perspective that stresses the importance of identities and shared understandings in shaping the behavior of social actors.

general, is governed by objective laws ... the operation of these laws being impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure.”²⁷ Realists assume that states would act as they do independent of any theory telling them that is how they should behave. The realities of world politics exist; they are not “created.” Constructivists disagree. States behave as they do because people adhere to certain notions of how they should and do behave. The very fact that states exist is the result of widely shared ideas that this is an appropriate way of dividing and organizing the planet and its inhabitants. And the behavior of states is shaped by widely shared ideas about how states should act. States behave as realists (or liberals) predict they will only so long as they accept and internalize the norms of state behavior embodied in these theories. This is not to suggest that there is no “real” world or that the world is and can become whatever we imagine it to be. There are realities: no world government exists; some nations do have nuclear weapons; and some nations are stronger than others. Constructivism holds, however, that the implications of these facts for the conduct of international relations depend on how people understand their significance.

An example may help illustrate the point. Constructivists accept the fact that there is no world government—that is, international politics is anarchic. Realists argue that anarchy creates insecurities and leads states into conflict with one another (the security dilemma). Constructivists are quick to note that this is not always the case. Sometimes the insecurity of anarchy leads states into conflict, but other times, it does not. France and Great Britain, enemies or rivals for much of their history, no longer fear each other. Why? Has a world government been created to eliminate uncertainty and insecurity? No. What has changed is how British and French statesmen view themselves and each other. They have come to see themselves as democracies that do not threaten each other. In the words of a prominent constructivist, “anarchy is what states make of it.”²⁸ That is, anarchy exists, but what this means in terms of how states relate to one another depends on what statesmen think, how they identify themselves and others, and how they believe they should act toward each other.

In this sense, constructivists highlight the distinction between theory in the natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, and physics as opposed to theory in the social sciences. The laws of physics, for example, operated long before we knew what they were. Gravity will pull a dropped book to the ground regardless of whether we think that this will or should happen. Theories about how cells behave or chemicals interact do not influence their behavior. But this sharp line between theory and behavior does not hold in the social realm. In the social sciences, there is an intimate relationship between theory and practice, between what leaders think about how the world works and how they choose to behave. As Christopher Fettweis explains: “[T]he most basic, central insight from constructivist theory in international politics is that the fundamental character of the system of states is neither set nor predetermined, but evolutionary and socially constructed.” As a result, “competition is natural only if states believe that it is natural to compete; as those beliefs evolve, which they do over time, such underlying assumptions can change.”²⁹

Perspectives and Levels of Analysis

There are several ways that we can organize and make sense of the complexities of international relations. One is to identify distinct schools of thought or worldviews and see how they apply to particular issues and problems. This is the approach emphasized in this text. Others have found it useful to focus on different **levels of analysis** in which international phenomena such as war or foreign policy are examined from several different “levels.” At the *individual level*, for example, we might focus on general aspects of human nature or traits of individual decision makers (e.g., perceptions, beliefs, and personalities). At the *state level*, we can try to understand how societal characteristics influence state behavior (e.g., are democratic states more peaceful or capitalist states more expansionist?). Finally, at the *international level*, we can attempt to understand the impact of international anarchy or given distributions of power (e.g., does a balance or imbalance of power lead to peace?).

Although various analysts tend to emphasize different levels, any reasonably complete understanding of international relations will incorporate all the levels of analysis. Indeed, the various perspectives discussed in this chapter usually cut across these different levels. Liberals, for example, make some assumptions about human nature (individual level) and the peacefulness of democracies (state level). Similarly, realists make assumptions about human nature (individual level), as well as the consequences of international anarchy (system level). Whether we organize our thinking about international relations primarily in terms of competing theories and philosophies or different levels of analysis is largely a matter of what seems most useful. Neither approach is necessarily better than the other; they are simply different organizational schemes for thinking about, and making sense of, international relations.

levels of analysis An organizational scheme for thinking about international politics. The most general focuses on causes and dynamics of the individual, state, and systemic levels.

Conclusion

Although this diversity of perspectives might seem confusing enough, matters actually get a little worse: Even within each perspective, there are differences of opinion on theoretical and practical policy issues. As a result, it is very rare that we can identify *the* realist, liberal, Marxist, feminist, or constructivist position. An answer to the question, “What is the realist position on such and such?” is not always straightforward. On a theoretical level, for example, realists disagree among themselves about whether the chances for war are lowest in a world with one, two, or multiple major powers. Using a policy issue as an example, there was no single realist position on the 2003 invasion of Iraq: some realists favored war, while others were staunch opponents. Muddying the waters further, representatives of differing perspectives may find themselves in agreement on an issue.

Thus, it is not always useful to think in terms of *a* realist, liberal, Marxist, feminist, or constructivist *position*. Instead, it is better to approach debates in terms of *arguments* or *rationales*. Let us again use the example of the 2003 invasion of Iraq

to illustrate. Realists disagreed among themselves about the wisdom of the U.S. invasion. But if we look at the type of arguments and rationales offered in defense of their differing positions, certain similarities are evident. Realist opponents of the Iraq War claimed that the threat that Iraq posed was insufficient to warrant the costs associated with war. Other realists found the threat posed by Iraq to be compelling and supported the war. In this case, there was agreement that national and strategic interests needed to guide the decision to go to war—realists were united on this point—but they disagreed about whether war in Iraq was indeed in the national interest. The underlying issues and concerns were the same, but their application to the specific case was different. On the question of Iraq, one could make an argument for or against the war on realist terms. It is the type of argument made, not necessarily the conclusion reached, that usually allows one to distinguish a realist from a Marxist or liberal. Thus, people who share the same basic assumptions may arrive at different positions. Conversely, people who start with different assumptions may arrive at the same position. Some liberals, for example, supported the war in Iraq largely on human rights grounds, arriving at the same position as pro-war realists, but for very different reasons. Thus, we cannot always assume that realists will always agree with other realists (or liberals with liberals, and so on) or that people from different perspectives will always be at odds. In textbooks such as this one, ideas are often neatly divided into sections and subsections. The real world, however, is not always so tidy.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Theoretical and policy debates in international relations are usually rooted in competing perspectives or worldviews that provide differing ways to look at and understand the world around us. The chapter focused on five competing visions of international relations: realism, liberalism, Marxism, feminism, and constructivism.
- Realism provides a somewhat pessimistic outlook that stresses the centrality and inevitability of conflict among nations. Many classical realists trace these conflicts to a flawed human nature, whereas neorealists are more inclined to see it as a consequence of an inherently insecure anarchical international system.
- Liberalism is a more optimistic outlook that sees a greater scope for international cooperation and peace. Whether the stress is on expanding commerce, spreading democracy, changing ethical norms, or strengthening international institutions, liberals believe that common interests and shared values offer hope for a fundamentally better and more peaceful world.
- Marxists analyze society, domestic and international, in terms of class interests and conflicts. The behavior and policies of states are seen as reflections of class (not national) interests, and the dynamics of world politics as a whole are understood in terms of the unequal and exploitative relations between the wealthy, powerful nations of the global north and the impoverished, weak nations of the global south. Social conflict generally, and international conflict in particular, is an inevitable consequence of inequality and exploitation.
- Feminists argue that social dynamics and institutions cannot be understood without the recognition of the reality of male dominance and the importance of gender. International relations is no exception, especially because there are few other areas where male dominance is so pronounced. Male dominance and socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity have helped shape the reality of international politics, as well as our theories of international politics.
- Constructivists argue that the behavior of social actors (e.g., individuals, groups, nations) is shaped by ideas, norms, and identities. As a result, they are skeptical of theories that portray certain types of behaviors as inevitable.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Different theories embody varying levels of pessimism and optimism about the future of international relations. Which of the theories discussed in this chapter leave you feeling more or less optimistic, and why?
2. To some extent do the perspectives on international relations differ in the questions they ask rather than the answers they provide?
3. It is important to recognize that theories of international relations often share elements in common despite their differences. Select various combinations (e.g., realists and Marxists or feminists and constructivists) and identify points of agreement, as well as disagreement.
4. Would a world in which women occupied more positions of political power be very different in terms of how states relate toward each? Why might feminists think it would? Why might realists think it would not?
5. Do you think that it is possible to combine different perspectives in a way that makes sense? For example, can someone be both a realist and a Marxist, or a feminist and a liberal? Do some combinations make sense, but not others?

KEY TERMS

anarchy, 37

bourgeoisie, 42

collective egoism, 35

commercial liberalism, 40

constructivism, 49

core, 44

Democratic liberalism, 40

feminism, 45

- gender, 46
 George Kennan, 35
 group egoism, 35
 Hans Morgenthau, 35
 harmony of interests, 39
- idealism, 38
 Karl Marx, 42
 levels of analysis, 51
 liberal institutionalism, 41
 liberal internationalism, 38

- liberalism, 38
 Marxist, 41
 nonneutrality of the state, 43
 periphery, 44
- proletariat, 42
 realism, 34
 security dilemma, 37
 Thucydides, 35

FURTHER READINGS

A good place to begin is with two of the most influential statements of classical realism: Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1964 [1945]), and Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967). The essential presentation of neorealism is Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979). A forceful recent restatement of realism is John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

The literature on liberalism is more diverse. Some essential works reflecting various strains of liberal thinking include Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

Those interested in Marxist approaches should begin with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's classic *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International

Publishers, 1939) and John Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965). An excellent survey is Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London: Routledge, 1990). A more recent analysis within the Marxist tradition is William I. Robinson, *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class, and the State in a Transnational World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Some important feminist works include J. Ann Tickner, *Gender and International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), and Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994). One of the classic and most interesting feminist works is Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, updated edition). A more recent example of feminist theory and research is Valerie Hudson et al., *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). The essential work in the constructivist tradition is Alexander Wendt, *A Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

NOTES

¹Stephen Walt, "International Relations One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 29.

²Quoted in Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. ii. See also Jesse Norman, *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

³Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. xx.

⁴Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp. 194–195.

⁵George Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 319.

⁶Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 3.

⁷Robert Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 305.

⁸Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 [1945]), p. 53.

⁹Stanley Michalak, *A Primer in Power Politics* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), p. 45.

¹⁰Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 51.

¹¹Michalak, *Primer in Power Politics*, p. 2.

¹²Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 104.

¹³John Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics* (New York: David McKay, 1976), pp. 72–73.

¹⁴Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 7.

¹⁵David Sidorsky, ed., *The Liberal Tradition in European Thought* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1970), p. 2.

¹⁶Steven Pinker, "Violence Vanquished, *Wall Street Journal Online* (September 24, 2011). Accessed at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424053111904106704576583203589408180>.

¹⁷John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), pp. 217, 244.

¹⁸Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, p. 305.

¹⁹Brian Rathbun, "Is Anybody Not an (International Relations) Liberal?" *Security Studies*, 19, 2010, p. 8.

²⁰Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 6, 9.

²¹Marysia Zalewski, "Well, What Is the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?" *International Affairs* 71, no. 2(1995): 355. The interesting title of this article reflects the widespread frustration feminists feel when their work is attacked on the grounds that it lacks "real-world" relevance.

²²Ibid., pp. 355-356.

²³Steve Niva, "Tough and Tender: New World Order Masculinity and the Cold War," in *The "Man" Question in International Relations*, ed. Marysia

Zalewski and Jane Parpart (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 111-112.

²⁴There are those (mostly nonfeminists) who see many behavioral differences as biologically determined. See, for example, Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (September/October 1998), and Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

²⁵Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 13.

²⁶Rosecrance, *Rise of the Trading State*, p. 41.

²⁷Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 4.

²⁸Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 392-425.

²⁹Christopher Fettweis, *The Pathologies of Power: Fear, Honor, Glory, and Hubris in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 160.



3

Power Politics

Key Controversy: Does International Anarchy Lead to War?

International politics is often considered the realm of power politics. Without a world government, nations do not have the luxury of security and must strive for power or live at the mercy of their powerful neighbors. According to realists, international politics is fundamentally a struggle for power in which nations must always be wary of the power of other nations. Nations that naïvely ignore these realities and try to avoid power politics will suffer the consequences of their folly. Historically, liberals have rejected this pessimistic assessment and sought alternatives to power politics. Although some utopian liberals have embraced world government, most have proposed more modest alternatives. Assuming a widely shared interest in peace, many liberals believe that the international community as a whole can effectively organize to deter aggression and war. Constructivists also reject the realist view that states must pursue power to ensure their security, pointing out that many states have created stable and secure relations that do not rest on calculations of power. ■

What are the causes of war? What, if anything, can be done to preserve and promote international peace? Although there is little agreement on the answers, there is at least a consensus that these are the most important questions for students of international relations. Most would concede that some measure of international conflict is unavoidable. Nations are unlikely to agree about everything all the time. Accepting the inevitability of international conflict, however, does not necessarily entail the inevitability of *violent* international conflict. And even if it is unrealistic to eliminate all violent international conflict, it might still be possible to significantly reduce its likelihood. As we will see in the next chapter, some hold out hope that the spread of democracy in the world can reduce, or perhaps even eliminate, the chances for war. Others argue that the prospects for war and peace have more to do with the nature of the international system—including anarchy, the distribution of power, the existence of international institutions, or all of the above—and suggest that we need to look here for ways to preserve peace.

But which international arrangements or institutions are conducive to peace? Does a balance of power lead to peace? Does peace require the presence of a hegemonic power capable of enforcing it (i.e., a great imbalance of power)? Can the global community as a whole come together to preserve peace? In short, what are alternative mechanisms for preserving peace, and how feasible are they?

Peace Through Strength?

It is almost impossible to get through a national political campaign in the United States without hearing the phrase “peace through strength.” Unfortunately, this geopolitical catchphrase is more often employed than explained. For our purposes, the interesting word in the phrase is *through* because it suggests a causal connection between peace and strength. But is there any reason to believe that peace and strength go hand-in-hand, that the latter leads to the former? Is there any evidence, for example, that strong nations are involved in fewer wars than are weaker nations? Probably not: Research demonstrates that great powers are involved in more, not fewer, wars.

Those who invoke peace through strength, however, probably do not intend it to be taken as a social scientific hypothesis. More likely, it is rhetorical shorthand for a foreign policy orientation emphasizing national power as the essential currency of international affairs. It conveys the message that nations must be concerned about their power if they value their independence and security. The expression “peace through strength” reflects a commitment to **power politics**, a perspective in which international politics inevitably entails “perceptions of insecurity (the security dilemma); struggles for power; the use of Machiavellian stratagems; the presence of coercion; attempts to balance power; and the use of war to settle disputes.”¹ The guiding assumption is that nations have no choice, or at least no good choice, other than engaging in power politics. In the international realm, nations have two options: “the alternatives … [are] probable suicide on the one hand and the active playing of the power-politics on the other.”² The imperatives and logic of international anarchy compel states to pursue power. As Stanley Michalak argues, “We like to think that solutions exist ‘out there,’ new ideas that … could usher in a new era of peace and amity among nations,” but regrettably, “the truth is: none exists. The few alternatives to military force have been well known for centuries … and whenever they have [been] tried, they have failed.”³ Thus, the operation or “playing” of power politics is not an alternative to international peace; it is the only feasible (though admittedly imperfect) means for achieving international peace.

Not surprisingly, Michalak’s pessimistic conclusion is not universally shared. If the history of international politics reveals anything, it is that the pursuit of power has not produced anything that deserves to be called peace, and the security that it supposedly ensures is fleeting and illusory. Strong powers may be *less insecure* than others, but in a world of relentless power competition, no nation enjoys total security, simply varying degrees of insecurity. Critics also challenge the assertion that there are no alternatives to power politics as a dangerously self-fulfilling part of the realist catechism, a statement of faith and ideology rather than a reflection of reality.

power politics A perspective portraying international relations as inevitably a realm of conflict and competition for power among states.

There Is No Alternative to Power Politics

In vivid terms, Kenneth Waltz tells us that “the state among states … conducts its affairs in the brooding shadow of violence. … some states may at any time use force,” so “all states must be prepared to do so—or live at the mercy of their militarily more vigorous neighbors.” In international relations, as in any other sphere of social interaction, “contact without at least occasional conflict is inconceivable; and the hope that in the absence of an agent to manage or manipulate conflicting parties, the use of force will always be avoided cannot be realistically entertained.”⁴ It is hard to imagine a more concise statement for the inevitability of power politics: International politics is anarchic; nations must provide for their own security; nations can never be certain what others are up to; war is always a possibility; and alternatives to national power as the final guarantor of safety and independence are unrealistic. Let us examine the argument in more detail.

Anarchy Leads to Power Politics

Why do nations in international society worry about their power in ways that people and groups within nations usually do not? Is it because nations come into conflict, whereas as people and groups within nations live in harmony? Certainly not. Domestic societies are rife with all kinds of conflicts—personal, social, and political. Is it that people within domestic societies are never threatened with violence, whereas nations are? Again, this is obviously not the case. Even though nations differ greatly in their level of domestic violence, none is able to eliminate it entirely. The difference is that in domestic society, conflicts occur in a context with a central political authority to deal with and manage these conflicts. Waltz explains that “the difference between national and international politics lies not in the use of force but in the different modes of organization for doing something about it.” In the domestic realm, we have governments with “a monopoly on the *legitimate* use of force, and legitimate here means that public agents are organized to prevent and counter the private use of force.” Because there is a government, “citizens need not prepare to defend themselves. Public agencies do that. *A national system is not one of self-help. The international system is.*”⁵

International society is **anarchic**, meaning that there is no world government with the right, obligation, or capacity to protect nations. The United Nations (UN) is an international governmental organization (IGO)—that is, a voluntary organization of states. The UN is not, nor was it ever intended to be, a world government. Without a central authority to protect them, nations have no alternative but to protect themselves as best as they can. This contrasts with domestic society, in which people are not responsible for providing their own security. This is why we have police. Even though police do not offer foolproof protection, “states … do not enjoy even an imperfect guarantee of their security unless they set out to provide it for themselves.”⁶ States can protect their security by relying on their own resources, or they can combine power with others. But either way, nations are responsible for their own security. There is no escaping the reality that “**self-help** is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order.”⁷ And, according to

anarchic The absence of a central governmental or political authority.

self-help The necessity for actors to make provisions for their own security in the absence of any central authority to protect them from potential threats.

security dilemma The problem that nations face when the actions taken to make one nation feel more secure inevitably make other nations feel less secure.

Frederick Dunn, “so long as the notion of self-help persists, the aim of maintaining the power position of the nation is paramount to all other considerations.”⁸

If self-help is an inevitable component of anarchy, the **security dilemma** is the logical consequence of self-help. The dilemma that nations face is that many of the actions that make them more secure increase the insecurity of others. Even actions that appear purely defensive can seem menacing to others. It is difficult to imagine a defensive military force that does not have at least some offensive potential. As a result, one nation’s security is often another’s insecurity. The contrast with domestic society is critical. Governments solve the security dilemma by providing security to all simultaneously. As the police ensure your security, this does not increase your neighbor’s insecurity. Because international politics is anarchic, there is no lasting solution to the security dilemma of nations.

In an anarchic international system characterized by self-help and a security dilemma, nations have to worry about the capabilities and intentions of other states. The relatively easy part of this assessment is determining capabilities. Trying to decipher intentions is another matter. There was not much uncertainty, for example, about the size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal during the Cold War: Spy planes and satellites gave the United States a fairly reliable picture of Soviet capabilities. But debates still revolved around what the Soviet Union intended to do with these capabilities. This is the unavoidable element of uncertainty in international politics, and uncertainty translates into insecurity, which easily escalates into fear. And because “fear is endemic to states in the international system … it drives them to compete for power so that they can increase their prospects for survival in a dangerous world.”⁹

So the argument for the inevitability of power politics follows a clear line of development: “Because the international system has no central authority, every nation must fend for itself, and states can do that only by utilizing their power; therefore, they will always be trying to increase their power.”¹⁰ In other words, “the mere existence of states claiming sovereignty in a world without a central authority creates a dynamic that encourages competition and violence.”¹¹

Power Politics I: The Balance of Power

power Influence over the behavior of others and the ability to prevail in conflict.

In the field of international relations, terms and concepts are often ambiguous and contested. *Power* and *balance of power* are two examples. Even though “power lies at the heart of international politics … there is considerable disagreement about what power is and how to measure it.”¹² At a conceptual level, **power** is the ability to prevail in conflict, to influence the behavior of other actors. Actually measuring power is more problematic. Most operating within the tradition of realism and power politics would be inclined to agree with Mearsheimer that “states have two kinds of power: latent power and military power. These two forms of power are closely related but not synonymous.” Whereas military power is fairly self-explanatory, “latent power refers to the socioeconomic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state’s wealth and overall size of its population. Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars, and a state’s latent power refers to the raw potential that it can draw on when competing with rival states.”¹³

The expression *balance of power* can also be confusing. As Inis Claude notes, “balance of power is assigned a number of different, and not always compatible, meanings in discourse on international relations.”¹⁴ This can be illustrated by looking at two common uses of the term. In some cases, the balance of power refers to a situation in which two nations or alliances are roughly equal. But there are also instances in which people refer to a “favorable balance of power,” which seems like a contradiction since the very idea of “favorable” balance suggests that power is not balanced at all. Here, the term *balance of power* actually refers to a *distribution* of power. So when we see references to the balance of power between X and Y, it is necessary to look closely to determine if it refers to a balance or an imbalance.

Definitions of these terms are critical because they are central to many theories of international relations, especially **balance of power theory**, sometimes referred to as “the grand old theory of international relations.”¹⁵ Balance of power theory begins with the basic premises of power politics: International relations is a struggle for power and security in an anarchic world. Because no central authority provides protection and intentions are always uncertain, states inevitably focus on the capabilities of other states. Balance of power theory predicts that states will do exactly what the theory’s name suggests—balance against the power of other states. In order to prevent any one state or alliance from achieving dominance, states can do one of two things: increase their own power or band together with other states. These options are sometimes referred to as *internal* and *external* balancing. States do not always intend for a balance to emerge, but “according to the theory, balances of power tend to form whether some or all states consciously aim to establish or maintain a balance.”¹⁶ States merely set out to safeguard their security, and in the process, “the various nations group themselves together in such a way that no single nation or group of nations is strong enough to overwhelm the others.”¹⁷

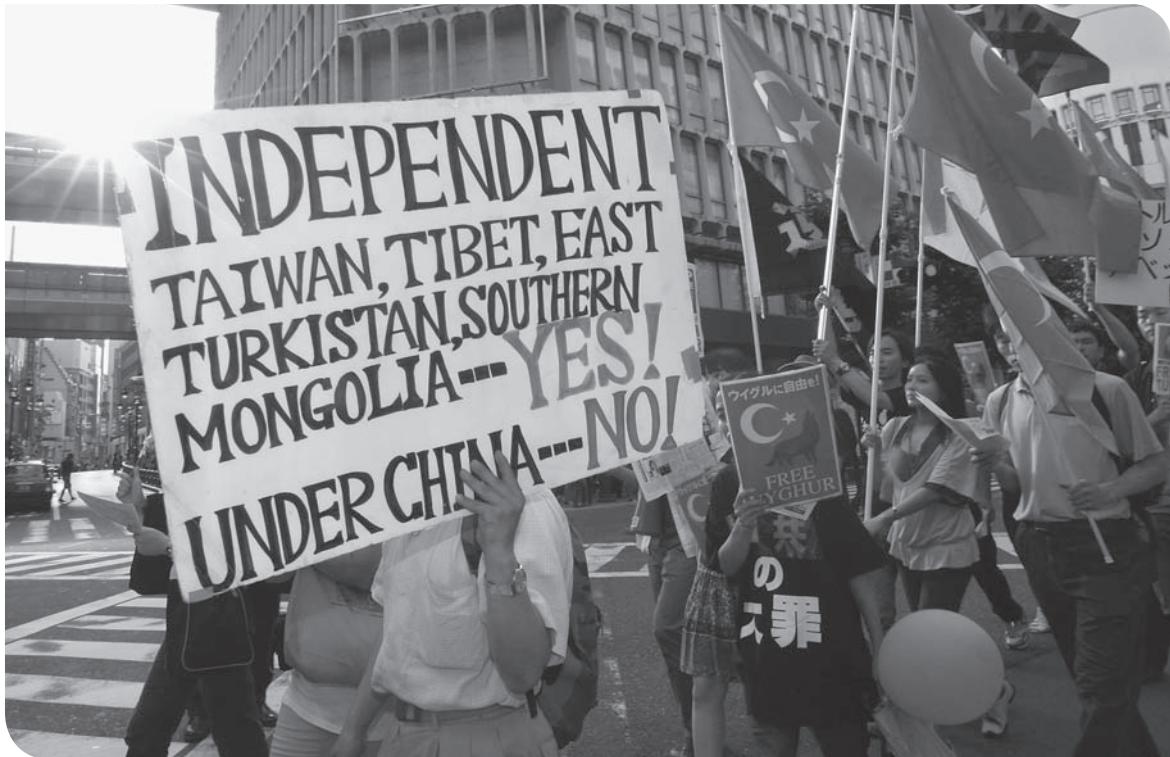
Balancing, however, is not the only option available to states. There is also the option of joining forces with the stronger power—that is, states could *bandwagon* with, rather than balance against, the most powerful state or alliance. Balance of power theorists see **bandwagoning** as unlikely because “to ally with the dominant power means placing one’s trust in its continued benevolence. The safer strategy is to join with those who cannot readily dominate their allies, in order to avoid being dominated by those who can.” Furthermore, “joining the weaker side increases the new members’ influence within the alliance, because the weaker power has greater need for the assistance.”¹⁸ To use an illustrative metaphor, the balance of power operates like a seesaw: Whenever one side gets powerful enough to tip the contraption in its favor, nations scoot over to the other side to keep it on an even keel.

In addition to preventing a nation or alliance from becoming powerful enough to dominate the international system, the tendency for states to balance has the benefit of contributing to peace and stability. The argument is straightforward. It begins by assuming that nations start wars because they expect to win them—that is, they expect gains to exceed losses. When potential antagonists are roughly equal in power, neither side can be confident of prevailing in a war. If neither side is confident of victory, the chances that one of them will initiate war will be low, although it is never zero. Balance of power theory is not universally accepted.

balance of power theory

A theory predicting that the pursuit of security by nations tends to result in the creation of balances of power on a systemic level. This is often accompanied by the prediction that war is less likely when power is balanced because no nation can be confident of winning a war (and, thus, no nation is tempted to initiate one).

bandwagoning When less powerful actors align with (rather than against) the most powerful ones. Inconsistent with balance of power theory, which predicts that nations will align against (and hence “balance”) the most powerful nation.



Many in Asia have begun to worry about China's increasing economic and military power. Protests often reflect growing fear about the consequences of China's rise for its neighbors.

Source: Junko Kimura/Getty Images

Part of the problem is that the theory is very difficult to test. Waltz himself admits that "because only a loosely defined and inconstant condition of balance is predicted, it is difficult to say that any given distribution of power falsifies the theory."¹⁹ Since the theory predicts only a *tendency toward* balancing, the absence of a balance of power at any point in time does not automatically undermine the theory. More significant, critics of the theory point to many historical examples that appear to run counter to its predictions. In the early years of the Cold War, for example, the United States was undeniably the world's most formidable military and economic power. If ever there were an undisputed strongest power in the world, the United States was it. According to balance of power theory, other nations should have been flocking to align against the United States. Other nations should have scooted over to the Soviet Union's side of the seesaw to even things out. They did not. Why not?

Power Politics II: Balance of Threat Theory

Balance of power theory assumes that states focus on the power of other states because intentions are unknowable. As a result, states assume that those with the

greatest capabilities pose the greatest threat and balance against them. On an abstract level, this is probably true. All else being equal, the most powerful states do pose the greatest danger. In the real world, however, all else is never equal. States do not ignore intentions merely because they cannot be established definitively. Great Britain and France, for example, have the *ability* to attack the United States with hundreds of nuclear weapons, but no one really worries about it because it is assumed that they have no intention or desire to do so. States make assessments, however imperfect, of both power and intentions. **Balance of threat theory** agrees that states do in fact balance; the question is what they balance against (see Figure 3.1 for a summary and contrast of the two theories).

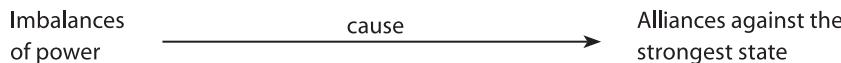
Stephen Walt, who provides the most persuasive statement of balance of threat theory, explains: “Perceptions of intent are likely to play an especially crucial role in alliance choices.... Even states with rather modest capabilities may prompt others to balance if they are perceived as especially aggressive.”²⁰ Many historical examples that contradict balance of power theory appear more consistent with balance of threat theory. Again, Walt notes that “balance of threat theory helps explain why the coalitions that defeated Germany and its allies in World War I and World War II grew to be far more powerful than their opponents.... The answer is simple: Germany and its allies ... were more threatening (though weaker) and caused others to form a more powerful coalition in response.”²¹ This approach also helps explain the alignment pattern of the early Cold War: most nations aligned with the United States rather than the Soviet Union because the latter was seen as more threatening despite its more limited power.

Balance of threat theory A theory predicting that nations align against whichever nation is seen as posing the greatest threat, not necessarily against the powerful nation.

FIGURE 3.1

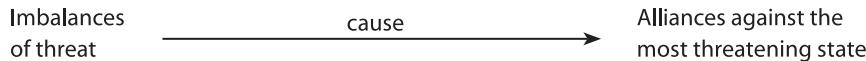
Balance of power versus balance of threat

BALANCE OF POWER THEORY



An imbalance of power occurs when the strongest state or coalition in the system possesses significantly greater power than the second strongest. Power is the product of several different components, including population, economic and military capability, technological skill, and political cohesion.

BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY



An imbalance of threat occurs when the most threatening state or coalition is significantly more dangerous than the second most threatening state or coalition. The degree to which a state threatens others is the product of its aggregate power, its geographic proximity, its offensive capability, and the aggressiveness of its intentions.

Source: Based on Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

An important caveat needs to be noted here: Nations balance against others that are *perceived* as posing a threat, and assessments of threat may be wrong, just as measurements of power can be mistaken. The failure of an adequate deterrent coalition to emerge against Nazi Germany in the mid-1930s is an example of just such a failure. Balance of threat theory does not claim that perceptions of threat are correct—merely that they play a critical role in alliance choices.

Power Politics III: Preponderance Theory

preponderance A theory arguing that nations tend to align on the basis of interests—those that are satisfied with the status quo as opposed to those that are dissatisfied. Peace and stability are more likely when there is a great imbalance of power in favor of the status quo states—that is, when there is preponderance of power in support of the existing order. Also known as *hegemonic stability theory*.

hegemonic stability theory
See *preponderance*.

degree of power In the preponderance theory, refers to a state's position in the international power hierarchy—that is, whether it is a great power, a middle-range power, or a weak state.

degree of satisfaction In the preponderance theory, the extent to which a state is essentially satisfied or dissatisfied with the existing international order.

A final version of power politics is **preponderance** or **hegemonic stability theory**, in which states are distinguished by their **degree of power** and **degree of satisfaction**. *Degree of satisfaction* refers to whether a state is satisfied or dissatisfied with the current international order and its place in it. Satisfied states are interested in preserving the international status quo, whereas dissatisfied states are revisionist and want to change (i.e., revise) the existing order. On the basis of power and satisfaction, the theory identifies four types of nations: (1) the powerful and satisfied, (2) the powerful and dissatisfied, (3) the weak and satisfied, and (4) the weak and dissatisfied. At the top of the power hierarchy is the dominant power or hegemon, typically the last major war's victor (the United States can be viewed as the hegemon from the end of World War II). By definition, the hegemon is a status quo power interested in preserving the existing order. Below the hegemon are great powers, middle powers, small powers, and dependencies. In each category, there are typically both status quo ("satisfied") and revisionist ("dissatisfied") states.²² The most dangerous states are those that combine great power with high levels of dissatisfaction.

This theory holds that states tend to align on the basis of interests—that is, status quo nations against revisionist nations. Although the alliances may not always be formal, status quo states will come together if the existing order is threatened by revisionist states. In the mid-1930s, for example, the United States, France, and Great Britain (status quo powers) did not form an alliance against Nazi Germany (a revisionist power), but they did eventually align in the face of German aggression.²³

Preponderance theory parts company with balance of power theory on the issue of which power distribution is most conducive to peace. According to Organski, it is not a balance of power that leads to peace, but rather an *imbalance* of power: "World peace is guaranteed when the nations satisfied with the existing international order enjoy an unchallenged supremacy of power ... major wars are most likely when a dissatisfied challenger achieves an approximate balance of power with the dominant nation."²⁴ Although it is true that a balance of power "means that either side might lose, it also means that either side may win."²⁵ When there is a great imbalance of power, the challenger knows there is no chance of winning a war and the dominant power has no need to resort to war. The peace that results when the dominance of the status quo powers is unquestioned "is not necessarily a peace with justice," but it is peace if we define this to mean the absence of war.²⁶

To illustrate the differences among the theories, consider their predictions for the post–Cold War world. The collapse of the Soviet Union clearly left the United States

as the dominant nation in the world. No other nation possessed a combination of economic and military power equivalent to that of the United States. The United States was the only nation with the ability to project military force on a global scale. This remains the case today. Balance of power theory predicts that other nations, fearful of U.S. power and uncertain of its intentions, should have balanced and aligned against the United States in order to prevent U.S. domination. Balance of threat theory, however, does not automatically predict the emergence of a counter-U.S. coalition. The important variable is not the power of the United States per se, but whether it is viewed as a threat. Hegemonic stability theory predicted that a counter-U.S. coalition would not emerge because the other major powers (e.g., Japan, Germany, Britain, and France), whatever their disagreements with the United States, are all satisfied powers interested in preserving, not overturning, the existing international order.

The Common Vision of Power Politics

The differences among balance of power, balance of threat, and hegemonic stability theories are clearly significant. Whether states balance against power or threats or align on the basis of interests is a critical question both for historical understanding and current policy debates. But the issues on which these theories disagree should not obscure their common underlying vision of international politics. For our purposes, the most important point is that all of these theories agree on the fundamental features and dynamics of international relations: Anarchy is the central fact that shapes relations among states; nations have to be concerned about their power vis-à-vis other states; and the pursuit of power and security by independent states is the driving force of international politics.

Alternatives to Power Politics

Even those who believe that there is no realistic alternative to power politics concede that it is not ideal. Although a balance or imbalance of power may be more conducive to peace, there is no guarantee that peace can be preserved indefinitely. Eventually, the balance breaks down or revisionist states gain power, and war results. Within a system of power politics, war is always possible. Even when peace prevails, states must conduct their “affairs in the brooding shadow of violence.”²⁷ At least, this is what realists tell us. But is it so? Is the world really doomed to power politics, with periods of peace and stability punctuated by spasms of war and violence? Or are there alternatives to the relentless and ruthless logic of power politics?

World Government?

To the extent that anarchy is the fundamental cause of power politics, the creation of a world government would constitute a frontal assault on the problem. On the level of theory and logic, the case for world government is impeccable and simple.

Just as national governments eliminate the security dilemma for individuals by providing protection and mechanisms for dealing with conflicts, a world government is essential if the same result is to be attained on a global scale. A truly effective world government would entail “the establishment of an authority which takes away from nations, summarily and completely, not only the machinery of battle that can wage war, but also the machinery of decision that can start a war.”²⁸

Even if we assume that world government is desirable, the problem is creating one. As Inis Claude notes in his discussion of the prospects for world government, “I do not propose to deal extensively with the question of the *feasibility* of world government in the present era, or in the foreseeable future. This abstention is in part a reflection of my conviction that the answer is almost self-evidently negative.” He sees “no realistic prospect of the establishment of a system of world government as a means for attempting to cope with the critical dangers of world politics.”²⁹ Realists, such as Kenneth Waltz, concede that *in theory*, world government presents a solution to the problems of anarchy. But world government is “unattainable in practice” because the world lacks the sense of shared values and community that are essential preconditions for effective government. “In a society of states with little coherence,” Waltz predicts, “the prospect of a world government would be an invitation to prepare for world civil war.”³⁰ Fortunately for those who seek an alternative to power politics, world government is not the only option.

Collective Security

collective security A system in which states renounce the use of force to settle disputes and also agree to band together against states that resort to the use of force. In such a system, the threat of collective response by all states deters the use of force by individual states. Collective security was the initial goal of the League of Nations.

Although there has never been a serious attempt to establish a world government, efforts have been made to transcend power politics through **collective security**, which refers to “a system of states that join together … and make an explicit commitment to do two things: (1) they renounce the use of force to settle disputes with each other, and (2) they promise to use force against any of their number who reject rule 1.”³¹ “The animating idea of collective security,” Earl Ravenal explains, “is that each outbreak of aggression will be suppressed, not by a partial alliance directed specifically against certain parties, but by a universal compact, binding *all* to defend *any*.³² Under collective security, peace is preserved not by individual states shifting alignments to offset the power of potential aggressors, but rather by the prospect of the entire community of nations coming to the aid of victims of aggression. Collective security arrangements can be global in scope, but they need not be; they can also be confined to more limited regions such as Europe or Southeast Asia.

It is important to note what collective security does and does not do. Although there certainly would be institutions for making decisions about how and when to respond to aggression, collective security would not create a world government. Individual states are not disarmed and replaced by some global police force. International politics remains anarchic and states sovereign. Nor does collective security reject power and deterrence as vital components of preserving peace. Proposals for collective security “recognize that military power is a central fact of life in international politics, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.”³³

In fact, collective security seeks to keep the peace by threatening any aggressor with the overwhelming power of the international community as a whole.

Rather than transcending international anarchy, collective security tries to ameliorate its consequences. Because the protection of each state's security becomes the responsibility of the wider international community, states would no longer be in a pure self-help situation. In committing themselves to aid any state threatened with aggression, all nations become part of an international police force, albeit one more like a volunteer fire department than full-time police. The element of self-help is removed because states are obligated to help whenever peace is threatened, not merely when it is in their interests to do so. And the fact that aid would be available to all members of the community allows states to escape the security dilemma. The security afforded to all does not come at anyone else's expense.

The most significant experiment with collective security was the League of Nations during the 1920s and 1930s. In urging the creation of the league, U.S. president Woodrow Wilson laid out the basic logic of collective security: "If the peace presently to be made is to endure, it must be a peace made secure by the organized major force of mankind.... Right must be based upon the common strength, not the individual strength, of nations upon whose concert peace will depend."³⁴ Although the League of Nations provided for means short of force to punish and deter aggressors, such as economic sanctions, the military option remained the ultimate deterrent. According to Article 16 (1) of the League Charter, "Should any Member of the League resort to war ... it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League," and after other measures had failed to restore the peace, "the Members of the League should severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League."³⁵

Although the league failed to achieve its objectives, there is debate about why it failed so miserably. Some trace its failure to specific historical circumstances, particularly the unwillingness of the United States to join, although it is unclear that this would have made much difference. The greater problem was that even though members paid lip service to the principles of collective security, they proved, time after time, that they were unwilling to do what was needed to make it work. There was a huge gulf between the rhetoric and treaty on one hand and the real world of policy on the other. Others go further and attribute the league's failure to the inherent weaknesses of collective security, which render it unworkable in almost any context.

A few of the problems likely to be encountered in any collective security system are obvious. One is the identification of the "aggressor." Sometimes this is relatively clear, such as when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. But there are also many instances in which there is disagreement. A vote in the UN on whether Israel is an "aggressor" vis-à-vis the Palestinians would certainly not be unanimous. A vote on whether the United States was the aggressor in Vietnam would have yielded a similarly divided verdict. The point is not that these judgments are right or wrong, but merely that such things are not always unambiguous in international politics. And if nations cannot agree on who the aggressor is, how can they be expected to fall into line in punishing or deterring the aggressor?

Critics see even deeper flaws. In rejecting as illegitimate any forceful change of the existing order, collective security is inevitably biased in favor of the status quo and its beneficiaries. Jiri Hochman observes that the league's goal of collective security "was, of course, identical with the defense of the post-World War I status quo."³⁶ Unfortunately, Germany and other nations viewed the World War I settlement as illegitimate, and they eventually possessed the power to challenge it. From the perspective of nations disadvantaged by the existing international order, collective security looks very different. Rather than seeing collective security as a noble and high-minded attempt to preserve peace, they view it as a scheme for protecting the status quo. As E. H. Carr argues, "just as the ruling class in a community prays for domestic peace, which guarantees its own security and predominance ... so international peace becomes a special vested interest of predominant powers."³⁷

Even those who support collective security admit that it only works if the major powers share an interest in upholding the status quo. In considering whether



The League of Nations meets in 1923. It was one of the most ambitious attempts to implement the principles of collective security. Unfortunately, the world's great powers failed to live up to expectations. World War II followed sixteen years later.

Source: Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Historical/Corbis

collective security would have worked in post-Cold War Europe, for example, Charles and Clifford Kuchan hold out the possibility that “Russia will emerge as a benign democratic great power and that all of Europe’s major states will share similar values and interests.” If this happens, “the underpinnings for the successful functioning of a collective security system” will be in place.³⁸ Note the critical concession: In order for collective security to work, *all* major powers must “share similar values and interests.” Skeptics are quick to note that if all major powers shared the same basic values and interests, the chances for war would be exceedingly low anyway. Thus, collective security arrangements are most likely to work under conditions where there is no major threat to peace, and most likely to fail when they are needed most.

Finally, in order for collective security to work, nations must be willing to deter and counter acts of aggression whether or not their interests are threatened. President Wilson recognized that “the central idea of the League of Nations was that States must support each other *even when their national interests are not involved.*”³⁹ Wilson could have gone one step further: In some circumstances, collective security could require states to act in *opposition* to their national interests. This is what differentiates collective security from power politics: the idea that nations can and will refrain from the use of force to advance their national interests and will use force when their interests are not at stake. Putting aside for the moment the issue of whether nations *should* do this, realists in particular doubt that they *will* because there is no evidence that states ever have. Thus, realists argue that collective security arrangements are bound to fail for two basic reasons: The necessary common interests and values among great powers will rarely be achieved, and states will place their national interest above the security of others.

If realists have been the traditional critics of collective security, its supporters have been found among liberal ranks. The basis for liberal support should be fairly obvious. Although few liberals have been so naïve as to believe that conflicts among nations do not exist, they have always been more inclined to see common interests as a basis for international cooperation. Collective security assumes that the common interest in preserving peace outweighs particular interests that might be advanced through war. Advocates of collective security concede that the League of Nations was a failure, but they warn against assuming that every effort at collective security is doomed. Although not part of a formal collective security arrangement, the international coalition that reversed the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait in 1991 is often cited as an example of the world community coming together to resist aggression. In 1991, there were plenty of nations that committed to using force even though it would be difficult to identify any national interests in the outcome of the crisis.

Security Amidst Anarchy

Even if we concede that world government and collective security are impractical alternatives to power politics, we are not without hope. Despite international anarchy, Inis Claude notes that “in sober fact, most states co-exist in reasonable harmony with most other states, most of the time; the exceptions to this passable state of affairs are vitally important, but they are exceptions nonetheless.”⁴⁰

Consider for a moment relations among the Nordic states of Norway, Sweden, and Finland. No one seriously believes that there is any chance that these nations will go to war. And even though each of these countries has armed forces, there is no evidence that any of them worries about the potential threat these forces pose. Why not? Is it a Nordic balance of power that preserves the peace? Is it because one nation enjoys a preponderance of power? Is there a central Nordic government? Have they created a collective security system? No, no, no, and no.

security community A group of nations among whom exists the prevailing and widely accepted expectation of nonviolence.

Scandinavia provides an example of what Karl Deutsch referred to as a **security community**, a group of nations sharing a reasonable and prevailing expectation of nonviolence.⁴¹ There is nothing that makes violence impossible—they are still sovereign states possessing offensive military capabilities. It is simply that the use of force has become sufficiently improbable that it no longer guides or shapes their relations. Deutsch identified several critical factors for the development of security communities; the most important being shared political and social values among political elites and a history of reliable and predictable behavior. Someone who tried to convince a Finnish president of the need to prepare for war with Sweden by giving a lecture about anarchy, self-help, and uncertainty would be confronted with a question: Sure, Sweden could invade tomorrow, but since it has not invaded on any other day over the past two centuries, why worry about it doing so now? Assuming that a Swedish invasion is not in the cards is a gamble in some sense, but a pretty safe one. Although the emergence of security communities may be uncommon, they nonetheless make a significant point: international anarchy does not *inevitably* lead to power politics. There have been and still are parts of the world that are anarchic, yet they “seem not to be subject to the kind of interstate relations that realists talk about.”⁴²

One could also look to the larger pattern of European politics in the postwar era. Although individual nations continue to maintain armed forces, there is no sense of security competition, and the risk of war is almost nonexistent. Despite their long history of war and conflict with each other, nations such as France, Spain, and Britain no longer live in the “brooding shadow of violence.” There is a security community in the sense of an expectation of nonviolence. This may stem from the creation of institutions that brought about greater integration, the most significant being the **European Union (EU)**. The EU had its origins in the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), in which France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg agreed to reduce barriers to trade in coal and steel. The hope was that this would start a gradual process of economic integration as a foundation for greater political cooperation. Over time, the economic integration has become wider and deeper. Membership in the EU now stands at twenty-eight, and several other nations are in the process of becoming full members. Economic cooperation has reached the point at which eighteen states (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain) share a common currency, the euro.

Even though the EU is not a European government in a strict sense, it also seems a bit misleading to think of Europe as anarchic. Several observers have offered terms such as *pooled* or *shared* sovereignty to describe the somewhat

European Union A regional intergovernmental organization of European states designed to promote greater trade and economic integration. Those who founded its precursors hoped that economic cooperation and prosperity would lead to greater political cooperation and a reduction in the conflict and competition that had marked European politics before World War II.

uncertain political status of European states. It is also difficult to evaluate the role of the EU in helping European states overcome the intense security competition that marked their relations between the rise of the modern state system and World Wars I and II. But it seems plausible that such institutions can help states escape power politics, even if they are not true governments in the strictest sense.

In recent years, constructivists have offered a more direct challenge to the realist proposition that international anarchy necessarily leads to power politics. Alexander Wendt states the question succinctly: “Does the absence of centralized political authority force states to play competitive power politics?” Realists answer this question in the affirmative. Wendt’s answer is equally straightforward: “Self-help and power politics do not follow logically or causally from anarchy.”⁴³ Understanding exactly why not, however, is somewhat complicated.

John Vasquez offers a good summary of the constructivist perspective on power politics and anarchy. He begins with constructivism’s basic premise: “I assume that any theory of world politics that has an impact on practice is not only a tool for understanding, but also helps construct a world.” If nations engage in power politics, it is “not because that behavior is natural or inherent in the structure of reality, but because realism has been accepted as a guide that tells leaders (and followers) the most appropriate way to behave.” Thus, if we tell ourselves that nations should and will act in certain ways, we create “a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.”⁴⁴ It is not anarchy, but rather “realist folklore [that] has provided a guide and cultural inheritance for Western states that has shaped and patterned the behavior of major states.”⁴⁵ It is no accident that realism seems most accurate when we look at the behavior of European states over the past few centuries, since this is where realist theory has been most influential. But “once you move to the periphery where nations were not socialized to realist theory, states do not behave this way.”⁴⁶ So even within the context of anarchy, there appear to be alternatives to power politics. There is nothing about anarchy that dictates that states continue to engage in power politics. If Finland and Sweden view each other as peaceful social democratic states that pose no threat to each other, there is nothing about anarchy that forces them into a competitive relationship. Anarchy does not have to lead to power politics. “Anarchy,” according to Wendt, “is what states make of it.”⁴⁷

Conclusion

Even those who see no alternative to power politics do not exactly sing its praises; it is treated as a regrettable inevitability, like death and taxes. It is hard to make a case in favor of insecurity, power struggles, and war. A recent statement of the inevitability of power politics begins with the following caveat: “Nothing in this primer should be taken as an endorsement or glorification of power politics.”⁴⁸ If we asked whether there were any *desirable* alternatives to power politics, almost everyone would answer “yes.” It is easy to imagine systems of international relations preferable to the one that has produced violence, death, and destruction on such a massive scale. The shortcomings of power politics are plain for all to see. The critical question, however, is whether there are any *feasible* alternatives.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Fear and insecurity, the pursuit of power, the use of force, and the ever-present possibility of war—that is, power politics—are often presented as inevitable, if regrettable, realities of international politics. For realists in particular, there is no avoiding power politics in an anarchic international system that lacks any mechanism but self-help to provide security for states.
- Despite this agreement on the inevitability of power politics, realists differ on the dynamics of power politics. Balance of power theorists assume that states tend to align with the most powerful nations. Balance of threat theorists predict that states will align against whatever powers appear to pose the greatest threat, regardless of whether they are the most powerful. Similarly, preponderance theorists argue that nations align on the basis of interests, with the generic distinction being status quo versus revisionist states.
- Balance of power theory predicts the emergence of balances of power in international politics, whereas balance of threat and preponderance theories anticipate imbalances of power.
- Despite their differences, all three theories assume the inevitability of power politics.
- Liberals have historically rejected the realist claim that there is no alternative to power politics. Although some more idealistic liberals have advocated the creation of world government, most have sought more modest collective security arrangements.
- Collective security, which was the principle behind the League of Nations, posits an organized community of states whose combined power will preserve peace by deterring possible aggressors. Collective security transcends power politics, not by eliminating the need for power, but by replacing self-help with community assistance.
- Critics claim that collective security arrangements have rarely worked and have several fundamental flaws. The requirement that states be willing to use force even when their national interests are not threatened is considered unrealistic. Most important, collective security is unlikely to work when it is needed most—that is, when major powers reject the status quo and are willing to change it by force.
- More recently, constructivists have argued that world government, complex collective security arrangements, or both are not essential to overcome power politics. Power politics can be (and has been) transcended by shared expectations, beliefs, and images that allow states to see each other as nonthreatening.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Almost everyone agrees that the international system is anarchic, but they do not agree on its consequences for state behavior. Explain why and how they differ.
2. What are the similarities and differences between power politics and collective security?
3. Most who see international anarchy as the cause of competition and conflict among states do not think that world government is the solution. Why not?
4. Why does the immediate post–World War II period pose a problem for balance of power theory? How would other power politics theories explain alignment patterns during this period?
5. Does the post–Cold War world appear to conform to balance of power, balance of threat, or preponderance theory?

KEY TERMS

anarchic, 59	bandwagoning, 61	hegemonic stability theory, 64	security community, 70
balance of power theory, 61	collective security, 66	power, 60	security dilemma, 60
Balance of threat theory, 63	degree of power, 64	power politics, 58	self-help, 59
	degree of satisfaction, 64	preponderance, 64	
	European Union (EU), 70		

FURTHER READINGS

A classic analysis of power politics and balance of power theory that remains essential reading despite the passage of time is Inis Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962). A recent argument for the inevitability of power politics is presented in Stanley Michalak, *A Primer in Power Politics* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001). An influential restatement of balance of power theory is Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979). Balance of threat theory is most clearly presented in Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). Randall Schweller's *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy for World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) is a fascinating application of balance of power and threat theories for understanding the origins of World War II. The best statement of preponderance theory is still A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Beyond Inis Claude's *Power and International Relations*, consider reading Earl Ravenal, "An Autopsy of Collective Security," *Political Science Quarterly* 90 (Winter 1975–1976): 697–714, which presents a critical overview of collective security. A more favorable assessment is provided by Charles Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan, "The Promise of Collective Security," *International Security* 60 (Summer 1995): 52–61. The constructivist critique of power politics can be found in Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially chapter 6; and John Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially chapter 3. A recent examination of the consequences of China's rise, written by a prominent realist and former U.S. secretary of state, is Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

POWER POLITICS ON THE WEB

www.globalsolutions.org/wfi/

Web site of the World Federalist Institute, which seeks the "establishment of a democratic federal world government."

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp

The full text of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which is a classic statement of the ideals of collective security, especially Article 16.

www.globalpolicy.org/reform/index.htm

Web site with extensive coverage of both the history of, and debates about, UN reform.

www.sipri.org/databases

Although military power is not all there is to national power, most power politics theories emphasize this aspect of power. The databases of the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) provide a wealth of information on world military expenditures and power.

NOTES

¹John Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 168.

²Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 205.

³Stanley Michalak, *A Primer in Power Politics* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 2001), p. 173.

⁴Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 102.

⁵Ibid., pp. 103–104, emphasis added.

⁶Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, p. 201.

⁷Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 111, emphasis added.

⁸Quoted in Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, p. 160.

⁹John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 345.

¹⁰Michael P. Sullivan, *Power in Contemporary International Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), p. 76.

¹¹Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *The Global Philosophers' World Politics in Western Thought* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992), p. 11.

¹²Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 55.

¹³Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁴Inis Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 12.

¹⁵Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 110.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁷A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 274.

¹⁸Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 18–19.

¹⁹Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 124.

²⁰Waltz, *Origins of Alliances*, p. 25.

²¹Ibid., pp. 264–265.

²²The best overall statement of preponderance theory, which this discussion draws heavily on, is provided by A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), pp. 338–376; and A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²³See Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

²⁴Organski, *World Politics*, pp. 371–372.

²⁵Inis Claude, cited in Sullivan, *Power in Contemporary World Politics*, p. 79.

²⁶Ibid., p. 370.

²⁷Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 102.

²⁸Norman Cousins, cited in Inis Claude, *Power in International Relations*.

²⁹Ibid., p. 208.

³⁰Cited in Thomas L. Prangle and Peter J. Ahrensdorf, *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), p. 246.

³¹David W. Ziegler, *War, Peace and International Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 302.

³²Earl C. Ravenal, "An Autopsy of Collective Security," *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (Winter 1975–1976): 702.

³³John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," in *Theories of War and Peace*, ed. Michael Brown et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 355.

³⁴Cited in Claude, *Power in International Relations*, pp. 96–97.

³⁵Charter provisions cited in Michalak, *Primer in Power Politics*, p. 195.

³⁶Jiri Hochman, *The Soviet Union and the Failure of Collective Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 174.

³⁷Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 82.

³⁸Charles Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan, "The Promise of Collective Security," *International Security* 60, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 60.

³⁹Quoted in Ravenal, "Autopsy of Collective Security," p. 712.

⁴⁰Claude, *Power in International Relations*, p. 213.

⁴¹Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁴²Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics*, p. 211.

⁴³Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391, 394.

⁴⁴John Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 87.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 196.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁷Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," p. 391.

⁴⁸Michalak, *Primer in Power Politics*, p. xii.

The Consequences of China's Rise

From a power politics perspective, the distribution of power among the great powers determines the character of international relations. Since the end of the Cold War, most have characterized the international system as unipolar, with the United States clearly the world's dominant military and economic power. Some saw this as a "unipolar moment" that was unlikely to last very long. Others were not so sure. Even though nothing lasts forever, the magnitude of U.S. dominance, particularly in military terms, was such that the unipolar "moment" might last for some time—perhaps even decades. But whenever that moment ends, it will be because another great power has emerged to challenge that dominance. Given its population and potential economic power, the most likely candidate to knock the United States off its hegemonic perch is China. As we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, there is no longer any doubt about China's economic potential. The critical question is whether China's rapid growth continues and, if it does, what China intends to do with this power. Will economic power be translated into military power? Will China's rise pose a threat to its neighbors? And if so, would this set China on a collision course with the United States? In the essays here, John Lee and Zach Beauchamp provide somewhat different takes on the implications of China's rise, both for its regional neighbors and the United States. Although neither makes any confident predictions, Lee is much more pessimistic about the future than is Beauchamp. What does each author see as the most likely future for China? What is the basis for Beauchamp's relative lack of concern? Why does Lee express more alarm? And how do these differing perspectives relate to assumptions about the inevitability of power politics discussed in this chapter?

China's Rise and the Road to War (2010)

John Lee

Four years before World War I, British author and politician Norman Angell published "The Great Illusion," arguing that military conquests had become obsolete between modern economies. Many policy makers use the same logic today to predict that China and the United States can avoid war. Like their forebears, they may be wrong.

PERSPECTIVE 1



That's the implicit argument of University of Chicago political scientist John Mearsheimer, who delivered the annual Michael Hintze Lecture at Sydney University this week. Politics, rather than economics, will decisively shape the future of Asia just as it did Europe in the previous century, he believes. China's ascent is likely to spark an intense security competition with the U.S., leading to the strong possibility of war between the world's two biggest economies.

This argument runs counter to today's conventional wisdom, which sees a benign future for U.S.-China relations. This view, still popular in Washington, is based on the idea that the U.S. can manage China by offering Beijing incentives to rise as a "responsible stakeholder" within the current U.S.-led global order. Like the educated and well-heeled elites in Europe whom Angell chronicled and who a century ago exhibited extreme reluctance to imagine the outbreak of major war, today's policy makers can't fathom war in the Pacific.

Yet history suggests that Mr. Mearsheimer's warnings should be heeded. Prior to World War I, Angell's logic—that the disruption to the international credit and trading system would mean that everyone loses in the event of war—was irrefutable. Prior to 1914, annual trade volumes of Britain, Germany, and France was 52%, 38%, and 54% of GDP respectively, with much of the trade being between these great powers. By 1913, Britain had become the leading market for German exports, with both countries largely benefitting from the economic relationship. In the decade leading to the Great War, trade and capital flows between these great powers increased by an estimated 65% and 84%, respectively. Yet, economic interdependence was not enough to prevent the tragic escalation of events that followed the assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

Today, China's self-proclaimed and widely accepted "peaceful development" similarly appears to be based on solid economic ground. China has re-emerged as a great trading nation but remains a poor country in terms of GDP per capita. China's export sector is responsible for the creation of hundreds of millions of jobs, and the country still remains deeply dependent on outside technology and know-how. To continue the country's rapid economic development, the Chinese Communist Party needs a peaceful and stable environment in Asia. On the U.S. side, no one in Washington wants to see a conflict with China erupt, especially at a time when America is fighting two wars and worries about Iran's intentions.

Yet Angell's optimism was ultimately wrong because it was based on an incomplete account of driving forces behind relations between the great powers. While the economic relationship created powerful incentives for peace, Angell did not take seriously the intense strategic competition—particularly the growing naval rivalry—between status quo powers like Britain and a rapidly rising and revisionist power like Germany. Nor did Angell's account allow for the human factor of strategic missteps and miscalculations—particularly by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II—that eventually plunged Europe into war.

What are the lessons for Asia? While economic interdependence and American attempts to "manage" China's rise has so far succeeded in preventing war, the recent diplomatic conflagration over the Chinese reiteration that its claims in the South China Sea are part of Beijing's "core interests" validates what scholars such as Aaron Friedberg have been saying for a decade: East Asia today has the potential

to recreate the European situation at the turn of the previous century. When it comes to strategic goals, China is re-entering into a regional order not of its making after decades of self-imposed isolation. By virtue of Beijing's fundamental dissatisfaction with several of its land and maritime borders, it is a revisionist power. As it rises, the desperation to secure its "core interests" will deepen.

Chinese grand strategy since the days of former leader Deng Xiaoping has been to avoid conflict with a much more formidable competitor (i.e., America) while China builds its "comprehensive national power." In favor of "winning Asia without fighting," as Chinese General Ma Xiaotian once put it, are many of the older generation of leaders who see caution as prudence, even if they relentlessly seek "windows of opportunity" to extend Beijing's power at the expense of America's. They still remember the suffering and humiliation of the Mao Zedong years, when an isolated China tried to achieve too much too quickly.

Yet, as history reaffirms, a peace built on continued political skill, dexterity and restraint rather than a harmony of strategic interest is inherently precarious. Without personal experience of China's recent traumatic history, future generations of leaders will be more confident and assertive. Even now, emerging Communist Party and People's Liberation Army leaders argue that China is moving too slowly on securing its foreign-policy goals. The danger is that, just as Germany did in Europe a century ago, China's overestimation of its own capabilities, and underestimation of American strengths and resolve—combined with strategic dissatisfaction and impatience—is the fast way toward disastrous miscalculation and error.

Several years before the outbreak of the Great War, Kaiser Wilhelm II publicly declared that he considered the prospect of war with Britain "a most unimaginable thing." Despite deep economic interdependence, Europe could not avert a disaster. Leaders in Washington and throughout Asia should not commit the same failure of imagination.

John Lee is a visiting fellow with Hudson Institute and a foreign-policy fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies in Sydney. He is the author of Will China Fail? (CIS, 2008).

China Has Not Replaced America—and It Never Will

PERSPECTIVE 2

Zach Beauchamp

Many people seem to think it's simply a matter of when, not if, China takes the reins of world leadership. How, they think, can America's 314 million people permanently outproduce a population that outnumbers the U.S. by over a billion people?

This facile assumption is wrong. China is not replacing the United States as the global hegemon. And it never will.



Source: China has not replaced America — and it never will, by Zack Beauchamp, February 13, 2014. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

China faces too many internal problems and regional rivals to ever make a real play for global leadership. And even if Beijing could take the global leadership mantle soon, it wouldn't. China wants to play inside the existing global order's rules, not change them.

Start with the obvious military point: The Chinese military has nothing like the global reach of its American rival's. China only has one aircraft carrier, a refitted Russian vessel. The U.S. has 10, plus nine marine mini-carriers. China's first home-made carrier is slated for completion in 2018, by which time the U.S. will have yet another modern carrier and be well on its way to finishing another. The idea that China will be able to compete on a global scale in the short to medium term is absurd.

Even in East Asia, it's not so easy for China. In 2012, Center for Strategic and International Studies experts Anthony Cordesman and Nicholas Yarosh looked at the data on Chinese and Taiwanese military strength. They found that while China's relative naval strength was growing, Taiwan had actually improved the balance of air power in its favor between 2005 and 2012—just as China's economic growth rate, and hence influx of new resources to spend on its military, was peaking.

China's equipment is often outdated, and its training regimes can be comically bad. A major part of its strategic missile force patrols on horseback because it doesn't have helicopters. This isn't to deny China's military is getting stronger. It is. And one day, this might require the United States to rethink its strategic posture in East Asia. But Chinese hard power is nowhere close to replacing, or even thinking about challenging, American military hegemony.

And look at China's geopolitical neighborhood. As a result of historical enmity and massive power disparities, Beijing would have a tough time convincing Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan that its military buildup is anything but threatening. Consequently, the smaller East Asian states are likely to get over their mutual disagreements and stick it out together in the American-led alliance system for the foreseeable future.

To the north and west, China is bordered by Russia and India. China fought each of them as recently as the 1960s, and both are likely to be threatened by any serious Chinese military buildup. Unlike the United States, bordered by oceans and two friendly states, China is surrounded by enemies and rivals. Projecting power globally is hard when you've got to worry about defending your own turf.

But what happens when China's GDP passes America's? Well, for one thing, we're not really sure when that will be. Realizing that current growth rates were economically and ecologically unsustainable, the Chinese government cut off the investment spigot that fueled its extraordinary 10 percent average annual growth. Today, China's growth rate is about half of what it was in 2007. One analysis suggests China's GDP may not surpass America's until the 2100s. Moreover, China's GDP per capita is a long way off from matching Western standards. In 2012, the World Bank assessed China's at \$6,009; the United States' was \$57,749. The per-person measure of wealth matters in that it reflects the government's capacity to pay for things that make its citizens happy and healthy.

That's where China's internal headaches begin. The Chinese government has staked its domestic political legitimacy on delivering rapid, massive improvements in quality of life for its citizens. As growth slows, domestic political dissent may rise. Moreover, growth's worst side effect to date—an unprecedented ecological crisis—is also a source of massive discontent. China has 20 of the world's 30 most polluted cities; environmental cleanup costs may hoover up 3 percent of China's GDP. That's throwing 30 percent of its yearly average growth (during the pre-2013 boom years!) down the drain.

The mass death and poisoning that follow as severe pollution's handmaidens threaten the very foundations of the Communist Party's power. American University China scholar Judith Shapiro writes that environmental protests—which sometimes “shut down” huge cities—are “so severe and so central to the manner in which China will ‘rise’ that it is no exaggeration to say that they cannot be separated from its national identity and the government’s ability to provide for the Chinese people.”

That's hardly the only threat to the Chinese economy. China's financial system bears a disturbing resemblance to pre-crisis Wall Street. Its much-vaunted attempt to move away from an unsustainable export-based economy, according to Minxin Pei, may break on the rocks of massive corruption and other economic problems. After listing a slew of related problems, Pei suggests we need to start envisioning a world of “declining Chinese strength and rising probability of an unexpected democratic transition in the coming two decades.”

But even if this economic gloom and doom is wrong, and China really is destined for a prosperous future, there's one simple reason China will never displace America as global leader: It doesn't want to.

Chinese foreign policy, to date, has been characterized by a sort of realist incrementalism. China has displayed no interest in taking over America's role as protector of the global commons; that's altogether too altruistic a task. Instead, China is content to let the United States and its allies keep the sea lanes open and free ride off of their efforts. A powerful China, in other words, would most likely to be happy to pursue its own interests inside the existing global order rather than supplanting it.

In 2003, Harvard's Iain Alastair Johnston analyzed data about Chinese hostility to the global status quo across five dimensions: participation in international institutions, compliance with international norms, twisting the rules that govern global institutions, making the transformation of global political power into a clear policy goal, and acting militarily on that objective. He found that China was “more integrated into and more cooperative within international institutions than ever before,” and that there was “murky” evidence at best of intent to challenge the United States outside of them. Johnston reassessed parts of his argument in 2013 and concluded that not much had changed.

It actually, then, wouldn't be bad for Americans if China bears like Pei were wrong, and China really did blossom economically in the 21st century. China probably won't have the military means to challenge the foundations of global stability and prosperity, and even if it didn't, its leaders don't seem to want to.

And morally speaking, a Chinese boom would be great: Expanded Chinese economic growth has been the single greatest anti-poverty campaign in modern history. That's an extraordinary accomplishment Americans should be able to celebrate without any attendant status anxiety produced by the phantom of a Chinese world order.

Zack Beauchamp is a reporter/blogger for ThinkProgress. He previously contributed to Andrew Sullivan's The Dish at Newsweek/Daily Beast, and has also written for Foreign Policy and Tablet magazines. Zack holds BAs in philosophy and political science from Brown University and an M.Sc in international relations from the London School of Economics.



4

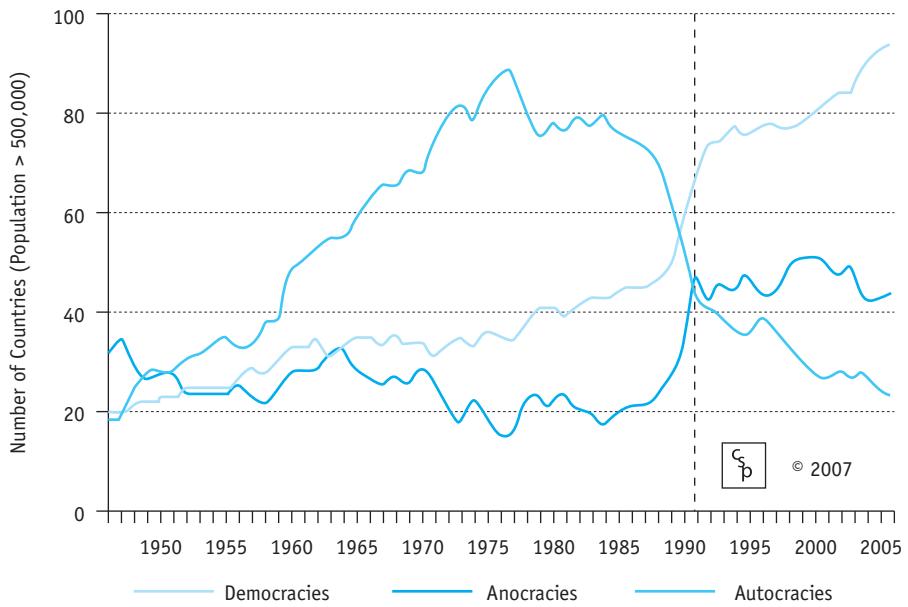
War and Democracy

Key Controversy: Are Democracies More Peaceful?

The idea that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies has been part of liberal international thought for more than two hundred years, and it is one of those ideas that has seeped from the realm of theory to real-world policy. Although proponents of *democratic peace theory* offer a variety of reasons why democracies might be less willing or able to wage war, all versions of the theory share the basic prediction that democracies will not wage war against one another. If the theory is correct, a more democratic world will also be a more peaceful world. The commonly cited evidence in support of the theory is the absence of any wars between clearly democratic states. Skeptics question this evidence, pointing to what they see as convenient and shifting definitions that omit troublesome cases. Some even claim that there have been wars between democratic states. Realists in particular are generally unconvinced by the theory and its supporting evidence. Even if we have not yet seen a war between democratic states, realists think that our luck is likely to run out. In time, democracies will be subject to the same insecurities and conflicts that have driven nondemocratic states to war. The coming decades are likely to put the theory to a real-world test as the number of democracies in the world continues to grow. ■

The spread of democratic political institutions has been one of the most remarkable trends in world politics over the past few decades (see Figure 4.1 and Map 4.1). In fact, the period around 1989 marked something of a watershed in global political history when, for the first time, a majority of the world's population lived under some form of democratic government. One might question the democratic credentials of a few countries, but the overall trend of global democratization seems clear. Most people, particularly in democracies such as the United States, view this as a good thing. But why? Why should anyone in the United States care whether people in other countries live under democratic forms of government? To the extent that democracy is associated with a greater respect for human rights, the positive

FIGURE 4.1
Global regimes by type, 1946–2006



Source: Based on Center for Systemic Peace, Polity IV Project. For more information visit <http://www.systemicpeace.org>.

assessment of global democratization is welcomed as a triumph for those values that people in democracies hold dear and wish to be shared. The spread of democracy elsewhere is a good thing in and of itself, not necessarily because there is anything to be gained from it. Not everything boils down to self-interest.

Nonetheless, the spread of democracy around the world is often presented as a matter of national interest. But how are Americans in South Dakota better off if people in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, or Africa live under democratic governments? Several possible connections might be drawn. To the extent that democracy is related to capitalism, free markets, and trade, one could argue that its spread contributes to global prosperity, which might eventually improve the lives of Americans. This chapter, however, focuses on another claim—, namely, that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies. It is the assumed peacefulness of democracies that generally provides the connection to U.S. national interests: The United States has an interest in peace; democracies are more peaceful; and thus the spread of democracy is a vital interest. The notion that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies is so widely accepted—among the general public, policymakers, and academics alike—that it is often taken as an article of faith. Some have characterized this as perhaps the only “iron law” of international relations. But why would we expect democracies to be more peaceful?

The Sources of Democratic Peacefulness

The proposition that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies is a central tenet of liberal international theory that can be traced to the writings of **Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804). Living in an era of absolutist monarchism, Kant argued in his classic work, *Perpetual Peace*, that the emergence and spread of “republican” (or liberal democratic) political institutions would be accompanied by the emergence of a zone of peace among them. Kant referred to this as a *republican* or **democratic pacific union**. Kant did not argue that democracies would refrain from waging wars; he simply argued that democracies would not wage war against other democracies. Democracies would be peaceful, not pacifist.

But why did he expect democracies to be more peaceful? Kant begins with the basic observation that in a republic or democracy, people are citizens, not subjects. As such, there are mechanisms that allow the desires and interests of citizens to influence government policy, including decisions about war and peace. Kant assumed that citizens have much more to lose than to gain from war because they shoulder the burdens of war. As essentially rational creatures (another assumption of liberalism), people are generally unwilling to support policies that do them harm, and as a result, they “will have a great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise [as war]” because “this would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war.” These miseries include not only the obvious, such as “doing the fighting themselves, supplying the costs of war from their own resources,” but also “making good the ensuing devastation, and, as the crowning evil, having to take upon themselves a burden of debts which will embitter peace itself and which can never be paid off on account of the constant threat of new wars.”¹

Kant’s explanation is usually referred to as the **rational or pacific public thesis** because it sees democratic peacefulness as rooted in the rational self-interest of democratic publics. This view is no longer very popular as an explanation of democratic peace because the past two centuries provide too many examples of public support, even enthusiasm, for war. People in democratic states greeted World War I with tremendous enthusiasm. In some cases, such as the Spanish-American War of 1898, it was the public, spurred by a prowar press, that pushed a reluctant political leadership into war.² As Robin Fox, a critic of democratic peace theory, observes, “there is rarely very effective opposition to a successful war.”³ For Fox, the absence of effective antiwar movements against successful wars suggests that there is no general preference for peace—merely a reluctance to fight losing wars.

Even Kant was not content to rely on the assumption of popular opposition to war. He also pointed to characteristics of democratic systems (namely, their institutional structure and political-cultural underpinnings). In terms of institutions, the most important feature of democracies is that political power and decision making are distributed in a manner that presents obstacles to war making. In terms of political culture, democratic peace theorists note that successful democratic institutions depend on the widespread adherence to certain values that shape international behavior of democracies. These institutional and cultural constraints are generally seen as particularly significant in terms of relations among democratic states.

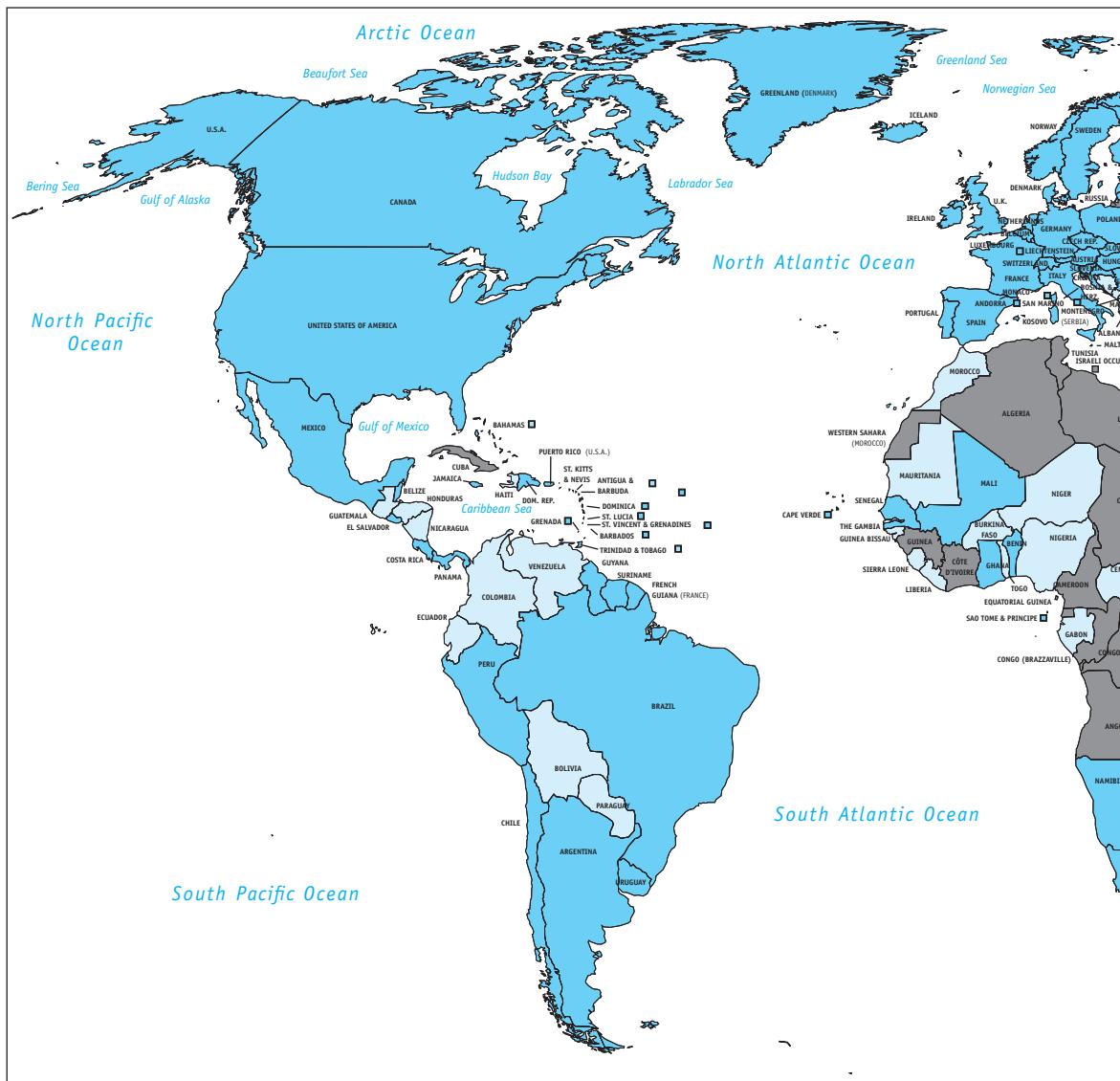
Immanuel Kant A German political philosopher who first proposed that democratic (or “republican” states) would be unlikely to wage war against each other.

democratic pacific union

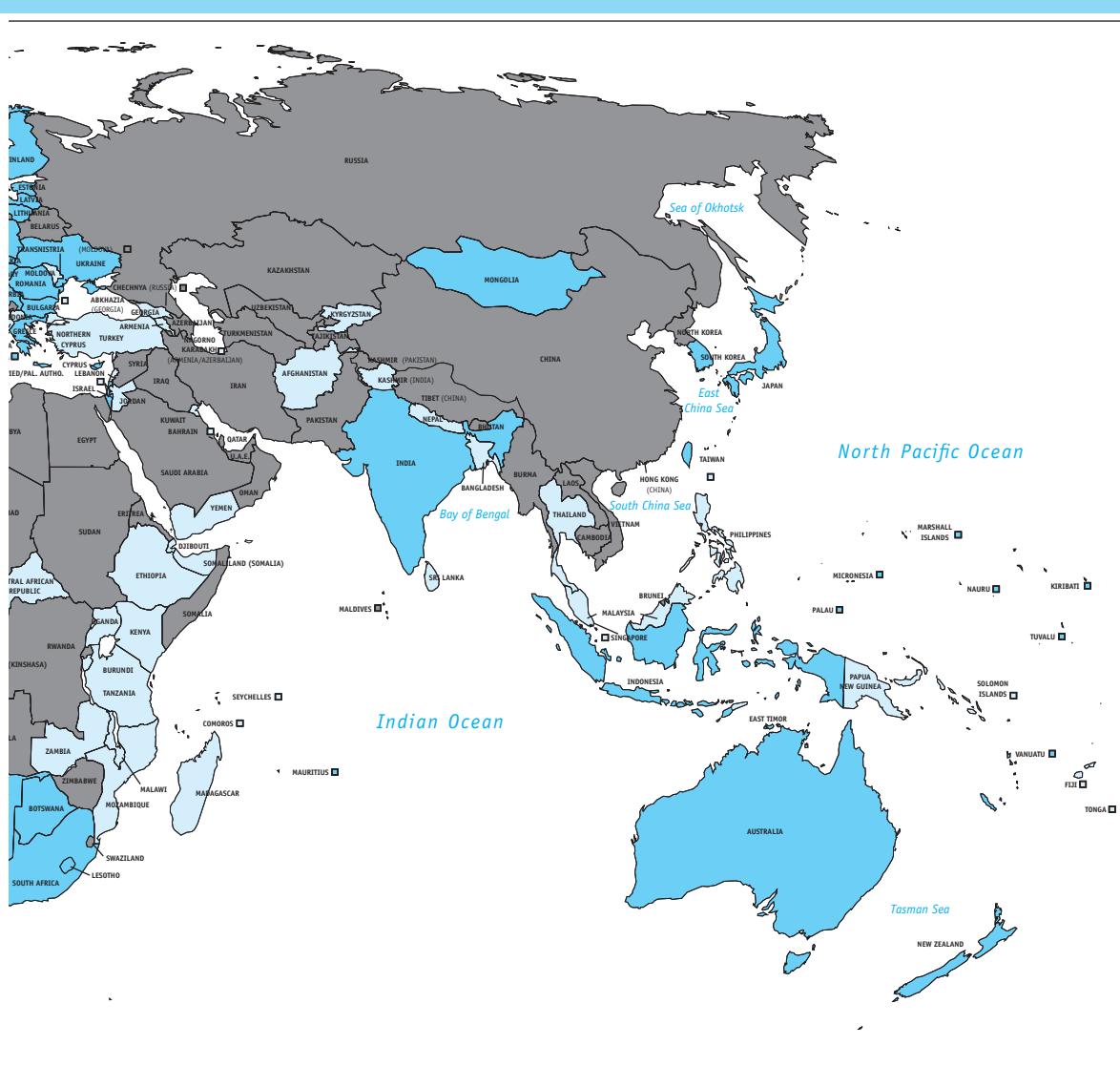
The separate peace that Immanuel Kant predicted would exist among democratic states. Many believe that this democratic peace has in fact emerged.

rational or pacific public thesis

The view that democracies are more peaceful because their foreign policies reflect the desires of an inherently rational and peaceful public. Also known as *pacific public thesis*.

MAP 4.1 Map of Freedom, 2008

Source: © Cengage Learning



institutional thesis A variant of democratic peace theory that sees the dispersion of power in democracies (see *checks and balances*) as the most important reason they are less likely to wage war, especially against each other.

checks and balances The division of power in democracies among different branches of government (e.g., the president and Congress in the United States). The institutional version of democratic peace sees this dispersion of powers as the critical reason why democracies are less likely to engage in war, especially with each other.

political-cultural thesis A variant of democratic peace theory that sees political and cultural norms or peaceful conflict resolution as the most important reason that democracies are less likely to wage war, especially against each other.

The **institutional thesis** emphasizes that democratic political systems are usually characterized by a dispersion of political power, whereas undemocratic systems usually concentrate power in the hands of a single person or small elite. Leaders such as Louis XIV, Joseph Stalin, or Kim-Jung II did not have to contend with many domestic constraints on their authority. Democracies, on the other hand, usually disperse political power. There are competing political parties, elections that can be lost, and public opinion that cannot be consistently ignored. There are also separate government institutions that limit the executive's freedom of action. Legislatures commonly possess budgetary authority, providing leverage over anything (like wars) that requires expenditures. In the United States, we refer to this as the system of **checks and balances** between the executive (i.e., the president), the legislature (i.e., Congress), and the judiciary. This dispersion of power makes it very difficult for democracies to do anything, whether it be reforming social security, changing the tax code, or going to war. As America's founders explained in *The Federalist Papers*, making government action difficult was precisely the point of dispersing political power. A certain degree of consensus is required for democratic governments to act, particularly when actions represent radical change or are very controversial. Thus, the essential element of the institutional thesis is that democracies find it more difficult to go to war—and certainly more difficult to initiate a war—than will nondemocratic governments.

While the institutional constraint thesis stresses a democracy's diminished *ability* to wage war, the **political-cultural thesis** emphasizes the *unwillingness* of democracies to go to war. The argument is that democratic institutions are rooted in widely shared norms about how political conflicts are managed. Democracy requires a consensus that conflicts be resolved without resort to force: Democracies substitute the counting of heads for the breaking of heads. However deep the disagreements over certain issues, very few resort to violence once they lose in the political arena. Al Gore loyalists did not circle the White House on January 20, 2001, with guns to prevent George Bush from moving in, despite their reservations about the election's outcome. Without a norm of peaceful conflict resolution, democracy is unlikely to prove very durable. In terms of international relations, the political-cultural thesis anticipates that democracies will externalize this norm from the domestic to the international realm. Thus, this norm of peaceful conflict resolution predisposes democracies to favor nonviolent approaches to international conflicts.⁴

Constructivists present a slightly different explanation for democratic peace. Remember that for constructivists, theories of international politics—that is, ideas about how states do or should behave—not only reflect but also shape the behavior of states. As people increasingly accept the notion that democracies do not fight other democracies, this has two major consequences. First, for elites in democratic societies, the nonuse of force against other democracies becomes an essential component of their identity: to be a democracy includes not fighting other democracies. Second, decision makers in democracies assume that other democracies share this belief and will not attack them, so they are very unlikely to see and treat them as military threats. It is not something inherent in democracies that prevents them from waging war against each other. What keeps democracies at peace is the internalized norm that democracies do not fight each other. In a sense,

democratic peace theory is an almost self-fulfilling prophecy. As Thomas Risse-Kappen explains, “Democracies do not fight each other because they perceive each other as pre-disposed toward peacefulness and then act on this assumption.”⁵

Most formulations of the democratic peace thesis, including Kant’s, do not predict a generalized predisposition for peace. The democratic preference for peace is assumed to operate primarily (or maybe even only) when democracies deal with one another. Kant’s pacific union was a zone of peace among democratic states: He fully anticipated that this would not extend to relations with nondemocratic states. But why would democracies prefer peace with each other, but not with nondemocracies? The constructivist argument can help us understand this apparent paradox. What is critical in the constructivist account is the *mutual* identification and perception of democracy because the peace of a democracy is rooted in mutual expectations. When a democracy comes into conflict with another democracy, it does so with the expectation of peaceful conflict resolution because it assumes that the opposing democracy is doing likewise. As Spencer Weart explains, “Peace follows if leaders come to recognize that their preference for negotiation is shared.”⁶ When the potential opponent is not a fellow democracy, the assumption of peaceful resolution cannot be made. In fact, democracies may assume the exact opposite—that non-democracies will be unwilling to resolve disputes peacefully.

This insight regarding mutual expectations has led one scholar to revise the democratic peace proposition slightly, emphasizing that states must *perceive* each other as democratic. There are a few cases where this may be critical. For example, it may be possible to argue that Germany was a democracy on the eve of World War I (we will have more to say about this shortly). Since Germany ended up fighting Great Britain and the United States, this could invalidate the democratic peace proposition. John Owen and Ido Oren, however, try to demonstrate that British and U.S. leaders did not perceive or identify Germany as democratic. Because they did not think they were dealing with a democracy, the inhibitions about going to war were not operative.⁷

What Is “Democracy”?

The assertion that democracies are more peaceful seems straightforward, but several issues need to be resolved to put the proposition to the test. One of the trickiest is the meaning of *democracy*. Although casual observers are sometimes exasperated by the academic tendency to argue over the definition of terms whose meanings appear obvious, sometimes definitions really matter. While virtually any definition of *democracy* would encompass nations such as the United States, Japan, and India today, many other cases are less clear-cut.

If asked what makes a country democratic, most people would probably list universal adult suffrage (i.e., the right to vote) as an essential component. Although this element seems uncontroversial, it is not always easily applied. A strict application of this standard would exclude the United States before 1920, when women were not allowed to vote at the federal level (they could vote only in some states at that time). This standard might even exclude the United States in 1960, because in large parts of the country, citizens of African descent were effectively denied their right to vote.



In 2012 Vladimir Putin was reelected as Russia's president. Although the country displays many of the trappings of democracy, many question the country's democratic credentials.

Source: Thomas Peter/Reuters/Landov

Can a country be considered a democracy when a sizable portion of its adult population is excluded from the franchise, whether by law or practice? The extent of suffrage, however, is not the only question. Another concerns the durability of democratic practices. Should a country be considered a democracy after a single round of elections, or do we need to see a pattern sustained over time? This is not the place to work through all the fine details and complications. It is enough to realize that matters of definition and classification are not always easy.

Despite some minor differences, most examinations of democratic peace theory have agreed on the essential features of democracy: regular elections for major government offices, competitive political parties, near-universal adult suffrage, and certain basic political and individual rights.⁸ The inclusion of basic rights that are protected even from democratic majorities leads many to prefer the description *liberal democratic states*. The criteria are usually relaxed somewhat when we move back to the nineteenth century, particularly on the issue of voting rights. A country that denied women and others the right to vote in 1900 can still be classified as a democracy, but similar practices today would be disqualifiers.

After we define *democracy*, we need some measure of peacefulness. Again, this is not as easy as one might

assume. Should we look simply at a crude measure, such as the number of wars that nations are involved in? This is certainly easy, but is it a valid measure of peacefulness? Perhaps a more meaningful indicator is not war involvement, but rather war initiation. But what about covert operations, threats of force, and military interventions that fall short of a formal state of war? And what about the provision of military aid and assistance that fuels wars? The range of behaviors that we might look at to get a handle on the peacefulness of a society is quite broad, and our conclusions might differ depending on the measure chosen.

The Evidence

At first glance, the claim that democracies are more peaceful seems odd. A long list of democracies waging (and even initiating) war is easy to compile: the United States in Iraq, British imperialism and all the wars that accompanied it, and the French war in Algeria, to name just a few. One of the initial studies of democracy and war demonstrated that over the last two centuries, there was no difference between democracies and nondemocracies in the frequency or duration of their war involvement.⁹

This was not the result of democracies always being attacked either, because there was no difference in war initiation. Rather than disputing these findings, democratic peace theorists have argued that they are not good tests. As was already discussed, Kant and others did not predict that democracies would refrain from war. The expectation was that democracies would not fight *one another*. Thus, the test of democratic peace theory is whether democracies deal with their conflicts among themselves differently than they do with conflicts with nondemocracies.

The most commonly cited evidence in support of democratic peace theory is the absence of wars between democratic states. There have been many wars between democracies and nondemocracies, as well as among nondemocracies. But, as Bruce Russett asserts, “there are no clear-cut cases of sovereign stable democracies waging war with each other in the modern international system.”¹⁰ Several important qualifications in this observation need to be highlighted. Russett’s observation does not include civil wars, only wars involving *sovereign* states. *War* is defined as an armed conflict between sovereign states resulting in at least 1,000 battle casualties. Note also the qualifier of *stable* democracies, which might exclude wars involving new, fledgling democracies. Russett also shows that conflicts between democracies are less likely to involve threats of force, displays of force, and uses of force below the threshold of war, although there are some cases.¹¹ Interestingly, Russett makes an attempt to examine democratic peace theory in the premodern era by looking at ancient Greece, finding that democratic city-states were “reluctant to fight each other,” although it did happen.

Russett and others recognize some close cases: the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain, the American Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and the Allies against Finland in World War II. Upon closer inspection, these end up not being wars between democracies. Britain was not yet a democracy in 1812, nor was Spain in 1898. The Confederacy was not a sovereign state during the American Civil War. And even though Finland was aligned with Germany in World War II because of its conflict with the Soviet Union, it never fought against the Western democracies. A more recent close call might be the 2014 conflict between Russia and Ukraine, although this is likely to be rejected on the grounds that Russia is not really democratic, even though it holds regular elections. Freedom House, an organization whose classifications are often relied upon, categorizes Russia as “not free,” which is usually taken to mean nondemocratic. Recent restrictions on the press and harassment of political opposition led Freedom House to talk about a “return to authoritarianism” in Russia.¹² Other supposed examples of democratic wars are usually rejected on similar grounds. Some boldly assert that democracies never have and never will wage war against each other, whereas others are content with the more limited claim that democracies are much less likely to fight one another. But whichever version one examines, the empirical fact that no democracy has ever gone to war against another democracy appears to many as strong evidence supporting Kant’s prediction vision of democratic pacific union.

Are Democracies Really Any Different?

In terms of the larger debate among the competing visions of international relations, the question of democratic peace is extremely significant. If, in fact, something about the nature of democratic regimes prevents or strongly discourages them from going to war with each other, this would strongly support the liberal worldview and undermine other perspectives, particularly realism. Thus, it should come as no surprise that some remain skeptical, questioning either the “fact” of democratic peace or its significance.

No Democratic Wars—So What?

The absence of war between stable democracies is the most striking piece of evidence in support of democratic peace theory. It is rare, in a discipline filled with qualifications, that we are able to assert that something has *never* happened. This nonevent seems to cry out for an explanation. Then again, maybe it does not. Perhaps the nonoccurrence of democratic war is not as surprising as it first appears.

To understand why some remain unimpressed by the absence thus far of wars between democracies, let us draw an analogy. If you have never won the big jackpot in the state lottery, would anyone find this at all surprising? Would this non-event be viewed as unusual, as something requiring explanation or investigation? Probably not. The mere fact that something has never happened does not automatically create a puzzle. Because the odds of winning the lottery are so small, the fact that you have never won is to be expected and is explained by the statistical improbability of winning. In fact, winning the lottery is the real anomaly, and winning twice would require some investigation. Thus, the nonoccurrence of an event is surprising only if there was a good reason to expect it in the first place.

David Spiro has made this argument about the absence of democratic war. The logic is quite simple and rests on two basic observations. First, over the last two hundred years, there have been very few democratic states. No more than a handful could be considered democratic prior to 1945, and it is only in the last two decades or so that democracies have constituted a majority of the world’s states. Until recently, democracy has been rare. Second, war is a rare event. Even though a war is usually going on somewhere in the world at any given moment, virtually all countries spend most of their time at peace. Peace is the norm in international relations; war is the exception. Spiro demonstrates that when we take into account the statistical rarity of both democracy and war, the absence of a war pitting one democracy against another is not in the least surprising. In fact, this is precisely what we should have expected. Thus, this absence of war is not an anomaly that cries out for an explanation.¹³ The “puzzle” of democratic peace is explained by the statistical improbability of war between two democracies.

Empirical Fact or Definitional Artifact?

Proponents of democratic peace theory usually recognize the existence of some potential examples of war between democracies. They also go to great lengths to

explain why these cases are not what they seem. There are two typical responses: either one of the states involved was not really a democracy, or the “war” in question was not really a war. Critics, however, see a pattern of shifting and loose definitions that always manage to save the theory.

The commonly employed definition of war in most tests of democratic peace theory is a very restrictive one, requiring that the parties fighting each other must be sovereign states. It is on this basis that, for example, the American Civil War is usually discounted as an instance of democracies fighting because the Confederacy was not a sovereign state recognized as such by other states. This is true. But given the underlying logic of democratic peace theory, it is not clear why this matters. Why should the theory not hold merely because the states in question are not recognized as independent by other states? This objection seems to be relying on a theoretically irrelevant technicality. Russett appears to admit as much when he notes that the American Civil War is “readily eliminated” as an exception “by the straightforward use of the definitions.”¹⁴ But for critics of democratic peace theory, the American Civil War raises serious questions that cannot be dismissed by its definitional elimination. Ted Galen Carpenter points to “the inconvenient matter that Southerners considered their new confederacy democratic (which it was by the standards of the day) and that most Northerners did not dispute that view (they merely regarded it as beside the point) is simply ignored. The willingness of democratic Americans to wage enthusiastic internecine slaughter fairly cries out for more serious discussion.” The experience of the Civil War leads him to ask, “If democratic people could do that to their own, how confident can we be that two democracies divided by culture or race (e.g., the United States and Japan) would recoil from doing so?”¹⁵

The example of Germany and World War I is undoubtedly the most controversial case, largely because of the magnitude of the conflict. As Christopher Layne explains, “Even if World War I were the only example of democracies fighting each other, it would be so glaring an exception to democratic peace theory as to render it invalid.”¹⁶ To some, Germany in 1914 seems reasonably democratic—there were regular and competitive elections, political parties represented a full range of political views from far left to far right, there was a free and vigorous press, and adult males were allowed to vote. In a largely undemocratic world, this was not too bad.

So why is Germany on the eve of World War I not generally considered a democracy? The problem is that German foreign and defense policy was determined by unelected government officials not responsible to the legislature. Germany as a whole may have been somewhat democratic, but its foreign policy apparatus was not. Although this may be true, Layne believes that Germany is being held to a higher standard and subjected to a degree of scrutiny that France, Britain, and the United States manage to escape. Looking more closely at these democracies, Layne concludes that most foreign policy decisions in London and Paris were also made with little or no legislative involvement, oversight, or control. Maria Meginnes reaches the same conclusion: “Through universal male suffrage, Germans elected a legislature, the Reichstag, in contested elections between multiple parties. German civil rights, protected under the constitution, were consistently observed.” Although conceding that “the issue of foreign policy control is slightly problematic,” she notes that “minimal popular influence was common practice

among other ‘liberal’ states of the era. In short, Imperial Germany was indeed ‘democratic.’”¹⁷ Democratic peace theorists, however, will have none of this. Spencer Weart reacts almost angrily, insisting that anyone classifying Germany in 1914 as a democracy “display[s] either their ignorance of modern history, or a willful indifference to the explicit meaning of this proposition.”¹⁸

Critics of democratic peace theory counter Weart’s charges of ignorance or willful indifference by noting that all democracies in 1914 were imperfect. One would not have to look very long to find legitimate grounds to deny the democratic credentials of any country in 1914 (including the United States), starting with the denial of the right to vote to women. Many democracies look a lot less democratic under the magnifying glass that always seems to be pulled out in the close cases. Thus, there are suspicions that new criteria emerge because the classification of Germany as a democracy in 1914 would, as Layne observes, be a fairly devastating blow to the theory. But just as the American Civil War was “readily eliminated” by using a certain definition of war, World War I is eliminated by using a certain definition of democracy. A charitable interpretation of the whole debate would highlight the inherent problems of making clear distinctions between democratic and undemocratic states in a messy world. A less charitable interpretation is that democratic peace theorists are more interested in finding ways to eliminate troublesome cases than subjecting their theory to rigorous examination.

The charge that democratic peace theorists play fast and loose with definitions in order to protect their theory from problematic cases is frequently made by realists, who are anxious to demonstrate that democracy has no significant impact. But there are also criticisms from the political and theoretical left. From this perspective, it is the manner in which terms such as *peaceful* are used that comes under fire. On one level, democratic peace theory makes a very specific claim: democracies are unlikely to fight other democracies. Unfortunately, this very narrow theoretical prediction and (maybe) empirical fact almost imperceptibly is inflated into self-congratulatory assertions about being more “peaceful” in general. Robert Latham, for example, argues that there is a tendency to see refraining from war as synonymous with being peaceful, which allows people to ignore the myriad ways in which democratic states contribute to war and conflict all over the world. In his view, “Islands of liberal democratic peace have not only waged war on non-democracies, they have also been responsible for—and are uniquely successful at generating—high levels of global militarization in, and conflict among, nondemocratic states.” He focuses in particular on the role of democratic states in the development and spread of arms in the world: “In the post second-World War period liberal democratic states—above all, the U.S.—have been in the lead in arms sales and the development and transfer of technology.” As a result, Latham concludes that “liberalism is the most effective interstate social organization for the production of military force in modern history.”¹⁹ Latham does not disagree with the fact that no two democracies have fought each other. He is simply unable to get terribly excited about it. For Latham, the absence of a democratic war is a relatively insignificant point that indicates little about the peacefulness of democracies in any broader and more meaningful sense of the term.

One could also consider evidence of democracies using covert action against other democratically elected regimes. During the Cold War, for example, the

United States actively intervened against democratic governments that pursued policies deemed hostile to its interests. Among the more infamous cases are the efforts by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to undermine or even overthrow the elected governments in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1973). Technically, of course, such actions do not undermine the very narrow claim that democracies will refrain from outright war with each other, but it does seem relevant to democratic peace theory's underlying assumptions of how democracies would view and treat each other. Noting that if "arguments that democracies externalize their internal norms of peaceful conflict resolution and respect for individual autonomy and rights" are to be taken seriously, Alexander Downes and Mary Lilliey think that "it is hard to reconcile aggressive and violent actions by one democracy against another democracy ... especially if leaders in one democracy recognizes the other country as democratic."²⁰ This, they demonstrate, is precisely what happened in Chile in 1972. Sebastian Rosato would concur, arguing that the lack of mutual respect inherent in such covert hostility is inconsistent with the underlying assumptions of several versions of democratic peace theory.²¹

Cause or Coincidence?

Let us accept that no two democracies have ever fought each other. Would we be able to infer from this claim that they have avoided war *because* they were democracies? Not necessarily. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman also points out that "no two countries that both had a McDonald's have fought a war against each other because each got its McDonald's."²² Would anyone seriously infer from this that eating fast-food burgers and fries leads nations to be more peaceful? Probably not. Although the "McDonald's peace thesis" is obviously at least somewhat frivolous, the underlying point is critical: empirical correlation is not sufficient grounds for inferring a causal relationship. There is always the possibility that the relationship is **spurious**—that is, explained by other variables.

In many respects, peace among democracies has been "overdetermined"—that is, there are many contributing factors. Until the post–World War II era, the rarity of democracies and their distance from each other severely restricted even the possibility of going to war. Peace between Finland and New Zealand in 1920 can be explained by geography, not shared democracy. There is also the existence of common, unifying threats. One could point to what sociologists refer to as the **in-group/out-group hypothesis**, which predicts internal cohesion in the face of an external enemy. It is plausible that peace among democracies in the twentieth century can be explained by the presence of such external threats—fascism in the 1930s and early 1940s and communism throughout most of the post–World War II period. That is, the democratic peace has been the product of strategic circumstances that provided a powerful incentive for cooperation. Still others have argued that peace is a consequence of economic wealth, growth, and prosperity, and because most democracies have been relatively wealthy and prosperous, this seems plausible as well.

Perhaps one way to look at the influence of alternative factors is to examine closely the cases in which democracies came close to war but refrained. This might reveal what considerations prevented the outbreak of war. Christopher Layne

spurious In statistics, a relationship that might appear to indicate a causal relationship, but that actually reflects the impact of a third variable. For example, democracies may not fight each other for reasons other than the fact that they are both democracies (e.g., wealth).

in-group/out-group

hypothesis The proposition that the internal unity of a social group increases when it is faced with an alternative social group, particularly if that other group is seen as posing a threat.



Protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square during the so-called "Arab Spring" demand political change. The movement raised hopes for democracy in Egypt and the region more generally, even if there was little agreement as to whether a more democratic Middle East would be more peaceful.

Source: © Paul Vinten/Shutterstock.com

examined several such crises between 1861 and 1923. The United States and Great Britain came close to war twice: in 1861, after the North's naval blockade prevented British commerce with the Confederacy during the Civil War, and again in 1895–1896, in a border dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela. Great Britain was also a party to another close call, this time with France in a contest for advantage in Egypt and the critical Suez Canal in 1898. The final crisis that Layne looked at pitted France against Germany in 1923, when France militarily occupied German territory known as the Ruhr. Although none of these crises escalated to war, Layne thinks that they are relevant for two reasons. First, the democracies involved seriously contemplated going to war with one another, which in and of itself seems inconsistent with democratic peace theory. Second, the reasons that they managed to avoid war had little, if anything, to do with the fact that they were both democracies. In each case, the decision against war was based on assessments of what the interests at stake were and the relative power of the states in conflict. Even Russett concedes that “in each of Layne’s cases, power and strategic considerations *were* predominant.”²³ That is, the democracies remained at peace, but not necessarily for the reasons suggested by democratic peace theory.

Democratization Versus Democracy

A final wrinkle in the democratic peace debate focuses on the distinction between *democratic* and *democratizing* states and their respective propensities to war. Even those who agree that mature, stable democratic states are more peaceful in their relations with each other note that democracies do not just appear overnight, fully formed. There is almost always a period of transition in which democracies emerge from some form of nondemocratic polity. This can be a very long and tumultuous process that increases the likelihood of both domestic and international conflict as old and new political groups adjust to the change in their status that democracy often entails. Examining these periods of democratic transition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield conclude that “in this transitional phase of democratization, countries become more aggressive and warprone, not less, and they do fight wars with democratic states.”²⁴ Regarding the case of Germany in World War I, for example, Snyder and Mansfield explain this as an example of an aggressive democratizing state not yet restrained by the forces that keep mature democracies from waging war against each other.

Applying these conclusions to contemporary debates, Snyder and Mansfield warn against excessive optimism regarding the spread of democracy in the Arab/Islamic world. Even before the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, they cautioned that “although democratization in the Islamic world might contribute to peace in the very long run … pressing for a quick democratic opening is unlikely to lead to peaceful democratic consolidations.” Instead, “unleashing Islamic mass opinion through sudden democratization might raise the likelihood of war.”²⁵ At the time, Snyder and Mansfield were trying to dampen expectations about the consequences of democratization in Iraq because this was often presented by supporters of the 2003 Iraq War as one of the potential benefits of regime change. There is no reason to think, however, that their warnings are any less applicable to possible democratization elsewhere in the region in the wake of the ouster of several undemocratic regimes. While a more democratic Middle East may be a much more peaceful place in the long run, there are reasons to worry. In the first place, it is too early to know the political trajectory of the current uprisings. There may be hopes for greater democracy, but there are no guarantees. But even if the final result is democracy and peace, we have no idea how long that will take to come about or what the interim period will look like.²⁶

Conclusion

We began this chapter by noting the recent trend of global democratization and ended with some speculation about recent uprisings and hopes for greater democracy in the Arab world. Although the historical evidence concerning the democratic peace theory remains controversial, the next few decades might go a long way to resolving the debate. For the first time, there are a lot of democracies in the world, representing many different cultures and levels of economic

development. Many of these democracies are next to each other and have histories of conflicts and war. Democratic peace theory might face its greatest test in places such as the Middle East. Referring back to the argument about the statistical insignificance of the democratic peace thus far, every year that passes without a democratic war makes for greater significance. If a hundred or more democracies around the world can go the next four or five decades without a war among them, it would be hard to deny the reality of democratic peace. In this sense, we are about to live through a massive, real-world test of democratic peace theory.

As the world becomes a giant laboratory, the debate over the democratic peace theory is sure to rage in the interim, with implications for both international relations theory and the real world of policymaking. On the level of theory, Russett goes so far as to claim that “the theoretical edifice of realism will collapse” if democratic peace theory is proven correct.²⁷ Although not everyone would see the stakes in such extreme terms, there is a general recognition that the issues raised strike near the heart of different theories. If internal democracy has a profound effect on the behavior of states, this would clearly undermine realist notions that international anarchy or human nature is the fundamental cause of war. But it is not only realism on the theoretical chopping block: Marxism is also challenged because liberal democratic states are, for the most part, capitalist. Because Marxism sees the underlying dynamics and requirements of capitalism as a basic cause of expansionism, militarism, and war, we can extend Russett’s warnings about the collapse of realism to Marxism as well. Perhaps it is the realization that the stakes are so important that explains why the debate over the democratic peace has become so central to contemporary research in international relations. The high stakes involved may also explain why the debate is sometimes so testy.

In terms of policy, critics of democratic peace theory see its acceptance by policymakers as dangerous. Some worry that it will lead to misguided attempts to spread democracy throughout the world, and others fear that it will blind the United States to emerging strategic threats because of the optimistic assumption that other democracies cannot possibly threaten them. Even realist Christopher Layne warns that “if American policymakers allow themselves to be mesmerized by democratic peace theory’s seductive—but false—vision of the future, the United States will be ill-prepared to formulate a grand strategy that will advance its interests in the emerging world of multipolar great power competition.”²⁸ For Russett, however, the failure to “grasp the democratic peace” would represent a tragedy of historic proportions, a lost opportunity to create and nurture a more civilized and peaceful world.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The idea that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies, which has long been central to liberal thinking about international politics, can be traced to Immanuel Kant's vision of a "democratic pacific union," in which democratic (or "republican") states would refrain from war in their relations with each other.
- With the end of the Cold War and the dramatic spread of democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been renewed interest in democratic peace theory among academics and policymakers alike.
- Democratic peace theory has two major variants. The institutional variant claims that the division or dispersion of power in democratic states makes it very difficult for them to initiate and wage war. The cultural version argues that the norms and values that permeate democratic societies, especially the commitment to resolving political disputes without resort to force, also shape the foreign policies of democratic states. These institutional and cultural constraints are particularly powerful when democracies deal with one another.
- The empirical record appears to support democratic peace theory because there is no example of an unambiguously democratic state engaging in war with another unambiguously democratic state.
- Critics and skeptics, however, remain unconvinced by the evidence. The rarity of war and (until recently) the rarity of democracy mean that we should not have expected to see wars among democracies up to now. As a result, the lack of war between democracies is neither surprising nor compelling.
- Skeptics also see a very convenient pattern of constantly shifting definitions, particularly when it comes to the requirements for classifying a country as a democracy. Whether Germany on the eve of World War I deserves the label of democracy is the most controversial example of these definitional problems.
- The spread of democracy over the past two decades will provide a real-world test of democratic peace theory in coming years because many new democracies are geographically close to each other and have long histories of conflict.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Why do definitions matter so much when assessing the validity of democratic peace theory?
2. Do the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan undermine democratic peace theory? Why or why not?
3. Why is democratic peace theory inconsistent with realism?
4. Why might the next few decades be critical for establishing the validity of democratic peace theory?
5. Why is World War I such a controversial case in the debate over democratic peace theory?

KEY TERMS

checks and balances, 86
democratic pacific union, 83

Immanuel Kant, 83
in-group/out-group hypothesis, 93

institutional thesis, 86
pacific public thesis, 83
political-cultural thesis, 86

rational public thesis, 83
spurious, 93

FURTHER READINGS

Contemporary interest in democratic peace theory was sparked by Michael Doyle's seminal "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80

(December 1986): 1151–1169. Several subsequent works have since become standards in support of the democratic peace theory, including Bruce Russett, *Grasping the*

Democratic Peace (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), and Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). Stressing the importance of mutual perceptions of democracy is John Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). Critiques from several different perspectives can be found in Christopher Layne, "Kant or Cant: The Myth of the

"Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19 (Fall 1994): 5–49; Joanne Gowa, *Bullets and Ballots: The Elusive Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Robert Latham, "Democracy and War-Making," *Millennium: A Journal of International Affairs* 22 (1993): 139–164. On the propensity of democratizing states for war, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

WAR AND DEMOCRACY ON THE WEB

www.hawaii.edu/powerkills

Explores the relationship among freedom, democracy, and war.

www.worldaudit.org

Evaluates and ranks the nations of the world on various scales, including democracy, press freedom, civil liberties, and others.

www.freedomhouse.org

Classifies nations of the world on a scale of "free," "partially free," and "not free." Categorizing nations as "free" is often taken by researchers as tantamount to a classification of being democratic.

www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm

Classifies nations of the world according to their type of government.

NOTES

¹Quoted in Michael Doyle, *The Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 280.

²This is not a universally shared interpretation. See Louis A. Perez, *The War of 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 70–77. Still, even those who reject the notion that popular opinion pushed President William McKinley into war over Cuba cannot plausibly argue that public opinion was a force for peace in the crisis.

³Robin Fox, "Fatal Attraction: War and Human Nature," *The National Interest* 30 (Winter 1992/1993): 17.

⁴The best summary of the institutional constraint and political-cultural theses can be found in Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 29–42.

⁵Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Democratic Peace—Warlike Democracies: A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument," *European Journal of International Relations* 34, no. 1 (1995): 489–515.

⁶Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 90.

⁷John Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), and John Owen, "How Liberalism Produces the Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 87–126; also Ido Oren, "The Subjectivity of the Democratic Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," *International Security* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 147–184.

⁸More radical or Marxist theorists might take issue with this statement. They would be inclined to argue that the formal processes mask the fundamentally undemocratic nature of most contemporary democracies because the skewed nature of economic power prevents the emergence of anything that could be considered democratic in the deeper sense of the term.

⁹J. D. Singer and Melvin Small, "The War Proneness of Democratic States," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1 (1976): 49–69.

¹⁰Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 11.

¹¹Ibid., p. 21.

¹²See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7475&year=2008>.

¹³David Spiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 50–86.

¹⁴Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, p. 16.

¹⁵Ted Galen Carpenter, "Review Essay: Democracy and War," *Independent Review* 2 (Winter 1998): 435–441.

¹⁶Christopher Layne, "Kant or Cant: The Myth of Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 41.

¹⁷Maria A. Megginnes, "Defining the Democratic: Imperial Germany and Democratic Peace Theory," *Undergraduate Journal of Politics and Government* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 32.

¹⁸Weart, *Never at War*, pp. 311–312. In general, Weart provides a comprehensive overview of the "close" cases and the reasons why he thinks none of them invalidate the democratic peace proposition (pp. 297–318).

¹⁹Robert Latham, "Democracy and War-Making: Locating the Liberal International Context," *Millennium: A Journal of International Affairs* 22, no. 2 (1993): 139, 153, 154.

²⁰Alexander B. Downes and Mary Lauren Lilley, "Overt Peace, Covert War: Covert Intervention and the Democratic Peace," *Security Studies* 19 (2010): 303.

²¹Sebastian Rosato, "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (November 2003): 585–602.

²²Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), p. 195.

²³Bruce Russett, "And Yet It Moves," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 166.

²⁴Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* vol. 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), p. 5.

²⁵Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Prone to Violence: The Paradox of Democratic Peace," *The National Interest* no. 82 (Winter 2005–2006), p. 40.

²⁶Another skeptical view is Piki-Ish Shalom, "'The Civilization of Clashes': Misapplying the Democratic Peace in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 4 (Winter 2007–08), pp. 533–54.

²⁷Russett, "And Yet It Moves," p. 164.

²⁸Layne, "Kant or Cant," p. 49.

Would Democracy Bring Peace to the Middle East?

Although it is one thing to understand the logic of democratic peace theory in the familiar context of Europe or North America, there is no reason that this logic should be so restricted. The interesting question is whether the introduction of democracy into places of intense war and conflict would have a similarly pacifying effect. When we think of conflict in the contemporary world, perhaps the first place that comes to mind is the Middle East. This raises the inevitable question: Would the spread of democracy bring peace to the Middle East? The conviction that it would was part of the rationale for regime change in Iraq in 2003. This general question is addressed in the following two essays. In a 2005 editorial, former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice makes the case that war and terrorism in the Middle East would be substantially reduced by the introduction and spread of democratic institutions. She does so, of course, largely in the context of justifying the decision to use force in pursuit of regime change in Iraq. More recently, uprisings in the Arab world have raised hopes such optimistic expectations might finally become reality. Perhaps nowhere are the potential consequences of democratization greater than in the case of Egypt and its relations with Israel. Because the two countries enjoyed more than two decades of peace with undemocratic regimes in Egypt, there are understandable concerns about the future. Benny Morris voices the fears shared by many in Israel that democratization in Egypt might actually endanger the peace between the two countries. The region may very soon become a real-world laboratory for various versions of democratic peace theory. In what ways do Rice and Morris reflect the various arguments presented in this chapter? Which view of democracy and peace in the Middle East do you find more persuasive, and why?

PERSPECTIVE 1

Perspective the Promise of Democratic Peace

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Op-Ed

Washington Post

December 11, 2005¹



Soon after arriving at the State Department earlier this year, I hung a portrait of Dean Acheson in my office. Over half a century ago, as America sought to create

¹ Source: Condoleezza Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace," *Washington Post* (December 11, 2005). Accessed at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/57888.htm>.

the world anew in the aftermath of World War II, Acheson sat in the office that I now occupy. And I hung his picture where I did for a reason.

Like Acheson and his contemporaries, we live in an extraordinary time—one in which the terrain of international politics is shifting beneath our feet and the pace of historical change outstrips even the most vivid imagination. My predecessor's portrait is a reminder that in times of unprecedented change, the traditional diplomacy of crisis management is insufficient. Instead, we must transcend the doctrines and debates of the past and transform volatile status quo that no longer serve our interests. What is needed is a realistic statecraft for a transformed world.

President Bush outlined the vision for it in his second inaugural address: "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." This is admittedly a bold course of action, but it is consistent with the proud tradition of American foreign policy, especially such recent presidents as Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan. Most important: Like the ambitious policies of Truman and Reagan, our statecraft will succeed not simply because it is optimistic and idealistic but also because it is premised on sound strategic logic and a proper understanding of the new realities we face.

Our statecraft today recognizes that centuries of international practice and precedent have been overturned in the past 15 years. Consider one example: For the first time since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the prospect of violent conflict between great powers is becoming ever more unthinkable. Major states are increasingly competing in peace, not preparing for war. To advance this remarkable trend, the United States is transforming our partnerships with nations such as Japan and Russia, with the European Union, and especially with China and India. Together we are building a more lasting and durable form of global stability: a balance of power that favors freedom.

This unprecedented change has supported others. Since its creation more than 350 years ago, the modern state system has always rested on the concept of sovereignty. It was assumed that states were the primary international actors and that every state was able and willing to address the threats emerging from its territory. Today, however, we have seen that these assumptions no longer hold, and as a result the greatest threats to our security are defined more by the dynamics within weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones.

The phenomenon of weak and failing states is not new, but the danger they now pose is unparalleled. When people, goods and information traverse the globe as fast as they do today, transnational threats such as disease or terrorism can inflict damage comparable to the standing armies of nation-states. Absent responsible state authority, threats that would and should be contained within a country's borders can now melt into the world and wreak untold havoc. Weak and failing states serve as global pathways that facilitate the spread of pandemics, the movement of criminals and terrorists, and the proliferation of the world's most dangerous weapons.

Our experience of this new world leads us to conclude that the fundamental character of regimes matters more today than the international distribution of power. Insisting otherwise is imprudent and impractical. The goal of our statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.

Attempting to draw neat, clean lines between our security interests and our democratic ideals does not reflect the reality of today's world. Supporting the growth of democratic institutions in all nations is not some moralistic flight of fancy; it is the only realistic response to our present challenges.

In one region of the world, however, the problems emerging from the character of regimes are more urgent than in any other. The "freedom deficit" in the broader Middle East provides fertile ground for the growth of an ideology of hatred so vicious and virulent that it leads people to strap suicide bombs to their bodies and fly airplanes into buildings. When the citizens of this region cannot advance their interests and redress their grievances through an open political process, they retreat hopelessly into the shadows to be preyed upon by evil men with violent designs. In these societies, it is illusory to encourage economic reform by itself and hope that the freedom deficit will work itself out over time.

Though the broader Middle East has no history of democracy, this is not an excuse for doing nothing. If every action required a precedent, there would be no firsts. We are confident that democracy will succeed in this region not simply because we have faith in our principles but because the basic human longing for liberty and democratic rights has transformed our world. Dogmatic cynics and cultural determinists were once certain that "Asian values," or Latin culture, or Slavic despotism, or African tribalism would each render democracy impossible. But they were wrong, and our statecraft must now be guided by the undeniable truth that democracy is the only assurance of lasting peace and security between states, because it is the only guarantee of freedom and justice within states.

Implicit within the goals of our statecraft are the limits of our power and the reasons for our humility. Unlike tyranny, democracy by its very nature is never imposed. Citizens of conviction must choose it—and not just in one election. The work of democracy is a daily process to build the institutions of democracy: the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free media and property rights, among others. The United States cannot manufacture these outcomes, but we can and must create opportunities for individuals to assume ownership of their own lives and nations. Our power gains its greatest legitimacy when we support the natural right of all people, even those who disagree with us, to govern themselves in liberty.

The statecraft that America is called to practice in today's world is ambitious, even revolutionary, but it is not imprudent. A conservative temperament will rightly be skeptical of any policy that embraces change and rejects the status quo, but that is not an argument against the merits of such a policy. As Truman once said, "The world is not static, and the status quo is not sacred." In times of extraordinary change such as ours, when the costs of inaction outweigh the risks of action, doing nothing is not an option. If the school of thought called "realism" is to be truly realistic, it must recognize that stability without democracy will prove to be false stability, and that fear of change is not a positive prescription for policy.

After all, who truly believes, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, that the status quo in the Middle East was stable, beneficial, and worth defending? How could it have been prudent to preserve the state of affairs in a region that was incubating and exporting terrorism; where the proliferation of deadly weapons was getting worse, not better; where authoritarian regimes were projecting their failures onto innocent nations and peoples; where Lebanon suffered under the boot heel

of Syrian occupation; where a corrupt Palestinian Authority cared more for its own preservation than for its people's aspirations; and where a tyrant such as Saddam Hussein was free to slaughter his citizens, destabilize his neighbors, and undermine the hope of peace between Israelis and Palestinians? It is sheer fantasy to assume that the Middle East was just peachy before America disrupted its alleged stability.

Had we believed this, and had we done nothing, consider all that we would have missed in just the past year: A Lebanon that is free of foreign occupation and advancing democratic reform. A Palestinian Authority run by an elected leader who openly calls for peace with Israel. An Egypt that has amended its constitution to hold multiparty elections. A Kuwait where women are now full citizens. And, of course, an Iraq that in the face of a horrific insurgency has held historic elections, drafted and ratified a new national charter, and will go to the polls again in coming days to elect a new constitutional government.

At this time last year, such unprecedeted progress seemed impossible. One day it will all seem to have been inevitable. This is the nature of extraordinary times, which Acheson understood well and described perfectly in his memoirs. "The significance of events," he wrote, "was shrouded in ambiguity. We groped after interpretations of them, sometimes reversed lines of action based on earlier views, and hesitated long before grasping what now seems obvious." When Acheson left office in 1953, he could not know the fate of the policies he helped to create. He certainly could never have predicted that nearly four decades later, war between Europe's major powers would be unthinkable, or that America and the world would be harvesting the fruits of his good decisions and managing the collapse of communism. But because leaders such as Acheson steered American statecraft with our principles when precedents for action were lacking, because they dealt with their world as it was but never believed they were powerless to change it for the better, the promise of democratic peace is now a reality in all of Europe and in much of Asia.

When I walk past Acheson's portrait upon departing my office for the last time, no one will be able to know the full scope of what our statecraft has achieved. But I have an abiding confidence that we will have laid a firm foundation of principle—a foundation on which future generations will realize our nation's vision of a fully free, democratic, and peaceful world.

Arab Spring, Israeli Winter (2011)

PERSPECTIVE 2

Benny Morris²

The National Interest

<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/arab-spring-israeli-winter-5229>

April 28, 2011

Egypt is steadily backing away from its peace treaty with Israel, with possible dire consequences for the region's stability and Israeli-Arab relations in general.



²From *The National Interest*, "Arab Spring, Israeli Winter," by Benny Morris, April 28, 2011. © 2011. Used with permission of the publisher.

Yesterday's demolition of the Egyptian-Israeli gas pipeline near El Arish, in Sinai, was only the latest in a series of ominous signs.

Many in the West waxed enthusiastic as thousands of Cairenes took to the streets two months ago to topple their aged dictator, President Hosni Mubarak: The revolution was hailed—along with the other outbursts of popular anger across the Arab world—as the birth of freedom in a long-dormant, long-unfree world.

And while none could remain unmoved at the sight of multitudes claiming their political voice for the first time, the ultimate outcome of this human turbulence is as yet unclear.

But, for Israelis, the Arab spring, as some call it—though it might yet turn out to have been an Arab autumn—had a clear, dark subtext, which many in the West preferred to ignore or deny. “What is happening is about the Arab world, internally; it has nothing to do with Israel,” they claimed.

But I’m afraid it has, and in spades, and the chickens are beginning to come home to roost. From the start, at least as regards Egypt, Israel was there as an issue, if not absolutely in the foreground, then certainly not in a faraway background. Pictures occasionally appeared of Mubarak surrounded by a Star of David; occasionally, the crowds chanted that he was a lackey of America and Israel.

Now the issue is definitely moving to the foreground. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press this week published a poll about what Egyptians think and want. *The New York Times* preferred to head its report in the matter by pointing to the overwhelming optimism of post-revolutionary Egyptians about their collective future. But the poll’s more striking feature was the finding that 54% of Egyptians want to annul the country’s 1979 peace treaty with Israel, a key symbol of the gradual dissipation (at the time) of the pan-Arab-Israel conflict and the pre-conditional cornerstone of any possible Israeli-Palestinian accommodation in the future. The percentage of nay-sayers rose among less educated Egyptians, though a full 45% of educated Egyptians also sought the annulment of the treaty.

(The poll also showed that 36% of Egyptians favored Islamic fundamentalism—a smaller number opposed such fundamentalism—and more than half believed that the Koran or Islamic sharia law should be the basis or guideline for the country’s constitution.)

On the energy front, two of Mubarak’s former energy ministers, Mahmoud Latif and Sameh Fahmy, are to stand trial for selling the gas to Israel at a discount (and, presumably, personally profiting in the process). Mubarak himself is today regularly portrayed as a dupe—or Zionist agent—and may be held to account in this connection. The bilateral \$2.5 billion agreement, signed in 2005 though never popular with the Egyptian public, was for fifteen years, with an option for five additional years. The Egyptians began supplying the gas through the overland pipeline in 2008.

Yesterday’s explosion severing the pipeline—it provided about half of the fuel for Israel’s electricity-generating plants—was but the latest instalment in the saga. About two months ago, the gasline was reportedly damaged by saboteurs and Egypt ceased supplying gas to Israel (and Jordan) for about a month. It was unclear then whether the line was really damaged or by whom. Now the supply has completely stopped. For yesterday’s sabotage the Egyptian military, which runs the country, have blamed “unknown, armed” assailants—though conspiracy

theorists, who abound in the region, might suggest that one of their own squads perpetrated the explosion, to put an end to the unpopular energy link while being able to deny responsibility. Simply stopping the gas supply would be a breach of contract and might well go down poorly in Washington.

All of this may augur a definitive Egyptian-Israeli rift following the establishment of a new government in Egypt after the scheduled September general elections. Whether that government would go so far as formally to cancel the peace treaty and renew the state of belligerence between the two countries is unclear. But without doubt Israel will no longer enjoy the certainty and strategic benefit of a quiescent and dependable neighbor on its southern front as it faces its enemies to the east and north (Hezbollah and Iran/Syria). How such a new Egyptian regime will handle Hamas (and the Israeli-Hamas conflict) along the Gaza Strip border is anyone's guess—though much will depend on the size of the Muslim Brotherhood contingent in the future Egyptian government. (Hamas is the Palestinian offshoot of the brotherhood, Egypt's largest Islamist party.)

And one last word about the Pew poll, which many of the participants appear to have missed. There may well be a clear contradiction, for Egyptians, between viewing their future optimistically and scrapping the peace with Israel. Put another way, the annulment of the treaty might lead to Egypt rejoining the Arab confrontation front against Israel and even to participation in new wars. And I doubt if this would result in a roseate future for Egyptians.



5

War and “Human Nature”

Key Controversy: Is War Part of Human Nature?

Does human nature lead to war? Given its obvious irrationality, many believe that there must be an uncontrollable force that drives people to engage in warfare. For centuries, contrasting philosophical and religious views of human nature have framed this debate. More “scientific” versions of this argument focus on psychological and biological impulses or instincts that supposedly lead to aggression and war. Although most realists do not explicitly endorse instinctual theories of war, there are some obvious parallels with their negative view of human nature, especially for classical realists. The opposing view sees war as a culturally learned practice, a form of collective violence, not a manifestation of aggression. This perspective is more consistent with liberalism’s positive assessment of human nature, as well as feminist and constructivist perspectives stressing the socially constructed nature of many human behaviors. Although much of this debate has been defined in terms of the familiar nature or nurture divide, in the final analysis, it might be more useful to think in terms of a combination of nature *and* nurture. ■

Whatever students of international relations might have to say about anarchy or the lack of democracy being fundamental causes of war, many suspect a deeper cause: “human nature.” Psychologist Anthony Storr appears to lean in this direction: “That man is an aggressive creature will hardly be denied. With the exception of certain rodents, no other vertebrate habitually destroys members of his own species. No other animal takes positive pleasure in the exercise of cruelty upon another of his own kind.”¹ Although Storr’s indictment is certainly harsh, it seems to be supported by the depressing statistics of war. By one estimate, there have been only 292 years of peace in the last 5,600 years, and during that time, more than 3.5 billion people have died in, or as a result of, more than 14,000 wars.² This includes not only the obvious military and civilian casualties, but also deaths from the common consequences of war—disease, famine, and civil violence. Other studies arrive at somewhat different figures but do not change the overall picture: War is almost certainly the second-leading cause of death in human

history, behind only the diseases and conditions associated with old age. The question of why human beings systematically prepare for and carry out the large-scale slaughter of members of their own species is perhaps the central question for anyone interested in our fate on this planet.

Even though explanations viewing war as part of human nature have fallen out of favor with scholars and academics, they remain part of the common wisdom. Opinions vary on exactly what it is about human nature that supposedly leads to war. For some, the element of human nature that leads to war is an innate aggressive drive or instinct. Others see war as resulting not from aggression per se, but rather greed, irrationality, or group-forming tendencies. Whatever the specifics, human nature explanations imply, either explicitly or implicitly, the inevitability of war. On the other side of the debate are those who see war as learned behavior, the culmination of a socialization process that encourages us to think about aggression, violence, and other social groups in ways that make systematic killing acceptable, even desirable in some situations. War does not come “naturally,” like sex; it is something people learn, and must sometimes be coerced to do. It is more like slavery and wearing black to funerals, learned social practices that can change, than it is like sex, which is a biological drive. In very simplistic terms, disagreements about the relationship between war and human nature are specific examples of the age-old **nature versus nurture** debate, over which human behaviors are inevitable reflections of some unchangeable part of the human makeup and which are social practices amenable to alteration. Although any explanation for something as complex as war inevitably combines elements of both nature and nurture, there is usually a sufficient difference in emphasis so that it is possible to place different theories on either side of this divide.

nature versus nurture The debate over which human behaviors are biologically or instinctually determined, as opposed to being socially or culturally conditioned.

Aggression, Instincts, and War

Philosophical and theological assumptions about human nature are not susceptible to scientific testing; they are simply foundational beliefs one either accepts or rejects. There have, however, been attempts to trace the origins of human aggression and war to biological and physiological instincts, creating modern or scientific versions of philosophical and theological doctrines. Sigmund Freud, for example, argued that people have both a life instinct (*Eros*) and a death instinct (*Thanatos*), with aggression (whether it is directed toward oneself in the form of suicide or toward others as violence) resulting from the deep-seated death instinct. Although he would later express doubts about this position, Freud was clear in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* about his view of human nature: “Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowment is to be reckoned with a powerful share of aggressiveness.... [this instinct] manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast.”³

The most influential instinctual theories of war have been proposed by a handful of **ethologists** (those engaged in the study of animal behavior). Books such as

ethologists Those who study animal behavior. Many ethologists have been influential proponents of the view that war has an instinctual basis in human behavior.

Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape*, Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox's *The Imperial Animal*, and Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative* portray war as a manifestation of an aggressive instinct that humans share with other animals.⁴ The most prominent exponent of this viewpoint was **Konrad Lorenz**, a German ethologist, whose book *On Aggression* provided the intellectual and theoretical foundation for the more popularized works of Morris, Tiger, Fox, and Ardrey.⁵ Lorenz's approach to understanding war begins with the implicit puzzle in Anthony Storr's observation about the near-uniqueness of human slaughter: How do we explain the fact that human beings kill each other with such frequency and enthusiasm? "Undeniably," Lorenz concludes, "there must be superlatively strong factors which are able to overcome the commands of individual reason so completely and which are so obviously impervious to experience and learning."⁶ What might these factors be? To answer this question, it is useful to break the big puzzle into two smaller ones. First, why do humans fight with one another? Second, why do they frequently kill one another? The distinction between aggression and *lethal* aggression is critical. If people just fought without killing, the problem of war would not be nearly that important.

Konrad Lorenz Influential and controversial German ethologist famous for drawing the distinction between lethal and nonlethal animals and placing humans in the latter category; he claimed that the ability of humans to craft lethal weapons upset the balance between our ability to kill and inhibitions against killing.

The "Functions" of Aggression

Lorenz and his fellow ethologists begin with the assumption that humans are animals, in the sense that we are living, breathing creatures. Although different from other animals in important respects, we are animals nonetheless. Like other animals, we are a product of evolutionary processes that have endowed us with certain instincts. We may have fewer instincts than other animals, but we still have them. These assumptions raise a number of misleadingly simple questions. First, what is an instinct? And second, how does one distinguish instinctual actions from learned behaviors?

An **instinct** is typically defined as a psychologically and biologically predetermined behavioral response to external stimuli. Hibernation, for example, is an instinct in some animals because it is a predetermined response to changes in the weather announcing the coming of winter. Lorenz and Morris distinguish instinctual from learned behaviors by the presence or absence of biological or physical "symptoms." Sexual arousal provides one example: External stimuli, such as the appearance of an attractive mate, elicit specific physical changes and activate desires to engage in certain behaviors. For Lorenz and Morris, it is significant that aggression and fighting are also accompanied by physiological changes, such as rapid breathing, elevated blood pressure, accelerated heart rate, higher levels of adrenaline, a cessation of food digestion, muscle tension, and various neurological changes.⁷ These are all indicators of an instinctual response. In comparison, culturally learned behaviors, such as wearing black to funerals, are not associated with similar physiological indicators.

Instinct A biologically or psychologically predetermined behavioral response to external stimuli.

Ethologists view instincts in the context of evolutionary theory in that they emerge and survive because they serve useful purposes. To use more technical terminology, instincts exist and persist because they are *adaptive*. They help assure the survival of a species. Among the instincts that virtually all animals possess are fear, sex, hunger, and aggression. The usefulness of sex and hunger for species survival is obvious.

Fear helps protect animals from unknown dangers. The evolutionary purpose of aggression is not as immediately clear and requires some explanation.

spacing The tendency of animals to disperse themselves over a given territory so as to prevent overpopulation and depletion of resources. Cited by ethologists as one of the useful functions of aggression in animals.

hierarchy The unequal distribution of power and authority in an animal grouping. In-group fighting often establishes the social hierarchy. Cited by ethologists as one of the useful functions of aggression in animals.

Ethologists see aggression as fulfilling several useful functions. The first is **spacing**. Any environment has sufficient resources to support a limited population. As the animal population expands, fights over resources (e.g., land, food, and mates) increase. These fights tend to repel animals, driving them away from each other, distributing or spacing them out to prevent overpopulation. The second function is the establishment of a **hierarchy** in animal groups. Fights among animals within their groups determine who rules and who is at the top and bottom of the social heap. This hierarchy is an integral element of social structure. It is also usually linked to reproduction, in that animals at the top have the most access to mates, ensuring that the strongest and fittest mate the most. Finally, aggression is necessary for defense of the young. According to Lorenz and his followers, there is every reason to believe that aggression performed these same basic functions in human evolution. Humans have developed an aggressive instinct over the course of evolution for very much the same reasons as other animals.

The critical puzzle, however, is not why human beings fight each other, but why we kill each other. It is not aggression that makes us stand out, but rather our lethal aggression. All animals fight with their own kind; the difference is that they rarely kill members of their own species. This is the genuinely puzzling thing about war. It is in his explanation of the uniqueness of human lethal aggression that Lorenz made his most original and controversial contribution.

The Curse of Intelligence: Weapons

In looking at the animal kingdom as a whole, Lorenz makes a fundamental distinction between two types of animals. On one hand, there are animals that lack the physical endowments necessary to kill with ease. Doves, gerbils, and rabbits, for example, do not possess the powerful limbs and jaws or sharp claws and teeth required for lethal aggression. On the other hand, animals such as lions, tigers, wolves, and bears do possess the physical tools necessary to kill. Explaining why doves, gerbils, and rabbits do not run around slaughtering each other is easy: They cannot. They fight, but they are unable to kill. No puzzle there.

The real puzzle is why animals with ability to kill members of their own species rarely do. As Desmond Morris observes, "Species that have evolved special killing techniques for dealing with their prey seldom employ these when fighting their own kind."⁸ Why not? Why aren't the plains of Africa littered with the corpses of great game killed by their own kind? The answer, according to Lorenz, is that lethal animals have developed in the course of evolution a set of signals, repertoires, and behaviors that inhibit the killing of their own species. In a fight between potentially lethal members of the same species, the fight almost always ends well short of death. This happens in one of two ways. The most obvious means of avoiding death is flight; the loser simply runs away, and the victor seldom chases to inflict further harm. In instances where flight is not feasible, the loser "must somehow signal to the stronger animal that he is no longer a threat and that he does not intend to continue the fight.... But if he can signal his acceptance of defeat ... he will be able to avoid further serious punishment." According to

Morris, "this is achieved by the performance of certain characteristic submissive displays. These appease the attacker and rapidly reduce his aggression, speeding up settlement of the dispute."⁹

This submissive posture is sometimes referred to as an **appeasement gesture**. It might involve lying down passively, exposing a vulnerable part of the body, or both. Such gestures signify, and are recognized as symbols of, defeat. Death seldom follows. Thus, potentially lethal animals rarely kill members of their own species because "all heavily armed carnivores possess sufficiently reliable inhibitions which prevent the self-destruction of the species."¹⁰ The ability to kill one's own kind without inhibition is a recipe for evolutionary failure.

How do human beings fit into this analysis? In terms of the division between lethal and nonlethal animals, humans fall into the latter category. We do not have sharp teeth, powerful jaws, strong limbs, or dangerous claws. Two naked people would find it very difficult to kill each other using only their physical capabilities. In this sense, we are more like rabbits than wolves. As essentially nonlethal creatures, we should have no need for mechanisms that prevent us from killing each other. The problem is that our intellect, creativity, and ingenuity have allowed us to develop tools that make us exceptionally lethal. In the 150,000 or so years that humans have been around, we have gone from using sticks and rocks to cannons and missiles. Although 150,000 years seems like a long time, from an evolutionary perspective this is an eyelid. And it has been less than 10,000 years from the development of many close-range weapons to the development of bombers and missiles. So in an evolutionary sense, we have gone from being relatively harmless to being incredibly lethal almost overnight. Lorenz lays out the basic problem: "All of his [mankind's] trouble arises from his being a basically harmless omnivorous creature, lacking in natural weapons with which to kill prey, and, therefore, devoid of the built-in safety devices which prevent 'professional' carnivores from abusing their killing power." Unfortunately, "in human evolution, no inhibitory mechanisms preventing sudden manslaughter were necessary because quick killing was impossible ... the invention of artificial weapons upset the equilibrium of killing potential and social inhibitions."¹¹

On some level, certain inhibitions undoubtedly exist. Many people would find it very difficult to kill someone in hand-to-hand combat when they were crouching and crying helplessly in a corner begging for mercy. Many would take this behavior as a sufficient appeasement gesture. The problem, however, is that humans have fashioned weapons that allow them to be lethal from great distances: a few dozen feet with spears and arrows, a few hundred feet with guns, a mile or two with artillery, several miles from above with a bomber, and thousands of miles away with missiles. A few individuals pressing buttons in an underground bunker can vaporize millions of their fellow human beings without even seeing a drop of blood or a single anguished expression. Again, Lorenz makes the implications of this clear: "The distance at which all shooting weapons take effect screens the killer against the stimulus situation which would otherwise activate his killing inhibitions.... The man who presses the releasing button is so completely screened against seeing, hearing, or otherwise emotionally realizing the consequences of his action, that he can commit it with impunity."¹² Physical distance encourages emotional distance. This is revealed in "a surprising problem for military leaders in times of

appeasement gesture A concept popularized by Konrad Lorenz involving displays or signals made by lethal animals while fighting with members of their own species in order to indicate defeat and avoid death.

war: soldiers in battle find it relatively easy to shoot someone a great distance away but have a much more difficult time shooting an enemy standing right in front of them.”¹³

evolutionary lag or disequilibrium Konrad Lorenz’s idea that humans’ intellectual evolution and ability to kill has not been matched by the development of inhibitions against using these abilities to kill members of our own species.

Thus, according to Lorenz and Morris, what we have is an **evolutionary lag** or **disequilibrium**. Human intellectual evolution, reflected in our ability to invent increasingly destructive weapons that kill from greater and greater distances, has outstripped our moral evolution. We are the evolutionary equivalent of bunny rabbits running around with machine guns, amazed at their newfound lethality while lacking the internal devices that stop them from killing their own kind. This is not a recipe for success in the long term.

In some respects, theories of instinctual human aggression mirror conservative/realist views. If people have an aggressive instinct that leads to war, this would be consistent with the conservative/realist view of humans as an imperfect and imperf ectible species. Very few realists, however, have explicitly adopted any particular biologically based theory of human aggression. Realists who emphasize the imperfections of human nature are generally content to rely on generic assertions of human lust, greed, passion, and desire for power. Nonetheless, it is difficult to avoid the similarities. And when those who believe in the innateness of human aggression turn their attention to international relations, they tend to adopt a decidedly realist approach. The arguments of Lorenz, Ardrey, and Fox appear to echo George Kennan’s lament that humankind cannot do anything about the beast within.

The Curse of Intelligence: Abstract Thought

Even if Lorenz is correct about the presence of an aggressive instinct and the consequences of our ability to produce lethal weapons, this in and of itself could not completely account for war. The argument presented thus far could just as easily lead to the expectation that individuals would be running around killing each other *as individuals* on a grand scale, but this is not what happens. War is not merely lethal aggression; it is a particular form of lethal aggression. It is lethal aggression among, and in the name of, organized political or social groups. The aggressive instinct alone cannot account for the prevalence of war. It may be a necessary part of explaining war, but it is not sufficient. As Robin Fox explains, “There is no question that aggression is related to war, just as sex is related to prostitution.... but neither *institutional* form follows directly from the basic instinctive drive.”¹⁴ If we want to understand types of lethal aggression, we need to add something to the equation. In a sense, there are three questions we need to answer in order to understand war: Why do people engage in aggression? Why do they engage in lethal aggression? Why do they engage in that type of lethal aggression that we call war? Thus far, we have addressed only the first two questions. Lorenz and Morris give the final answer by incorporating our capacity for abstract, symbolic thought and our innate sociability. These things combine with our innate aggressiveness to explain war.

Although Lorenz and those who agree with him see people as animals with instincts, they would also concede that we are probably less instinctual than other creatures because of our intelligence and capacity for abstract, conceptual thought.

It is this intelligence that distinguishes us from other creatures and has allowed us to thrive in an evolutionary sense. Paradoxically, this intelligence—our greatest asset—is also the root cause of our war problem. It is our intelligence, after all, that provides us with the ability to invent the weapons that place our species in danger. It is also this intelligence that aids and abets our innate aggressiveness to produce war as we know it. Not only does our intelligence allow us to think of new ways to kill each other, it also allows us to conceive the world in ways that are part of the equation of war. As Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox explain, “Only an animal with brain enough to think of empires and try to manage them could conceive of war. Only an animal so wedded to the truths inside his skull could travel many miles and expend endless, precious calories and hours and artifacts to destroy others.”¹⁵ Animals fight over things—mates, food, territory—but people fight over ideas: “Since we are an animal that lives primarily by ideas and only secondarily by instincts ... we react fanatically when our basic ideas—those that decide our identities individual and collective—are threatened.”¹⁶ And as Lorenz states with characteristic boldness, “All the great dangers threatening humanity with extinction are direct consequences of conceptual thought.”¹⁷

The notion of a collective identity hints at another fundamental human motivation—our “natural tendency to form in-groups.”¹⁸ Although this is not necessarily an instinct, it is a basic human motivation deeply ingrained in our psyche over the course of human evolution. Echoing ideas that we saw in conservative and realist thought, people are seen as inherently social creatures who inevitably identify with social groups that provide people with a sense of belonging. Earlier in human history, this aspect of human nature was also essential to survival in very harsh environments in which individuals on their own stood little chance. Group identity, however, requires differentiating one’s in-group from out-groups. Anthony Storr elaborates: “We define ourselves, psychologically as well as physically, by comparison and differentiation. Colour does not exist except in relation to another colour; personality has no meaning except in relation to other personalities.... The maintenance of human identity requires oppositions.”¹⁹ People are generally able to maintain peaceful relations within their in-group when an out-group exists upon whom aggression can be directed. But it is this division of human society into distinct social groupings combined with our attachment to ideas that accounts for the particular form of lethal aggression we call war. Fox combines these elements in observing that “the occasions for each particular will vary ... but ultimately ‘we’ fight ‘them’ because they are different, and their difference is threatening in its challenge to the validity of these ideas we live by. Thus, all wars are ideological wars.”²⁰

For Lorenz, Morris, Fox, and Storr, war results from this combination of an innate aggressive instinct, the ingenuity that produces artificial weapons, our capacity for conceptual thought, and the divisive consequences of social group formation. Our creativity and intelligence are simultaneously our greatest blessing and curse. The result is gloomy assessments about the fate of humankind. Although Lorenz tries to maintain a cautious optimism that human reason and culture may eventually prevail, he is usually drawn to more pessimistic conclusions: “An unprejudiced observer from another planet, looking upon man as he is today,

in his hand the atom bomb, the product of his intelligence, in his heart the aggressive drive inherited from his anthropoid ancestors, which this same intelligence cannot control, would not prophesy long life for the species.”²¹

Culture, Social Learning, and War

Those who believe that war is the inevitable result of human nature are fond of pointing to the frequency of war in human history. Using the figures cited at the beginning of this chapter, we can point to less than three hundred years of peace in the last fifty-six centuries. On the basis of such statistics, Robin Fox confidently asserts that “war has been a constant of human history.”²²

But what do we mean that war has been a *constant*? That every person, every society, and every nation is “constantly” at war? This is patently not the case. Even though war is constant in that at any given moment, one is probably going on somewhere in the world, this is not the same as saying that people and nations are constantly at war. Others look at the evidence and are struck by war’s rarity, not its constancy. In any given year, the vast majority of people and nations are at peace, not war. The majority of the world’s people has never fought in a war, has never killed anyone, and probably never will. Furthermore, few people will go to their graves considering their life diminished and incomplete if they have never engaged in warfare. Does this sound like aggression, lethal aggression, and war are an integral part of human nature? Could we say the same thing about other supposedly instinctual behaviors such as sex? No; thus many reject the empirical characterization of war as a constant feature of human existence. And if war is actually a rare event, then its inevitability and connection to human nature can be called into question.

Beyond the fact that war does not seem to be a constant, those who fall on the nurture side of the debate see several other major flaws in human nature explanations. First, the presence of peaceful societies contradicts the expectations of human nature theories. Second, when we look at the actual behavior of those who fight wars, there are reasons to believe that people may in fact possess a fundamental aversion to lethal aggression. Third, even if there is an individual instinct of aggression, this may have nothing to do with war. Finally, it is more compelling to view aggression, lethal aggression, and war as the result of social learning, cultural norms, conditioning, peer influence, and other environmental forces that shape our behavior.

Peaceful Societies

If a behavior is an inherent part of human nature, it seems reasonable that it would be universal—that is, evident across time and space in human existence. Again, sex provides a less controversial example. Almost every human being has sexual desires, and every human society that we know of has engaged in sexual behavior. Those groups that refrain, such as religious leaders or sects that take vows of celibacy, do not claim to be free of sexual impulses; they merely pledge to resist them. There are no examples of sexless human societies.

One piece of evidence that seems to contradict the notion that war is inherent in human nature is the presence of so-called **peaceful societies**. Anthropologists have identified contemporary and historical human societies that appear to have no experience with anything we would recognize as war, lacking even a word or concept for it. Commonly cited examples include the Copper Eskimo in Canada, the Polar Eskimo of Greenland, the King Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert in Africa, and the Hutterites and Zuni Indians in North America.²³ These are obviously societies of human beings, but they seem to have no war. In the modern world, there are also countries that have gone generations without any involvement in war, such as Sweden and Switzerland. If there is such a thing as human nature and human instincts, we can assume that people in these societies share them. Nonetheless, war does not seem to be part of their world. For many, this alone refutes the idea that war is the consequence of some essential, inherent human characteristic.

Studies of peaceful societies remain controversial. A few supposed examples, such as the Tasaday, a primitive society in the Philippines supposedly discovered in the 1970s, have been exposed as frauds. Most, though genuine, raise questions of interpretation. For example, does any act of violence by someone from one group against someone from another group constitute an act of war? When a group attacks another group for food or mates, are these raids or wars? These debates aside, there are certainly a few examples of human societies that appear to have been free of war. But many remain skeptical of their larger significance, pointing to both their rarity and very unusual characteristics. After emphasizing that only a handful of peaceful societies exist “in all the world and all history,” Joshua Goldstein observes that “these societies all exist at the fringes of ecological viability, in circumstances where small communities are scattered in a harsh environment with little contact with each other. These cases demonstrate the extremes to which one must go to find a society where war is absent.”²⁴ Still, their existence cannot be denied. Examining the evidence on peaceful societies, Lawrence Keeley concludes that “while it is not inevitable, war is universally common and usual.”²⁵ The fact that war does not seem to be inevitable is a theoretically significant finding, even if it does not offer much of a basis for practical hope.

peaceful societies Historical and contemporary human communities that do not engage in war or even have a concept for it. These rare examples are often used to counter the argument that human nature or instincts make war inevitable.

The Reluctance to Kill

An intriguing body of evidence that might help us assess the relative merits of the nature–nurture positions is studies of how people behave in battle, a subject often ignored by those interested in the causes of war. Do people in battle behave as innate aggression theories would lead us to expect? There are reasons for doubt. In fact, some argue that the evidence seems to point exactly in the opposite direction: people possess an instinctual aversion to lethal aggression.

There are surprisingly few systematic studies of how soldiers behave in battle, though anecdotal accounts are common. Before World War II, there were no such studies. To fill this gap, the U.S. Army decided that it needed to understand what soldiers did in combat in order to train them better. Under the direction of General S. L. A. Marshall, soldiers were asked what they did in combat. Their answers came as something of a shock. Marshall found that only 15 to 20 percent

of soldiers actually took part by firing their weapons at the enemy. The majority refrained, even in situations where their lives might be endangered. Although they did not run from battle, they would simply not fire their weapons or would do so in ways that posed little danger of actually killing anyone.²⁶ In recent years, Marshall's work has come under intense criticism, with some even questioning whether he really conducted the research on which his conclusions rest.²⁷ Despite these critiques, many continue to accept his findings, particularly because they seem consistent with other historical evidence of large amounts of ammunition fired resulting in comparatively few casualties. Epley cites an example from the American Civil War. Noting that since "muskets were capable of hitting a pie plate at 70 yards and soldiers could typically reload anywhere from 4 to 5 times per minute," a typical "regiment of 200 soldiers firing at a wall of enemy soldiers 100 feet wide should [have been] able to kill 120 on the first volley." But in reality, "the kill rate during the Civil War was closer to 1 to 2 men per minute, with the average distance of engagement being only 30 yards." These statistics suggest that "battles raged on for hours because the men just couldn't bring themselves to kill one another."²⁸ This has become known as the phenomenon of **nonfirers**, or the reluctance of soldiers to fire their weapons to kill the enemy.

nonfirers Soldiers who refuse to fire their weapons in battle (or deliberately try to avoid killing enemy soldiers). Those who reject instinctual theories of aggression and war often cite the frequency of this phenomenon.

How are we to interpret this evidence? For critics of the innate aggression thesis, this avoidance of lethal aggression hardly seems consistent with the notion that the violence of war is the consequence of some uncontrollable instinct. The fact that soldiers are even more reluctant to engage in lethal aggression when isolated from commanding officers and comrades suggests that social pressures are essential to get soldiers to do things that they would prefer not to do. What sort of instinct can this possibly be when social pressure is so important and when so many soldiers refuse to kill, even when their own lives are in danger?

Some have gone so far as to suggest that studies on nonfirers point in precisely the opposite direction. General Marshall himself concluded that "the average and healthy individual ... has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance towards killing a fellow man that he will not of his own volition take life if it is possible to turn away from the responsibility."²⁹ From these studies, the military learned that its training had been based on the faulty assumption that a soldier's fear of death was the major obstacle that the military needed to overcome. Marshall's study demonstrated that the real problem was countering the average soldier's reluctance to kill. And even after all the drills, training, indoctrination, social pressure, and threat of discipline, the military is not always successful in doing so. What kind of instinct is this when so much effort meets with so little success in eliciting the desired behavior?

War Is Violence, Not "Aggression"

One of the more powerful criticisms of the Lorenzian thesis begins with the seemingly odd assertion that war has nothing (or very little) to do with aggression in the first place. Ashley Montagu, perhaps the harshest critic of instinctual theories of

war, makes the startling argument that “the truth is—and this is perhaps the greatest paradox of all—motivationally, war represents one of the least aggressive forms of man’s behavior.”³⁰ This is an observation that takes some time to digest. How can the slaughter of millions on the battlefields of World War I represent one of the *least* aggressive forms of human behavior? There are two keys to understanding Montagu’s argument—his careful use of the word *motivationally* and the distinction between violence and aggression.

An analogy might help illuminate Montagu’s point. If asked why people eat, we might say that they do so to satisfy their hunger: Hunger provides the motivation for the behavior of eating. But does this mean that every time people eat, they are hungry? No. Hunger certainly motivates people to eat, but people often eat for reasons that have nothing to do with hunger, such as habit, social custom, or some psychological compulsion. Sometimes we eat lunch just because it is lunchtime. Other times, we might soothe depression with a pint of ice cream. Everyone eats at social functions such as wedding receptions, though it is unlikely they all happen to be hungry at the same time. Thus, even though hunger drives people to eat, we cannot assume that every act of eating is motivated by hunger.

Similarly, although aggression may lead to violence, we cannot assume that every act of violence is motivated by aggression. To use another analogy, a robber who shoots a bank teller refusing to hand over the cash is using violence to get something, not because of any internal desire or drive to violence. Had the teller handed over the cash, the shooting would not have taken place. The robber was motivated by greed, not aggression. This is sometimes referred to as **instrumental violence** to accomplish a particular objective. It is very different, for example, from someone who kills in an aroused state of anger in the midst of a heated argument. Although there is certainly some relationship between violence and aggression, they are not one and the same.

Montagu sees the violence of war much as we would the bank robber shooting the teller. War is the organized, planned use of violence by political units in pursuit of political, economic, or social objectives. People who make the decision to go to war are rarely participants themselves, and the soldiers who engage in the violence are picked out of their normal settings (often by force) and transported to distant battlefields. Montagu quotes French biologist Jean Rotund: “In war ... man is much more like a sheep than a wolf. War is servility ... but not aggressiveness.” The soldier’s behavior “is not instinctively but state-directed toward the enemy.”³¹

Montagu’s argument is clever and formidable. Even if one concedes almost all of Lorenz’s major points, Montagu’s basic position still stands. Even if people do have instincts, and even if aggression is one of them, this does not necessarily bring us any closer to understanding war. Theories of human aggression only help us understand war if war is aggression. It is the linkage between war and aggression that Montagu rejects, which makes theories of aggression interesting but largely irrelevant. For Montagu, war has as much, or as little, to do with aggressive instincts as gluttonous Roman feasts, where people stuffed their faces for hours and days on end, had to do with their hunger.

Instrumental violence

Violence used in pursuit of some identifiable objective.



Basic training at Parris Island, North Carolina, designed to turn civilians into soldiers. The transformation is as much psychological as physical.

Source: Andrew Lichtenstein/The Image Works

Social Learning and Conditioning

Human nature, by definition, is constant. War, on the other hand, is variable. Some periods in history reveal more frequent and intense wars than others: The first half of the twentieth century was much bloodier than the last half of the nineteenth century. By some accounts, the last several decades have been among the least violent in all of human history. Certain countries and societies have been extremely warlike in the past but are relatively pacific today: The Swedes, for example, used to be fierce warriors. Within societies, some groups are less warlike than others: The Amish refused to fight in World War II, even though almost all other citizens participated enthusiastically. Whenever we see behavior that varies over time, across societies, and even within societies, we are dealing with something that has a significant social or cultural component. The variability of war across and within societies and cultures leads anthropologist Margaret Mead to conclude that warfare “is an invention like any of the inventions in terms of which we order our lives, such as writing, marriage, cooking our food instead of eating it raw, trial by jury, or burial of the dead, and so on.”³² If war is an invention, it can be “uninvented”; if it is learned, it can be unlearned.

When we say that war is a learned behavior, we do not mean in the narrow sense of classroom instruction. *Learning* refers to the complex process by which people are socialized—that is, how they decide what behaviors are acceptable in

what settings. People learn in a variety of ways. One mechanism is observation and imitation. As children grow in any culture, they see how others behave in certain situations and they are likely to behave likewise in similar settings. People also learn through a process of **stimulus and response** based on consequences. If people are rewarded for a behavior, they are more likely to engage in it; if people are punished, they are inclined not to repeat it. Rewards and punishments need not be financial; they can also include praise, prestige, adulation, criticism, denigration, and social ostracism. To use a common example, no instinct leads most kids to dress alike, but they inevitably follow the same trends and fads. Why? Because they fear the social punishments and value the social rewards that result from various forms of dress. These processes of socialization that shape our behavior are so pervasive and subtle that people are usually not even conscious of what is going on.

There are many potential forms and manifestations of aggression. All cultures have norms and rules regarding what types of aggression are acceptable. Almost nobody believes that it is permissible to beat up a cashier who gives you the wrong change or kill someone who cuts you off on the highway. These are forms of aggression that our society rejects and punishes. As a result, they are also extremely rare. But if the government sends you a draft notice, cuts your hair, puts you in uniform, and sends you thousands of miles away to kill people that you have never met, you are praised. If you are very good at it, you may even get medals. Richard Barnet put his finger on the irony that "Individuals get medals, promotions, and honors for committing the same acts for the state for which they would be imprisoned in any other circumstance."³³ Even if there is some instinctual basis for aggression, the forms that this aggression will take and the contexts in which it is deemed acceptable are shaped by our culture. These sorts of distinctions are culturally, not biologically, determined.

Many also see a connection between a culture's treatment of aggression and violence in general and war. In this context, it is interesting to look at the subtle and not-so-subtle messages that Western culture conveys about violence. War films provide an obvious example. At any time of day, we can watch films that portray the mass slaughter of people in war in positive and heroic terms. Such films are not relegated to late-night viewing accompanied with warnings about mature content. David Grossman emphasizes in graphic terms society's disparate treatment of violence and sex by pointing out that "in video stores the horror section repeatedly displays bare breasts (often with blood running down them), gaping eye sockets, and mutilated bodies. Movies rated X with tamer covers are generally not available in many video stores and, if they are, are in separate adults-only rooms. But horror videos are displayed for every child to see." The implicit lesson is that "breasts are taboo if they are on a live woman, but permissible on a mutilated corpse."³⁴

What message does this send about acceptable and unacceptable behavior? Why is boxing, in which two men (and now women as well) beat each other up, considered a "sport" that can be seen on television at any time of day, but certain types of nudity remain forbidden? Why do people automatically become tempting presidential candidates because they successfully fought a war, not because they avoided one? These examples can be multiplied many times over. What is the cumulative effect of these images, messages, and practices over the course of a lifetime?

stimulus and response Used in social learning theory to indicate that human behavior is shaped by social stimuli—that is, people engage in those behaviors for which they receive social rewards and refrain from behaviors that bring social punishment.

Although images and messages conducive to war are prevalent even in times of peace, in times of war, they become dominant in the form of propaganda. How war propaganda portrays the enemy is particularly significant. In his study *Faces of the Enemy*, Sam Keen demonstrates that societies at war tend to use very similar visual and rhetorical imagery to portray the enemy as less than human.³⁵ Whether the picture is a savage brute or, at the most extreme, the depiction of the enemy as an animal or vermin, the prevalence of such imagery, and perhaps the need for it, might tell us something. The process of constructing enemy images has been characterized as **dehumanization** or **pseudo-specification**, which is the tendency to view members of our own species as if they are not members of our species—that is, to falsely (hence *pseudo*) divide the human race into different species.³⁶ Keen and others argue that the process of dehumanization is an almost necessary component of war because “as a rule, human beings do not kill other human beings. Before we enter into warfare or genocide, we must first ‘dehumanize’ those we mean to eliminate.... The hostile imagination systematically destroys our natural tendency to identify with others of our species.... The purpose of propaganda is to paralyze thought ... and to condition individuals to act as a mass.”³⁷ This dehumanization is particularly important for soldiers who have to do the actual fighting and killing. As Richard Holmes, who taught at Sandhurst, Britain’s equivalent of West Point, explains, “The legitimate need to defuse deep-seated cultural and psychological taboos against killing is an inseparable part of military training.” Part of this “defusing” of taboos is the “almost obligatory dehumanisation of the enemy.”³⁸ William Broyles, an author and veteran of the Vietnam War, pointed out that the soldier’s greatest weapon was not his rifle, but rather his idea of the enemy.³⁹

The ubiquity of dehumanization in war is both depressing and grounds for hope. It is depressing in the sense that we are able with such ease to create and accept images of other people as less human than ourselves. On another level, however, the fact that we do this suggests that people may indeed have a resistance to killing other people whom they recognize as like themselves. If we were able to kill other human beings on a grand scale while viewing them as being on a par with ourselves, this would be even more troubling. This process of dehumanization also suggests the importance of culture and socialization for understanding war. It is obvious that inhibitions against killing, the social “taboos” that Holmes refers to, can be created. The fact that efforts need to be taken to overcome these taboos suggests there is nothing natural or inevitable about it. The images and ways of thinking that allow or encourage people to do the killing that is part of war are social and cultural artifacts. There is nothing inevitable or biologically instinctual about them. Part of the answer to the problem of war, then, is how we make the taboos against killing stronger while refraining from actions to defuse them. If we can consciously defuse these taboos, we can also reinforce them.

Are People Peaceful?

If people are not by nature aggressive and warlike, does this mean that we are by nature peaceful? Most alternatives to instinctual theories of aggression do not make this leap. It does not automatically follow that a negative view of human nature

needs to be replaced with a positive one. Logically, one can also claim that people have no "nature" at all—that is, we are not naturally good or bad, moral or immoral, rational or irrational, peaceful or warlike. Exactly where social learning theorists come down on this question is often unclear. When David Grossman refers to the difficulties of overcoming people's fundamental resistance to killing, he does appear to suggest the existence of an innate peaceful disposition. Similarly, in pointing to the essential role played by dehumanizing rhetoric and propaganda, Keen also seems to lean in this direction because he suggests that people would be much less inclined to kill other people if they recognized them for what they are—other people. If ethological theories of instinctual aggression lent support to conservatism and realism, these approaches would appear more in line with liberalism's optimistic view of human nature.

Most social learning theories, however, reject the very notion that we can identify a "human nature" independent of social circumstances. There are no (or almost no) human behaviors that are not socially derived. It is not a matter of social forces or pressures reinforcing or defusing preexisting drives, but rather of creating them in the first place. Skepticism about the utility of the concept of human nature is a characteristic of Marxist, feminist, and (obviously) constructivist approaches. These approaches may differ in terms of which social forces are viewed as most important in shaping human behavior. For Marxists, it is the underlying economic forces that drive behavior, whereas for feminists, it is beliefs about gender roles and gendered social and political institutions. From these perspectives, debates about the relationship between war and human nature are pointless and distracting.



"Death to the Fascist Beast" proclaims a Soviet poster from World War II. The enemy, of course, is not another human being but a snake. Who mourns the death of a snake? Such dehumanization of the enemy is a common feature of war propaganda.

Source: Laski Diffusion/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Conclusion

Within this debate about whether war is a biological, instinctual phenomenon or a cultural and social invention, there is actually more common ground than might be assumed. We can see the point of convergence in Robin Fox's admission that war, as an institutional form of aggression, does *not* follow directly from what he sees as the basic instinctual drive. In order to make the link between the supposed instinct of aggression and war, Lorenz, Fox, and Morris are compelled to add cultural and social factors. The causal arrow is not a direct one. A similar position has been

articulated more recently by Harvard psychologist Stephen Pinker in his best-selling book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*.⁴⁰ Noting the “ubiquity of aggression among primates and...the universality of violence in human societies,” he concedes that “the evidence for innate aggressive tendencies is plentiful enough.” Pinker nonetheless remains hopeful because “human nature is not a single trait or urge but a complex system comprising many parts, including several mechanisms that cause violence and several mechanisms that inhibit it.” And there is no reason that the violent mechanisms must inevitably win out. Human reason and culture can alter the equation in favor of “the better angels of our nature.... Just as our species has applied its cognitive powers to ward off the scourges of pestilence and famine,” Pinker thinks that “it can apply them to manage the scourge of war” because although “the spoils of war are always tempting, sooner or later people are bound to realize that victors and losers tend to change places in the long run, and so, everyone would be better off if somehow everyone could simultaneously agree to lay down their arms.”⁴¹

In Pinker’s formulation, the existence of instinctual aggression need not lead to despair. Similarly, viewing war as a learned behavior need not lead to optimism if the practical obstacles to unlearning war are insurmountable. Tiger and Fox seem to be leaning in this direction when they ask: “If we are not by nature violent creatures, why do we seem to inevitably create situations that lead to violence?” After recognizing that a substantial element of learning and social conditioning goes into war, they conclude that “we are creatures who are by nature *easily* aroused to violence, we *easily* learn it, and we are wired to create situations in which the arousal and learning readily take place and in which violence becomes a necessity [emphasis added].”⁴² When Tiger and Fox look at the world, they are amazed by how little it takes to get people to fight and kill. The ease with which they think this is done indicates to them that it strikes a chord with a deep and fundamental part of our being.

Others are struck by how difficult it is to get people to kill: a lifetime of socialization into a culture of violence, social pressure, and government compulsion to get soldiers to serve, and a continual dehumanization of the enemy. According to Sam Keen, “*Homo hostilis* must be created by the media and the institutions that subject him to a constant indoctrination by way of hero stories, ideology, rationalizations, tribal myths, rites of passage, and icons of the enemy ... The entire institutional and symbolic apparatus of society is necessary” to get people to engage in war. And even after all this, “the effort is successful for only a small minority.” Rather than being easy, Keen thinks that “it is so *difficult* to mold us into killers [emphasis added].”⁴³

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The nature–nurture debate is one that appears in some guise in virtually all social sciences. At issue is which behaviors are best understood as reflections of basic and unalterable aspects of human nature or instincts, as opposed to cultural conditioning and socialization. Whether the persistence of war can be explained by some element of human nature is only one specific manifestation of this more general debate.
- A “nature” or instinctual explanation for war often begins with the assumption that the persistence of such an irrational and destructive behavior must be rooted in some uncontrollable drive.
- The ethologist Konrad Lorenz claimed that human beings possess an aggressive instinct, just like virtually every animal. For animals, this instinct is “adaptive” because it helps preserve, protect, and perpetuate species.
- Lorenz divided the animal kingdom into two categories—lethal and nonlethal creatures. In the case of nonlethal animals, there is no danger that aggression will become lethal aggression. Hamsters do not kill each other because they cannot. Although lethal animals can kill members of their species, over the course of evolution, they tend to develop inhibiting mechanisms that prevent them from doing so.
- The problem is that humans are essentially nonlethal animals who have become lethal because of the technology afforded by our intellectual evolution. Humans can now kill their own kind with great efficiency, and often at great distances. This adaptation has happened so quickly, however, that inhibiting mechanisms have not emerged to prevent humans from killing members of their own species.
- When we add the basic human need for social belonging and identity to this aggressive instinct and weapons, the result is war.
- The proposition that war is an inevitable reflection of human nature or instincts can be criticized in several ways. The existence of peaceful societies and others that can go for very long periods without war suggest that war is not an integral feature of human existence. The lengths to which societies and governments must go to get soldiers to engage in war seems to undermine the instinctual argument. Finally, some theorists question whether it even makes sense to view war as aggression. Perhaps war is better viewed as instrumental, socially organized violence that has little or nothing to do with individual aggression.
- Instead of viewing war as rooted in human nature or instincts, it can also be viewed as a cultural or social practice shaped and reinforced in countless and often subtle ways as people are bombarded with messages, lessons, images, and ideas about violence and war.
- Perhaps a better approach is to understand war as result of instincts *and* learning. In this view, aspects of human nature certainly can lead to war, but they do not do so on their own. It is a matter of whether those elements of human nature that contribute to war are reinforced or discouraged by learning and socialization.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. People often assume that instinctual theories are pessimistic and learning theories optimistic about the future of war. Neither assumption, however, is always true. Why not?
2. Assuming that war is a learned behavior, how is it “learned”?
3. Why might it be best to view war as the result of both instinctual and learned behaviors?
4. What does the phenomenon of pseudo-specification tell about the instinctual basis of war?
5. Why is the distinction between aggression and violence potentially critical for understanding the causes of war?

KEY TERMS

appeasement
gesture, 111
dehumanization, 120
disequilibrium, 112

ethologists, 108
evolutionary lag, 112
hierarchy, 110
instinct, 109

instrumental violence, 117
Konrad Lorenz, 109
nature versus nurture, 108
nonfirers, 116

peaceful societies, 115
pseudo-specification, 120
spacing, 110
stimulus and response, 119

FURTHER READINGS

The classic statement of the instinctual aggression thesis is Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963). The major critique of this position is Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). The classic statement of the social/cultural perspective is Margaret Mead, “Warfare Is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity,” *Asia* 40 (1940): 402–405. A more recent example of this position is David Grossman, *On Killing* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995). Another interesting

perspective on this debate is found in Joanna Burke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). And Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Henry A. Holt, 1998) tries to integrate and transcend the nature–nurture divide. Stephen Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012) is a must-read for anyone interested in where the debate about war and human nature stands today.

WAR AND HUMAN NATURE ON THE WEB

www.culture-of-peace.info

An organization dedicated to creating a “culture of peace” to replace the “culture of war.” The group’s perspective in terms of the issues discussed in this chapter goes without saying.

www.seedsofpeace.org

An organization dedicated to promoting peace by teaching children to “develop trust and empathy for another.” The underlying assumption guiding the organization’s mission obviously places it on the “nurture” side of the debate over war and human nature.

www.globalissues.org/HumanRights/Media/Military.asp

Discusses and illustrates media coverage of war issues, as well as propaganda.

www.visionofhumanity.org

An interactive website on levels of global violence in its various manifestations.

www.classroomtools.com/faces2.htm

Contains some good examples of the dehumanizing propaganda that is often part and parcel of modern war.

NOTES

¹Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), introduction, n.p.

²These are the conclusions of Norman Cousins, cited in Francis Beer, *Peace Against War* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1981), p. 20.

³Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 58.

⁴Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971); and Robert Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative* (New York: Atheneum, 1966).

⁵Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963).

⁶Ibid., p. 237.

⁷James A. Schellenberg, *The Science of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 32; Morris, *Naked Ape*, pp. 149, 159.

⁸Morris, *Naked Ape*, p. 156.

⁹Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁰Lorenz, *On Aggression*, p. 241.

¹¹Ibid., p. 241.

¹²Ibid., p. 242.

- ¹³Nicholas Epley, "The Psychology of Hate: How we deny human beings their humanity." *Salon*, March 3, 2014. Accessed on June 2, 2014, at: www.salon.com/2014/03/02/the_psychology_of_hate_how_we_deny_human_beings_their_humanity/.
- ¹⁴Robin Fox, "Fatal Attraction: War and Human Nature," *The National Interest* (Winter 1992/1993), p. 15.
- ¹⁵Tiger and Fox, *Imperial Animal*, p. 212.
- ¹⁶Fox, "Fatal Attraction," p. 17.
- ¹⁷Lorenz, *On Aggression*, p. 238.
- ¹⁸Morris, *Naked Ape*, p. 176.
- ¹⁹Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 57.
- ²⁰Fox, "Fatal Attraction," p. 16.
- ²¹Lorenz, *On Aggression*, p. 49.
- ²²Fox, "Human Attraction," p. 13.
- ²³David Fabro, "Peaceful Societies," in *The War System: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Richard Falk and Samuel Kim (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1980), pp. 180–203; Lawrence Keeley, *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 27–32.
- ²⁴Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 32–33.
- ²⁵Keeley, *War Before Civilization*, p. 32.
- ²⁶See S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (New York: Morrow, 1967). The implications of this study are addressed by David Grossman, *On Killing* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), pp. 15–16, 29–30; Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1986), p. 178; and Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: Free Press, 1985), pp. 325–327.

²⁷See Roger J. Spiller, "S. L. A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire," *RUSI Journal* (Winter 1988), pp. 63–71.

²⁸Epley, "The Psychology of Hate."

²⁹Quoted in Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 29.

³⁰Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 273.

³¹Ibid., p. 272.

³²Margaret Mead, "Warfare Is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity," in *War*, ed. Leon Bramson and George Goethals (New York: Basic Books, 1964), p. 270.

³³Richard Barnet, *Roots of War* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 13.

³⁴Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 310.

³⁵Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*, p. 25.

³⁶See David Barash and Judith Eve Lipton, *The Caveman and the Bomb* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), pp. 139–140.

³⁷This dehumanization is particularly common and easy to achieve with enemies of other races.

³⁸Holmes, *Acts of War*, p. 366.

³⁹From the documentary video by Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*, produced in 1987 and based on the previously cited book.

⁴⁰Stephen Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁴¹Stephen Pinker (2013), "The Decline of War and Conceptions of Human Nature," *International Studies Review*. 3(15), 404–405.

⁴²Tiger and Fox, *Imperial Animal*, p. 208.

⁴³Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*, p. 178.

Are People (or Men) “Hard-Wired” for War?

The relationship between war and human nature is one of those abstract and theoretical topics that people rarely talk about explicitly. Assumptions about human nature are more likely to remain implicit in most discussions of war and peace. Occasionally, however, those who reject or endorse the notion of a link between innate human aggressiveness and war feel compelled to restate their position. One of the more powerful and succinct attempts to refute the instinctual theory of violence and war in recent decades is the Seville Statement on Violence. Drafted in 1986 by a group of natural and social scientists, the statement was subsequently adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an official expression of its position on war and violence. This statement, included here, clearly reflects the view that war is a culturally learned and conditioned practice. Yet there are those who remain convinced that some connection must exist between aggressive instincts and war, though the exact nature of the connection is sometimes unclear. E. O. Wilson, one of the world's most well known and respected biologists, disagrees, emphasizing what he characterizes as our “bloody nature.” In many respects, these two documents reflect many of the basic positions presented in this chapter. Wilson adds some additional elements to his analysis. To what extent do they reflect the familiar arguments in the nature-nurture debate, and in what ways do they move beyond the traditional positions?

PERSPECTIVE 1

Seville Statement on Violence, Spain, 1986

Subsequently Adopted by UNESCO at the Twenty-fifth Session of the General Conference on November 16, 1989¹



Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognizing that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of the Spanish UNESCO; we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following Statement on Violence. In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological

¹ Source: Seville Statement on Violence, 1986 (subsequently adopted by the General Conference during its 25th session, 17 October–16 November 1989), © UNESCO 1986.

findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war. Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these misstatements can contribute significantly to the International Year of Peace.

Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism, and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organized groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intraspecies violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals. [....]

IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior. In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to co-operate and to fulfill social functions relevant to the structure of that group. "Dominance" involves social bondings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does involve aggressive behaviors. Where genetic selection for aggressive behavior has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally-created hyper-aggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that humans have a "violent brain." While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that war is caused by "instinct" or any single motivation. The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of cognitive factors. Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism, social skills such as language, and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this

exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as “wars begin in the minds of men,” peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

Seville, 16 May 1986

David Adams, Psychology, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, U.S.A.

S.A. Barnett, Ethology, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

N.P. Bechtereva, Neurophysiology, Institute for Experimental Medicine of Academy of Medical Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

Bonnie Frank Carter, Psychology, Albert Einstein Medical Center, Philadelphia (PA), U.S.A.

José M. Rodriguez Delgado, Neurophysiology, Centro de Estudios Neurobiológicos, Madrid, Spain

José Luis Diaz, Ethology, Instituto Mexicano de Psiquiatría, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Andrzej Eliasz, Individual Differences Psychology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland, Santiago Genovés, Biological Anthropology, Instituto de Estudios Antropológicos, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Benson E. Ginsburg, Behavior Genetics, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, U.S.A.

Jo Groebel, Social Psychology, Erziehungswissenschaftliche Hochschule, Landau, Federal Republic of Germany

Samir-Kumar Ghosh, Sociology, Indian Institute of Human Sciences, Calcutta, India

Robert Hinde, Animal Behavior, Cambridge University, Cambridge, U.K.

Richard E. Leakey, Physical Anthropology, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

Taha H. Malasi, Psychiatry, Kuwait University, Kuwait

J. Martin Ramirez, Psychobiology, Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Biochemistry, Universidad Autónoma, Madrid, Spain

Diana L. Mendoza, Ethology, Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

Ashis Nandy, Political Psychology, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India

John Paul Scott, Animal Behavior, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, U.S.A.

Riitta Wahlstrom, Psychology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

PERSPECTIVE 2

Is War Inevitable? (2012)

Edward O. Wilson²



“History is a bath of blood,” wrote William James, whose 1906 antiwar essay is arguably the best ever written on the subject. “Modern man inherits all the innate pugnacity and all the love of glory of his ancestors. Showing war’s irrationality and horror is of no effect on him. The horrors make the fascination. War is the strong

²Source: E. O. Wilson, “Is War inevitable?” *Discover Magazine*, June 12, 2012. Reprinted by permission of the author.

life; it is life in extremis; war taxes are the only ones men never hesitate to pay, as the budgets of all nations show us."

Our bloody nature, it can now be argued in the context of modern biology, is ingrained because group-versus-group competition was a principal driving force that made us what we are. In prehistory, group selection (that is, the competition between tribes instead of between individuals) lifted the hominids that became territorial carnivores to heights of solidarity, to genius, to enterprise—and to fear. Each tribe knew with justification that if it was not armed and ready, its very existence was imperiled. Throughout history, the escalation of a large part of technology has had combat as its central purpose. Today the calendars of nations are punctuated by holidays to celebrate wars won and to perform memorial services for those who died waging them. Public support is best fired up by appeal to the emotions of deadly combat, over which the amygdala—a center for primary emotion in the brain—is grandmaster. We find ourselves in the "battle" to stem an oil spill, the "fight" to tame inflation, the "war" against cancer. Wherever there is an enemy, animate or inanimate, there must be a victory. You must prevail at the front, no matter how high the cost at home.

Any excuse for a real war will do, so long as it is seen as necessary to protect the tribe. The remembrance of past horrors has no effect. From April to June in 1994, killers from the Hutu majority in Rwanda set out to exterminate the Tutsi minority, which at that time ruled the country. In a hundred days of unrestrained slaughter by knife and gun, 800,000 people died, mostly Tutsi. The total Rwandan population was reduced by 10 percent. When a halt was finally called, 2 million Hutu fled the country, fearing retribution. The immediate causes for the bloodbath were political and social grievances, but they all stemmed from one root cause: Rwanda was the most overcrowded country in Africa. For a relentlessly growing population, the per capita arable land was shrinking toward its limit. The deadly argument was over which tribe would own and control the whole of it.

Once a group has been split off from other groups and sufficiently dehumanized, any brutality can be justified, at any level, and at any size of the victimized group up to and including race and nation. And so it has ever been. A familiar fable is told to symbolize this pitiless dark angel of human nature. A scorpion asks a frog to ferry it across a stream. The frog at first refuses, saying that it fears the scorpion will sting it. The scorpion assures the frog it will do no such thing. After all, it says, we will both perish if I sting you. The frog consents, and halfway across the stream, the scorpion stings it. Why did you do that, the frog asks as they both sink beneath the surface. It is my nature, the scorpion explains.

War, often accompanied by genocide, is not a cultural artifact of just a few societies. Nor has it been an aberration of history, a result of the growing pains of our species' maturation. Wars and genocide have been universal and eternal, respecting no particular time or culture. Archaeological sites are strewn with the evidence of mass conflicts and burials of massacred people. Tools from the earliest Neolithic period, about 10,000 years ago, include instruments clearly designed for fighting. One might think that the influence of pacific Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, has been consistent in opposing violence. Such is not the case. Whenever Buddhism dominated and became the official ideology, war was tolerated

and even pressed as part of faith-based state policy. The rationale is simple, and has its mirror image in Christianity: Peace, nonviolence, and brotherly love are core values, but a threat to Buddhist law and civilization is an evil that must be defeated.

Since the end of World War II, violent conflict between states has declined drastically, owing in part to the nuclear standoff of the major powers (two scorpions in a bottle writ large). But civil wars, insurgencies, and state-sponsored terrorism continue unabated. Overall, big wars have been replaced around the world by small wars of the kind and magnitude more typical of hunter-gatherer and primitively agricultural societies. Civilized societies have tried to eliminate torture, execution, and the murder of civilians, but those fighting little wars do not comply.

Archaeologists have determined that after populations of *Homo sapiens* began to spread out of Africa approximately 60,000 years ago, the first wave reached as far as New Guinea and Australia. The descendants of the pioneers remained as hunter-gatherers or at most primitive agriculturalists, until reached by Europeans. Living populations of similar early provenance and archaic cultures are the aborigines of Little Andaman Island off the east coast of India, the Mbuti Pygmies of Central Africa, and the !Kung Bushmen of southern Africa. All today, or at least within historical memory, have exhibited aggressive territorial behavior.

Tribal aggressiveness goes back well beyond Neolithic times, but no one as yet can say exactly how far. It could have begun at the time of *Homo habilis*, the earliest known species of the genus *Homo*, which arose between 3 million and 2 million years ago in Africa. Along with a larger brain, those first members of our genus developed a heavy dependence on scavenging or hunting for meat. And there is a good chance that it could be a much older heritage, dating beyond the split 6 million years ago between the lines leading to modern chimpanzees and to humans.

A series of researchers, starting with Jane Goodall, have documented the murders within chimpanzee groups and lethal raids conducted between groups. It turns out that chimpanzees and human hunter-gatherers and primitive farmers have about the same rates of death due to violent attacks within and between groups. But nonlethal violence is far higher in the chimps, occurring between a hundred and possibly a thousand times more often than in humans.

The patterns of collective violence in which young chimp males engage are remarkably similar to those of young human males. Aside from constantly vying for status, both for themselves and for their gangs, they tend to avoid open mass confrontations with rival troops, instead relying on surprise attacks. The purpose of raids made by the male gangs on neighboring communities is evidently to kill or drive out their members and acquire new territory. There is no certain way to decide on the basis of existing knowledge whether chimpanzees and humans inherited their pattern of territorial aggression from a common ancestor or whether they evolved it independently in response to parallel pressures of natural selection and opportunities encountered in the African homeland. From the remarkable similarity in behavioral detail between the two species, however, and if we use the fewest assumptions required to explain it, a common ancestry seems the more likely choice.

The principles of population ecology allow us to explore more deeply the roots of mankind's tribal instinct. Population growth is exponential. When each individual in a population is replaced in every succeeding generation by more than one—even by a very slight fraction more, say 1.01—the population grows faster and faster, in the manner of a savings account or debt. A population of chimpanzees or humans is always prone to grow exponentially when resources are abundant, but after a few generations even in the best of times it is forced to slow down. Something begins to intervene, and in time the population reaches its peak, then remains steady, or else oscillates up and down. Occasionally it crashes, and the species becomes locally extinct.

What is the “something”? It can be anything in nature that moves up or down in effectiveness with the size of the population. Wolves, for example, are the limiting factor for the population of elk and moose they kill and eat. As the wolves multiply, the populations of elk and moose stop growing or decline. In parallel manner, the quantity of elk and moose are the limiting factor for the wolves: When the predator population runs low on food, in this case elk and moose, its population falls. In other instances, the same relation holds for disease organisms and the hosts they infect. As the host population increases, and the populations grow larger and denser, the parasite population increases with it. In history diseases have often swept through the land until the host populations decline enough or a sufficient percentage of its members acquire immunity.

There is another principle at work: Limiting factors work in hierarchies. Suppose that the primary limiting factor is removed for elk by humans' killing the wolves. As a result the elk and moose grow more numerous, until the next factor kicks in. The factor may be that herbivores overgraze their range and run short of food. Another limiting factor is emigration, where individuals have a better chance to survive if they leave and go someplace else. Emigration due to population pressure is a highly developed instinct in lemmings, plague locusts, monarch butterflies, and wolves. If such populations are prevented from emigrating, the populations might again increase in size, but then some other limiting factor manifests itself. For many kinds of animals, the factor is the defense of territory, which protects the food supply for the territory owner. Lions roar, wolves howl, and birds sing in order to announce that they are in their territories and desire competing members of the same species to stay away.

Humans and chimpanzees are intensely territorial. That is the apparent population control hardwired into their social systems. What the events were that occurred in the origin of the chimpanzee and human lines—before the chimpanzee-human split of 6 million years ago—can only be speculated. I believe that the evidence best fits the following sequence. The original limiting factor, which intensified with the introduction of group hunting for animal protein, was food. Territorial behavior evolved as a device to sequester the food supply. Expansive wars and annexation resulted in enlarged territories and favored genes that prescribe group cohesion, networking, and the formation of alliances.

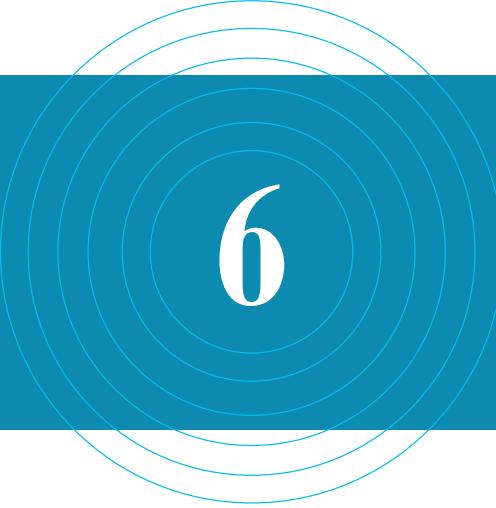
For hundreds of millennia, the territorial imperative gave stability to the small, scattered communities of *Homo sapiens*, just as they do today in the small, scattered populations of surviving hunter-gatherers. During this long period, randomly

spaced extremes in the environment alternately increased and decreased the population size so that it could be contained within territories. These demographic shocks led to forced emigration or aggressive expansion of territory size by conquest, or both together. They also raised the value of forming alliances outside of kin-based networks in order to subdue other neighboring groups.

Ten thousand years ago, at the dawn of the Neolithic era, the agricultural revolution began to yield vastly larger amounts of food from cultivated crops and livestock, allowing rapid growth in human populations. But that advance did not change human nature. People simply increased their numbers as fast as the rich new resources allowed. As food again inevitably became the limiting factor, they obeyed the territorial imperative. Their descendants have never changed. At the present time, we are still fundamentally the same as our hunter-gatherer ancestors, but with more food and larger territories. Region by region, recent studies show, the populations have approached a limit set by the supply of food and water. And so it has always been for every tribe, except for the brief periods after new lands were discovered and their indigenous inhabitants displaced or killed.

The struggle to control vital resources continues globally, and it is growing worse. The problem arose because humanity failed to seize the great opportunity given it at the dawn of the Neolithic era. It might then have halted population growth below the constraining minimum limit. As a species we did the opposite, however. There was no way for us to foresee the consequences of our initial success. We simply took what was given us and continued to multiply and consume in blind obedience to instincts inherited from our humbler, more brutally constrained Paleolithic ancestors.

Excerpted from *The Social Conquest of Earth*, by Edward O. Wilson, published in April by Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright © 2012.



6

Free Trade

Key Controversy: Does Free Trade Benefit All?

A basic principle of the post–World War II global economic order, free trade has been part of a liberal prescription for international relations for almost two hundred years. Free trade is seen as desirable because it allows consumers to buy what they need and want for the lowest price, regardless of where in the world it is produced. Free trade serves the interests of consumers (and everyone is a consumer) while promoting economic efficiency. Just as nations practice free trade within their borders, they should practice free trade across their borders. Critics reply that there are times when, and very good reasons why, nations might not want to pursue free trade. Marxists and feminists (and even many liberals) fear the impact of free trade on economically vulnerable segments of society. Even if free trade does promote economic efficiency, there may occasionally be other social considerations and values that take precedence. Realists, who tend to think about international economics in terms of national security, worry about becoming dependent on other nations for essential commodities. These intellectual conflicts are likely to fuel political conflicts over trade for some time to come. ■

It has been just a little over two decades since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in January 1994. Greatly reducing trade barriers between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, it was one of the most widely and intensely debated pieces of trade legislation in U.S. history. The arguments at the time were familiar to anyone with knowledge of the intellectual history of free trade. Opponents worried about the fate of workers and industries that would face intense new competition, particularly from Mexico. The former and future independent presidential candidate Ross Perot, in a famous televised debate on the treaty with Vice President Al Gore in 1993, predicted there would be a “giant sucking sound” as U.S. jobs were drawn south of the border, where wages were lower and regulation less onerous. Proponents dismissed these fears, claiming that increased trade and economic growth would be a boon to all three countries.

Twenty years later, both sides think they were right: “Labor unions and other critics of NAFTA say that the deal pushed American manufacturing operations overseas and has cost hundreds of thousands of jobs,” while “the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business interests say the pact led to booming trade and commercial activity in North America.”¹

The fears expressed and promises made regarding NAFTA had been heard many times before, in trade debates stretching back to the middle of the nineteenth century. And more than two decades after NAFTA, they are once again being heard as President Barack Obama, with the support of many Republicans and business leaders, is trying to reach new trade agreements with Pacific Rim countries that are modeled on NAFTA. Potentially involving as many as 14 nations from Chile to Australia to Japan, the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement could dwarf NAFTA in size and economic significance. The Congressional Research Service notes that “if enacted, the TPP would eliminate 11,000 tariff lines among the parties.”² Although it has yet to attract the same level of public attention as NAFTA, supporters and opponents of TPP are relying on many of the same arguments. Opponents warn of dire consequences for workers and rising inequality, whereas supporters promise more trade and economic growth that will bring new jobs and greater prosperity. Whatever the specifics of such agreements, anxiety about trade is likely to remain a feature of the economic and political landscape in the United States and elsewhere. Thus, it is important that we understand the history of free trade in practice and theory, particularly the arguments for and against it.

Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO)

The post-World War II international economic order embodying the traditional liberal preference for free and open trade as a means of promoting economic efficiency and prosperity.

World Bank Originally the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now one of the major institutions of the post-World War II international economic order. Its initial function of providing aid in the rebuilding of societies destroyed by the war has been replaced with a more controversial focus: namely, aiding and assisting the world’s developing nations.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

One of the critical institutions of the post-World War II Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO). Initially intended to help nations deal with balance of payments deficits, since the 1960s, it has played an increasing and controversial role in assisting developing nations.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) A world organization of nations created in 1947 for the purpose of reducing tariffs and other obstacles to international trade. Resulted in a series of meetings and agreements in subsequent decades (the so-called GATT Rounds) that reduced tariffs. Replaced in 1995 with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Liberal International Economic Order

How, when, and why did free trade become so central to the global economy? In general terms, the main outlines and institutions of the current global economy were established after World War II under the leadership of the United States, which emerged from the war as the world’s dominant military and economic power. The global economy it created was shaped by the recent historical experience of war and depression, U.S. economic interests, and a commitment to liberal economic theory. The system became known as the **Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO)**, the cornerstone of which is the principle of free and open trade. As Stephen Krasner explains, “The fundamental objective of American foreign economic policy after the Second World War was to establish a regime in which the impediments to the movement of capital and goods were minimized.”³

In formal terms, several institutions were designed to help create and sustain a liberal international order. The **World Bank**, officially known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** were established in 1944. The World Bank is a global lending agency whose initial purpose was, as its official name suggests, to assist postwar reconstruction. The IMF’s major function was to provide short-term assistance to nations with balance of payments difficulties. The final element of the postwar liberal order was the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**. Created in 1947, GATT was the most important institution for international trade, whose fundamental mission was the

reduction of international tariffs (taxes on goods imported from other countries) to the lowest possible level. After 1947, there was a series of negotiations (known as GATT *rounds*) to reduce tariffs. Today, largely as a result of these efforts, “the average tariff on U.S. imports is a meager 3 percent—down from 20 percent in 1940.”⁴ In January 1995, GATT became the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**. Even though the world has never achieved a completely free and open trading system, with no barriers to the sale of goods and services among nations, this is the ideal—the principle—upon which these institutions are based.

The critical question, however, is *why* the United States and others believe that a liberal order based on free and open trade is so desirable. What motivated the creation of the LIEO? One potent force was the perceived lessons of the Great Depression and World War II. After World War II, American decision makers traced the causes of the Great Depression of the 1930s to the **economic nationalism** of the 1920s. That is, throughout the 1920s, the world’s major economies (including the United States) used ever-increasing tariffs and quotas to shield their domestic industries from foreign competition. This undermined world trade, contributing to the Great Depression. The Great Depression, in turn, undermined democracy in many of the hardest-hit countries, contributing to the rise of fascism, which then led to world war. Free trade, it was believed, was necessary to prevent a repetition of this course of events. Free trade was seen as providing political as well as economic benefits: If economic nationalism brought depression, fascism, and war, free trade would bring prosperity, democracy, and peace.

There was also a good measure of self-interest driving the creation of the LIEO. Since the United States emerged from World War II as the only intact industrial economy, free trade was clearly in its interests. U.S. factories would soon be producing automobiles and appliances instead of bombers and tanks, and with so many products to sell, easy and free access to markets was essential. But the commitment to free trade was also based on a broader conviction that it would benefit everyone in the long run. By promoting economic growth and prosperity, a system of free and open trade would be, to use a common metaphor, a rising tide that lifts all boats. It is this assumption of mutual gains from free trade that derives from the intellectual rationale for the postwar liberal order.

The Case for Free Trade

“About two hundred years ago,” Douglas Irwin observes, “free trade achieved an intellectual status unrivaled by any other doctrine in the field of economics.” And even though it has “been subjected to intense scrutiny over the two centuries since that time, free trade has, by and large, succeeded in maintaining this special position.”⁵ Why have economists generally embraced free trade? To answer this question, we must return to the economists who first made the case for free trade, particularly **Adam Smith** (1723–1790) and **David Ricardo** (1772–1823). Even though Smith and Ricardo lived two centuries ago, the arguments in favor of free trade have changed little since then.

In their time, Smith and Ricardo advocated free trade in place of the prevailing policies and doctrines of **mercantilism**, a policy designed to increase the wealth of

World Trade Organization

(WTO) Created in 1995 as a successor to GATT, the WTO is supposed to enforce international trade rules that promote free and open trade.

economic nationalism

Policies designed to protect domestic industries from foreign competition, usually by using tariffs and quotas as barriers to imports.

Adam Smith (1723–1790)

A liberal economist and philosopher who argued for free trade. Coined the famous expression “the invisible hand” to describe the operation of a free market economy.

David Ricardo (1772–1823)

An English economist known for his defense of international free trade and theory of comparative advantage.

mercantilism Trade policies designed to increase the wealth and power of a state vis-à-vis other states.

each state by rigging trade rules to promote exports and reduce imports. The rationale was that if more goods were sold than bought, more gold would flow into national treasuries than out, thus increasing a state's wealth. Mercantilist doctrine viewed trade as a means to increase a state's relative wealth and power. It was economics in the service of political power. Smith and Ricardo led the intellectual opposition to mercantilism.

The Origins of Free Trade

Corn Laws In the first half of the 1800s, these laws gave English farmers protection from foreign competition. Supporters of free trade claimed that they protected inefficient farmers and forced consumers to pay too much for basic food items. Attempts to repeal these laws succeeded in 1846.

Richard Cobden (1804–1865) A prominent figure in the Liberal Party in Britain and a leading crusader for free trade and the repeal of the Corn Laws.

division of labor Individuals, nations, or others specializing in the production of certain commodities.

theory of comparative advantage The idea that all nations benefit when they produce those commodities that each produces most efficiently. David Ricardo argued that free trade allows nations and consumers to benefit from their different comparative advantages.

Conflicts over mercantilism came to a head in the middle of the 1800s, when England faced intense domestic debate over the repeal of what were known as the **Corn Laws**. These laws gave British growers of wheat, corn, and other grains a monopoly on the domestic market through government subsidies and restrictions on imports. Denied access to cheaper imports, British consumers paid higher prices than they should have. The Corn Laws benefited wealthy landowners at the expense of the poor, who had to pay more for food. Influenced by the writings of Smith and Ricardo, **Richard Cobden** (1804–1865), a prominent figure in the British Liberal Party, fought to repeal the Corn Laws on the grounds that they benefited a few politically powerful landowners at the expense of many. Although the Anti-Corn Law League had been around since 1838, it wasn't until 1846 that the laws were repealed, marking the emergence of free trade as a theory converted into policy.⁶ The historical popularity of free trade has fluctuated ever since.

Smith's and Ricardo's opposition to mercantilism and advocacy of free trade was based on two relatively simple economic concepts, the division of labor and comparative advantage. The **division of labor** refers to the simple fact that people do not (and should not) produce everything they need and want. Few of us build our own houses, make our own clothes, educate our children, or even change the oil in our cars. In all but the most primitive economies, there is a division of labor in which people specialize and trade what they produce. In modern economies, this exchange occurs through the medium of currency, not barter. When we buy things with money, we are really exchanging what we produce (and got paid for) for things others have produced. This is the most efficient way to organize an economy. If we all had to make and provide for ourselves the things we need and want, we would end up with fewer of them. Thus, an efficient economic system at any level (local, national, or international) is based on a division of labor; and if there is a division of labor, trade is necessary.

But why does this trade have to be free trade? The answer is found in Ricardo's **theory of comparative advantage**, which has been described as "the greatest gift that economic wisdom ever bestowed upon humankind."⁷ Simply stated, the theory holds that people should produce whatever they produce most efficiently (i.e., those commodities for which they have an advantage compared to others) and trade with others specializing in what they do best. Nations possess different resources and assets that lead to different comparative advantages—some nations produce oil or other scarce commodities, some have plentiful and cheap labor, some have agriculturally productive land, and others have favorable geographical

locations for trade. Japan will probably never produce its own oil. Saudi Arabia will never grow rice. Landlocked Chad will never be a center of shipping. And Canada is unlikely to produce much coffee. If these nations want to meet their peoples' needs and desires, they need to specialize and trade. **Autarky**, or complete self-sufficiency, is not a practical or economical option.

Ricardo illustrated his theory using the example of Portugal and England producing wine and cloth, arguing that Portugal produced good, cheap wine (while England did not) and England produced good, cheap cloth (while Portugal did not). It is a division of labor and free trade that allows English and Portuguese consumers to have both good and cheap wine and cloth.⁸ In the words of Adam Smith, "If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them."⁹

Let us use a more familiar example to illustrate the economic logic of comparative advantage. The citizens of Vermont and Florida occasionally enjoy maple syrup and orange juice as part of their breakfast. How should these desires be satisfied? One option is that each state produces both juice and syrup on its own. Producing maple syrup would be no problem for Vermont because the climate conditions are ideal. Orange juice would be another matter, however, requiring the construction of huge greenhouses to grow orange trees. This can be done, theoretically, so Vermonters *could* make their own orange juice—but the cost would be high. The reverse can be said of the production of orange juice (easy) and maple syrup (difficult and expensive) in Florida. What to do? Ricardo's answer was simple—each state should specialize in producing the commodity for which it has a comparative advantage and trade the commodity with others that produce commodities for which they have an advantage. Vermonters make maple syrup, Floridians make orange juice, and they trade. Everyone gets what he or she wants for the lowest price.

Not everyone will be happy, however. Free trade will chase Vermont's orange juice producers out of business. Who, after all, would pay several more dollars a gallon for orange juice from Vermont than the same juice from Florida? For the orange juice producers of Vermont to survive, an import tax would have to be applied to artificially raise the price of juice from Florida. The reverse would have to be done to protect maple syrup producers in Florida. But Ricardo would think it a folly if Vermont's orange juice producers and Florida's maple syrup producers were kept in business. Protection would simply promote economic inefficiency and increase prices to consumers. Certainly, some are harmed by free trade in the short term (Vermont orange juice producers and Florida maple syrup producers, in this scenario). But from a larger, long-term perspective, everyone is better off as a result of the efficiency that comes from free trade.

From the standpoint of economic theory, tariffs and other barriers to imports are bad because they distort the market. In the free market, prices convey information to consumers about who is producing a commodity most efficiently. People then reward efficient producers by buying their lower-priced goods and punish the inefficient by not purchasing their products. When these purchasing decisions are aggregated, inefficient producers are driven out of business. When prices are artificially raised (or lowered) by government intervention, accurate economic information is

Autarky A policy of self-sufficiency in which a state attempts to cut itself off from the outside world. A policy of economic autarky would attempt to meet all of a society's needs from its own resources.

not conveyed to consumers. As a result, inefficiency is not punished and efficiency is not rewarded. And in the long run, the inefficient use of resources serves no one's interests.

Free Trade Within Nations, Free Trade Among Nations

Interestingly, virtually all nations practice free trade within their borders. In the United States, one of the federal government's functions under the Constitution is to prevent the adoption of restrictions on interstate trade. The government of Tennessee, for example, cannot impose taxes on cars imported from Michigan in order to protect the jobs of workers at a production plant located in that state. This would be an illegal restraint on interstate commerce. Everyone would probably agree that it would be a disaster if individual states within the United States could impose tariffs on goods coming from other states.

Advocates of free trade argue that the logic supporting free trade *within* nations applies to trade *among* nations. If it makes sense to practice free trade between Minneapolis and St. Paul or Vermont and Florida, it makes just as much sense to practice free trade between the United States and Germany or Japan and Botswana. The economic logic of free trade is not altered merely because a political boundary is crossed. As Jagdish Bhagwati explains, "If one applies the logic of efficiency to the allocation of activity among all trading nations, and not merely *within* one's own nation—that alone would ensure that goods and services would be produced where it could be done most cheaply."¹⁰

The Primacy of the Consumer

The interests of consumers are at the heart of the case for free trade. But it is important to realize that for Smith and Ricardo, the distinction between producers and consumers is somewhat artificial—everyone is a consumer, and consumers are *always* better off buying what they want and need for the lowest possible price regardless of where it is produced—across town, across the state, another state, or the other side of the world. Consumers are better off because this leaves them with more money to buy other things we want and need. Consumers are never better off paying more.

This argument contains an implicit assumption about the compatibility of individual and collective interests. That is, if every individual consumer in a community is better off, it follows that the community as a whole is better off. In the case of free trade, this means that what serves the best interests of every American consumer serves the best interests of the United States as a whole. Individual and collective interests are in harmony. Ricardo makes this implicit assumption explicit: "Under a system of perfectly free commerce, each country naturally devotes its capital and labor to such employments as are most beneficial to each. The pursuit of individual advantage is admirably connected with the universal good of the whole."¹¹

Here, the liberal roots of free trade are most apparent. One of the key assumptions of liberalism is the existence of a harmony of interests. This is

also the underlying assumption of free market capitalism in general and free trade in particular: Each individual and nation pursuing their own economic interest results in a long-term situation where the interests of all are advanced. There is no conflict in terms of the economic interests of individuals and nations. In promoting economic efficiency, a system of free trade benefits all. To use some technical terminology, international trade is not a **zero-sum game** in which one nation's gain is another's loss, but rather a **positive-sum game** in which all benefit. Economist and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, a leading advocate of free trade, emphasizes the harmony of interests in an essay with a telling title: "The Illusion of Conflict in International Trade." If trade is treated as something involving conflicts of interests among nations, Krugman fears that "trade will be treated as war, and the current system of relatively open world markets will disintegrate.... And that will be a shame ... [because] the conflict among nations that so many policy intellectuals imagine prevails is an illusion; but is it an illusion that can destroy the reality of mutual gains from trade?"¹² It would be impossible to state the liberal argument more clearly: Conflict is an illusion.

Advocates of free trade view trade restrictions such as tariffs and quotas as policies that protect special interests at the expense of the public interest. A tariff on imported automobiles, for example, serves the short-term interests of the domestic automobile industry. Although this may seem like a good idea to some, such policies merely protect a relatively inefficient industry from competition, remove incentives to become more efficient, and increase the price that people pay for automobiles. This decreases the amount of money that they have to spend on other things they want and need. The benefits of protectionism may be immediate and tangible to that sector of the economy, but the benefits are short-lived and illusory, and they come at the expense of consumers.

Contemporary Challenges to Free Trade

Even though free trade has been the cornerstone of the postwar order, the ideal of completely open trade has never been achieved. All nations continue to impose an array of tariffs and other restrictions. The mere fact that there are 11,000 tariffs for the TPP to eliminate is itself a testament to how far the world remains from a system of completely free trade. Even the United States, for example, imposes tariffs of 32 percent on acrylic sweaters, 17 percent on polyester bras, 16 percent on canvas handbags, and 28.5 percent on drinking glasses costing less than 30 cents apiece.¹³ As Findlay and O'Rourke note, "it is safe to say that the majority of the world's population in 2000 lived in economies that had higher manufacturing tariffs than on the eve of the Great War."¹⁴ Nations have also proven very ingenious in devising methods of protectionism. The most common alternatives are **nontariff barriers**, regulations on imported commodities that serve the same purpose as outright tariffs. Regulations requiring imported agricultural goods to meet certain quality and inspection requirements are a prime example. Although these safety requirements seem reasonable enough,

zero-sum game A situation in which one actor's gain is another actor's loss.

positive-sum game A situation in which the actors involved can all gain or benefit at the same time.

nontariff barriers Policies designed to inhibit trade and imports without imposing direct tariffs on imports. Safety regulations that make it nearly impossible for foreign producers to sell their goods are an example.

if they result in imported goods sitting on docks for days to be inspected, this can be tantamount to an outright ban.

Government subsidies also violate the logic of free trade. If a government gives money to a company that enables it to sell its product for a price that does not accurately reflect the costs of production, this is as much a violation of the principle of comparative advantage as a tariff that raises prices. When politicians accuse other countries of **dumping**, this is what they are talking about—selling something on the world market for less than it costs to produce. Perhaps nowhere has this been a greater problem than in the area of agricultural subsidies. Developing nations complain bitterly that subsidies to farmers in the United States and Europe allow them to sell their products on the world market at reduced prices, driving down the price of many commodities that developing nations produce. This prevents farmers in developing countries from taking advantage of their comparative advantages.

The persistence of agricultural subsidies illustrates why even when nations agree in principle that free trade is a good thing, it is difficult to maintain. The problem is that even if free trade is in everyone's *long-term* best interests, there are *short-term* losers: companies go out of business and workers lose their jobs. Such is the nature of economic competition and efficiency. These companies and workers are seldom comforted by the economic logic that they will be better off in the long run. As then-chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, explained, “[T]he social and political opposition to openness can be strong ... because changes in the patterns of production are likely to threaten the livelihoods of some workers and the profits of some firms, even when these changes lead to greater productivity.” When this happens, as it inevitably will under free trade, “the natural reaction of those so affected is to resist change, for example, by seeking the passage of protectionist measures.”¹⁵ And politicians often cave in to such pressures. President George W. Bush’s decision to impose tariffs on imported steel during his first term, despite his commitment to free trade, is but one of many examples. The fact that steel tariffs were favored by constituencies in Midwestern states with critical electoral votes, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, was surely no coincidence. The political temptation is sometimes to be a **free rider**—that is, let others practice free trade while you do not. The free rider enjoys all the benefits but pays none of the costs of free trade. The general problem is that political incentives do not always coincide with economic logic. What is good in terms of winning the next election is not always good for the economy in the long run.

When we hear about disputes between the United States and its major trading partners in Western Europe and Japan, there are frequent accusations of unfair trade practices. These disputes largely usually involve the accusation of free riding: We practice free trade, while they do not. The charge of “cheating” embodies this dilemma. But many contemporary conflicts over trade are more deeply rooted than this. It is not merely that actually practicing free trade is difficult even when everyone agrees that it would be desirable. The more fundamental problem is that there is disagreement about whether free trade is always the best policy.

dumping Selling commodities to other nations for less than it costs to produce them, which often is made possible by government subsidies to industries and producers.

free rider When an actor enjoys the benefits of policy without paying its share of the costs associated with that policy.



A protest against NAFTA. Although the agreement passed, many were (and remain) concerned about the consequences of free trade with nations with lower wages and weaker regulations.

Source: Bob E. Daemmrich/Sygma/Corbis

What's Wrong with Free Trade

Free trade is hard to maintain even when policymakers believe it to be the right policy. This difficulty is, of course, magnified when free trade is viewed as detrimental. Although it borders on heresy in contemporary economics to suggest that free trade might be undesirable, some have voiced reservations ever since Ricardo first made his case. There are very few who believe that nations should never practice free trade, or that foreign imports should always be subject to tariffs and quotas. No one seriously believes that economic autarky is possible or desirable. The argument against free trade is more accurately seen as skepticism about whether it is always preferable. Even skeptics agree that much of the time (indeed, probably most of the time), open trade is wise. But, they argue, there are times when (and very good reasons why) nations should not trade freely. The objection is that free trade has become an ideology, particularly in the United States, with critics and skeptics being viewed as the equivalent of flat-earthers. Paul Krugman, for example, suggests that anyone who does not see the wisdom of free trade is stupid and uniformed.

The notion that there is any intellectually respectable argument against free trade is simply not entertained. But the fact is that Adam Smith and David Ricardo have not been alone in thinking about international trade, and not everyone has reached the same conclusion.

After spending several years in Asia, columnist and author James Fallows was struck by how differently people elsewhere think about international trade compared to people in the United States. One symptom of this divergence is the popularity of the German economist **Friedrich List** (1789–1846). Most Americans can get an economics degree without ever having read List; one certainly hears a lot less about him in the United States than they do about Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Fewer still have actually read List's *The National System of Political Economy* (1841), probably the most powerful critique of Smith's and Ricardo's ideas.¹⁶ In Europe and Asia, however, List's work remains influential. How did List differ from Ricardo? He did not argue that nations should *never* practice free trade, a point that needs to be emphasized. Much of the time, and for most commodities, List agreed that free trade was a good idea. Instead, he argued that Smith and Ricardo failed to recognize that there were also certain circumstances in which, for very legitimate reasons, states might be wise to depart from the logic of free trade.

List offered a decidedly conservative or realist critique of liberal trade doctrine. This will become evident as we deal with his major arguments. Yet List's criticisms are not alone; critics have looked at free trade from other perspectives as well. Marxist critiques analyze free trade within the general context of international capitalism. Feminists often worry about the impact of trade on women, an issue that they think is usually ignored. Interestingly, these seemingly odd ideological bedfellows make many of the same arguments. This paradox is reflected in the fact that a somewhat unusual coalition has emerged in opposition to the economic aspects of contemporary globalization, in which many on the political right and left find themselves aligned.

More Efficient, But So What?

The first major justification for free trade is that it promotes economic efficiency. When production and trade are based on comparative advantage, efficient producers survive and inefficient ones go out of business. On purely economic grounds, critics of free trade concede the point: Free trade does promote economic efficiency. But so what? If something is the most economically efficient thing to do, does that automatically imply that it should be done? Not necessarily. This would be the logical conclusion only if economic efficiency were the be-all and end-all of economic policy. In the real world, however, people and societies try to balance a variety of values and considerations.

Societies follow policies all the time that are inconsistent with strict standards of economic efficiency. For example, most societies spend the majority of their health-care dollars on people in their last few years of life when they are no longer economically productive. If societies allocated resources based solely on economic efficiency, there would certainly be other areas where this money could be better spent.

Friedrich List (1789–1846)

A German economist critical of David Ricardo and free trade. Rejected the liberal notion that individuals advancing their own interests inevitably serve the interests of the larger community or nation, and argued that nations need to approach trade from the perspective of the national interest and the interests of the community as a whole.

If we adopted policies simply on the grounds of economic efficiency, what sort of healthcare systems would we have? What would we do with people who were no longer economically productive? Why do we spend all this money on the economically unproductive elements of our society? We do so because other values influence our decisions. Economic efficiency is only one consideration. Demonstrating that a policy promotes economic efficiency is an important component of policy debates, but it does not end them. Applying this point to international trade, we can easily imagine considerations that might lead states to reject free trade, even if the result is reduced economic efficiency. Take, for example, the case of Japan and rice. Rice produced in Japan costs Japanese consumers a lot more than rice grown in the United States. If the logic of free trade and comparative advantage was followed, Japan's rice farmers would almost certainly be driven out of business as the Japanese bought the cheaper foreign rice. But for the Japanese, rice is more than just another food; it is a deeply meaningful part of their history and culture. A Japan that did not grow its own rice would be like a Germany that produced no beer, a France that produced no wine or cheese, or a United States that produced no automobiles. To an economist, these are just commodities, and it should not matter where they are made. But most people are not economists. If preserving this part of Japanese culture requires restrictions on foreign imports, we might say that this makes little economic sense, but who would argue that the preservation of culture is illegitimate?

Many countries have a similar problem with small family farms, which are almost never competitive with huge agricultural corporations or cheap foreign imports. Pure free trade would almost certainly spell death for these small farms. But what if people want to preserve a quaint countryside, with small villages and cute farms that they can return to on the weekends? If a government restricts cheaper imports or subsidizes its farmers in order to protect this rural way of life, is this necessarily a wrongheaded policy? Smith and Ricardo would think so, but others might not be so dismissive. If French consumers have to pay a bit more for domestically grown peppers and tomatoes in order to protect a way of life that they value, perhaps this is an acceptable trade-off, in which strict considerations of economic efficiency lose out to broader cultural concerns.

The particulars of cases will vary, but the general point is to question the underlying assumption implicit in arguments for free trade that economic efficiency is *the* basis on which policies should be chosen. John Gray, a critic of free trade, concedes the economic argument: "There is not much doubt that the free market is the most *economically efficient* type of capitalism," and "for most economists, that ends the matter."¹⁷ For Gray and others, obviously, it does not.

Free Trade Within Nations, Free Trade Among Nations

Friedrich List's most forceful criticism of free trade stemmed from what he saw as the failure of Ricardo and others to recognize the critical difference between domestic and international society. When this distinction is taken into account, it does not follow that free trade among nations makes as much sense as free trade within nations. Domestically, people need not worry about becoming dependent on

others for things they need because this dependence is unlikely to be used as leverage. For example, pro-choice shoppers do not worry that their local grocery store will withhold food until they change their position to align with the manager's pro-life views. Floridians do not have to worry that Vermont will refuse to sell them maple syrup unless they vote the right way in the next presidential election. Within nations, people do not have to be very concerned about their dependence on one another. Nations, however, need to worry about the potential security consequences of dependence, as well as about shifts in economic power resulting from growth in other countries. International economics cannot be divorced from considerations of international politics. Economists might be pleased as punch if greater trade makes China more wealthy and prosperous; international security strategists might not be so happy. An economist might not care if one nation relies on another for something that it produces more efficiently and cheaply, but a security strategist might be concerned.

Thus, List argued that if a nation can produce commodities that it really needs, it should do so rather than become dependent on others, even if these commodities can be purchased more cheaply from abroad. Take, for example, steel or computer chips, which are essential commodities for a modern industrial and technological economy. Let us assume that country A can manufacture steel for \$20 a ton and chips for \$50 each. If country B can produce steel for \$18 and chips for \$40, what should country A do? Ricardo's advice would be clear: Country A should buy steel and chips from country B and get out of the steel and chips businesses, rather than impose a tariff or quota on steel and chip imports in order to protect its own industries. For List, however, this would be ludicrous because if A becomes dependent on B for vital commodities, B will have power and leverage over A. To avoid becoming dependent on others that might seek to convert economic dependence to political power, it may be advisable for A to impose tariffs in order to stay in the steel and chips businesses, even though these commodities could be purchased more cheaply from abroad. Saving a few bucks is not always the most important consideration in international relations.

Sometimes nations have no option but to become dependent. Japan, for example, needs oil but has no reserves of its own to exploit. Japanese oil independence is not an option. Furthermore, for most things, it really does not matter if a nation becomes dependent on others. Being dependent on others for honey or sneakers is not the same as being dependent for oil or steel. A threat to cut off a nation's supply of sneakers is unlikely to produce much political leverage. So for most commodities, free trade is best. List would simply argue that there are some vital commodities that nations should retain the ability to produce if they can, even if it is economically inefficient.

Some take this argument a step further, arguing that nations should use trade policy not merely to protect their industries, but also to undermine those of other countries. Assume, for example, that country A produces steel for \$20 a ton and B for \$18. Under free trade, country A would go out of the steel business and buy its steel from B. But country A could stay in the steel business by imposing a tariff of \$2 or more to protect its domestic steel industry. But country A could also subsidize its domestic steel industry and sell its steel on the world market at a loss



The movement to emphasize fair trade in place of free trade is reflected in product labels that provide information to consumers about which products meet the criteria.

Source: Kyodo/Landov Media

(maybe \$17 a ton) in order to drive country B out of the steel business and make it depend on A. The goal is not merely to avoid dependence on others, but to make them depend on you. This turns the logic of free trade and comparative advantage on its head. This sort of **predatory pricing** is an example of what is sometimes referred to as **strategic trade policy**, or consciously using trade policy to enhance national power and leverage over others.

Even economists supportive of free trade concede that “Ricardo’s theory did not cover every circumstance.” As Clive Crook notes, “exceptions to its general rule (potential benefits from protecting ‘infant industries,’ for instance) were recognized long ago.”¹⁸ List was among those who argued for the need to protect **infant industries** from foreign competition. When a nation first produces a commodity, it might be difficult to compete with established producers elsewhere in the world. If the logic of free trade were applied, these industries would often “die in the cradle,” so to speak. List pointed out that many industries in the United States and Britain developed behind a wall of protection before the adoption of free trade. Even when free trade was desirable in the long run, List saw a need for “temporary protective measures in countries passing through a certain state of development to ensure that they could trade on equal terms with more advanced countries.”¹⁹ Foreshadowing some of List’s themes, Alexander Hamilton made a very similar

predatory pricing Setting the price of a commodity with the intention of driving others out of business, even if this requires selling the commodity for less than it costs to produce.

strategic trade policy Policies designed to enhance national power and encourage other nations to become dependent as a means of gaining leverage over them.

infant industries Industries at early stages of their development in a nation, particularly when the same industries are already well developed (i.e., mature) in other nations.

argument in the early years of the U.S. republic: “to maintain, between recent establishments of one country, and the long-matured establishments of another, a competition upon equal terms ... is in most cases, impracticable.”²⁰ So there are times when some level of protection from more efficient foreign competition is seen as necessary for industrial development.²¹

These types of policies and concerns derive from List’s conviction that trade policy cannot and should not be separated from national security policy. In an anarchic world, nations must worry about security in ways that people and groups within nations do not. This is why free trade might not make as much sense among nations as it does within them. The *economic* logic may be the same, but the *political* logic is very different. Nations have to consider the implications of trade policy in terms of their power over, and dependence upon, others. List criticizes “Adam Smith’s doctrine ... [because it] ignores the very nature of nationalities, seeks almost entirely to exclude politics and the State, presupposes the existence of a state of perpetual peace and of universal union, underrates the values of national manufacturing power, and the means of obtaining it, and demands absolute freedom of trade.”²²

In the final analysis, a nation’s power rests on its ability to produce, not consume. In this sense, List’s criticisms of, and reservations about, free trade reflect a realist perspective. His emphasis on the different environments in which states operate, his focus on economic production as the foundation of national power, and his concern about the consequences of dependence is consistent with a realist view of the world. Whereas liberals tend to see international trade as a positive-sum game, in which everyone can become better off at the same time, List and realists are more inclined to approach trade as a zero-sum affair, in which the gains of one person mean losses for others. Conflict over trade is not an illusion because it cannot be completely divorced from political conflict, which is all too real.

Consumers and the Nation

Consumers lie at the heart of the case for free trade. Free trade allows consumers to buy what they want or need for the lowest price regardless of where it is produced, which makes it possible for them to buy more of what they want and need. And because everyone is a consumer, everyone’s interests are advanced by free trade. Furthermore, if every consumer is better off, it follows that the nation as a whole is better off. For critics of free trade, this logic is deceptively attractive but wrong. When individuals do what is in their own best interest, this does not necessarily serve the best interests of that community. Understanding why this is not so requires some explanation.

Every day, consumers are faced with discrete purchasing decisions. Someone goes to the mall to buy a pair of jeans and finds two pairs: one made in the United States costing \$40, and the other made in Malaysia for \$20. In this situation, most consumers would buy the cheaper jeans because it would leave them \$20 to buy other things. In the world of Smith and Ricardo, this is as it should be. This one decision by the consumer is good for that person and has no wider social or economic consequences. But if we take this one decision and multiply it

by thousands and millions of identical decisions, there are larger social and economic consequences. Perhaps the plant making jeans in the United States will go out of business, or the workers will have to accept lower wages or even lose their jobs. If the workers are laid off, they will collect unemployment insurance, which has to be paid for through other people's taxes. If enough factories go out of business, maybe the entire local community's economy will collapse. As factories close and unemployment goes up, tax revenues go down. Schools have less money. As schools decline, the community's downward spiral accelerates. Crime may increase, and the quality of life may erode as a result. The problem is that we cannot reasonably expect individual consumers to calculate and take into account these larger consequences for every purchasing decision. Emphasizing this point, List asks, "Can the individual ... take into consideration in promoting his private economy, the defense of the country, public security, and the thousand other objects which can only be attained by the aid of the whole community?"²³

Contrary to the liberal assumption that individual and collective interests are in harmony, List explicitly rejects this conflation: "... nor does the individual merely by understanding his own interests best, and by striving to further them, if left to his own devices, always further the interests of the community."²⁴ It does not necessarily follow that whatever serves the best short-term interests of each consumer also advances the long-term interests of the community. In such situations, it is reasonable for the government to step in and protect the interests of the larger national community. This is what governments do. As James Fallows points out, people live in nations and communities, and "in the real world, happiness depends on more than how much money you take home. If the people around you are also comfortable ... you are happier and safer than if they are desperate."²⁵

How do we deal with this problem? One option is trade restrictions. To continue with our jeans example, the government might impose a tariff to make the foreign jeans less attractive. Again, Fallows explains that "the answer to this predicament is to pay explicit attention to the welfare of the nation. If a consumer has to pay 10 percent more for a product made by his neighbors than for one from overseas, it will be worse for him in the short run. But in the long run, and in the broadest definitions of well-being, he might be better off."²⁶ One can see these types of concerns when the European Union (EU) considers new nations for inclusion. The EU is an organization of European states that essentially practice free trade among themselves. They are wealthy and prosperous nations, with high wages and generous welfare states. When poorer nations with lower wages seek admission, the current members are often hesitant. If poorer nations with much lower wages are allowed to compete on a free basis, the fear is that this will exert downward pressure on wages throughout the EU. Regulations that determine who may and may not join the EU are in part designed to protect European workers from the effects of competing with much cheaper labor.

Although it is primarily realists who express concerns about the impact of free trade on the economic bases of national power and security, others worry about the effects on workers and the general standard of living. Marxists, for example, see free trade (which is part and parcel of global capitalism) as potentially harmful to workers in both developing and developed countries. Because capital

(i.e., multinational corporations) is free to set up shop wherever wages are lowest, the net effect of free trade is to push and keep wages down. Part of the problem is that on a theoretical level, completely free trade should allow labor to move as freely as capital and commodities do. In the real world, however, this is not possible. Thus, businesses can go anywhere in the world in search of the lowest wages, but workers cannot go in search of the highest wages. This fundamental difference in the mobility of capital and commodities compared to that of labor places workers at a great disadvantage.

Feminists are also often critical of free trade and its consequences. They tend to agree with Marxists that workers in all parts of the world are harmed by free trade. But feminists also point out that women in particular usually bear the brunt. Because women often find themselves as second-class economic citizens, occupying the lowest-paying and most expendable jobs, their interests are usually the first to be sacrificed. Even many liberals, who are generally predisposed to free trade, worry about the potential consequences, especially unrestricted trade between nations at very different levels of development. There are also issues that go well beyond those mentioned already, such as the impact on the environment when factories are moved to low-wage countries with fewer environmental protections in place. But an overall concern about the impact of free trade on workers and other vulnerable groups unites critics from a very broad range of viewpoints.

Fair Trade or Free Trade?

Concerns about the impact of free trade, particularly between developed and developing nations, have been central to the increasingly vocal and visible movement for “fair trade” rather than free trade. On college campuses, this is often seen in anti-sweatshop movements that pressure universities and others not to buy collegiate apparel produced in developing nations where workers are paid very low wages and work in unsafe factories. There are, however, at least three different conceptualizations of what fair trade entails, which are united only by a belief that some are being disadvantaged (i.e., being treated unfairly) in the current liberal trading order.²⁷

The first vision of fair trade tries to deal with the problem of free riders, who enjoy access to foreign markets but restrict access to their own. The unfairness here is differential market openness, in which free trade is essentially a one-way street. To remedy this problem, some propose that countries with open markets should demand reciprocity—i.e., that others open theirs as well. If the offending nation does not comply, restrictions should be placed on its exports. According to this analysis, allowing others to protect their industries as they challenge yours is tantamount to unilateral economic disarmament. The hope is that threatened retaliation would induce others to open their markets, thereby expanding and strengthening free trade. Critics worry, however, that this practice might result in vicious cycles of retaliation, leading to a collapse of the global trading system.

The second vision of fair trade focuses on what many see as an unlevel playing field in which wealthy nations with high wages and workplace safety regulations have to compete with nations with much lower prevailing wages and weak systems

of worker protection. The proposed solution is to negotiate trade treaties with provisions that level the field by requiring certain wage levels and labor standards. If a potential trading partner is unwilling to accommodate these demands, then it would not enjoy open access to your markets. In this analysis, workers and businesses in developed countries are the ones that are disadvantaged (i.e., being treated unfairly) by being forced to compete with workers who are paid a lot less and businesses whose regulatory costs are much lower.

The third approach to fair trade may be most familiar because it is evident every time you buy a latte at Starbucks and see “fair trade” coffee for sale. Coffee and other fair-trade products are designated as such by various organizations verifying that producers received a “fair” price for the commodity—which often is substantially higher than the prevailing market price. The hope is that wealthier consumers are willing to pay slightly more if they know that their money is going to poor producers rather than rich corporations. On one level, this version of fair trade is necessarily counter to free trade, in that it relies on voluntary consumer choices, not government restrictions, tariffs, and quotas. Consumers still have the option of buying cheaper products that reflect market prices. Nonetheless, there is an underlying assumption that free trade as commonly practiced works to the disadvantage of many, particularly producers in developing nations, and fair trade practices try to rectify this.

Conclusion

Conflicts over international trade are likely to continue both among and within the world’s major trading participants. One source of these conflicts is the political ramifications of free trade. Even those who support free trade concede that even if everyone benefits in the long run, there are winners and losers in the short term. Free trade, when it works as it is supposed to, drives comparatively inefficient producers out of business. Industries go under, investors lose money, and workers lose jobs. We cannot expect these groups to be happy about their losses. In democratic societies, where the success of politicians depends on keeping people happy, there will continue to be strong political pressures to protect domestic interests from the inevitable consequences of free trade and competition. Even if the long-term benefits of greater efficiency work to the benefit of all, these benefits are often dispersed. The costs of free trade, however, are very concentrated. A person who loses his or her job feels the costs more than a person who saves a dollar on a pair of jeans notices the benefits. Economic logic and political imperatives sometimes point in opposite directions. This is a dilemma even when there is agreement on an intellectual level that free trade would be desirable.

The problem goes beyond this, however, because there is no consensus, either within or among nations, that free trade is in fact always desirable. Among the advanced industrialized nations, the belief in free trade is probably greatest in the United States. The Japanese and Europeans do not always share enthusiasm for the idea. They see a greater scope for legitimate government intervention and

are more inclined to recognize potential conflicts between the short-term interests of the consumer and the long-term well-being of the national community.

For many, it seems as though disagreements over trade issues are becoming more widespread and intense. Some cite declining U.S. hegemony and the end of the Cold War as reasons for increasing conflicts over trade. The argument is that the decades immediately after World War II were characterized by U.S. economic and military dominance over Japan and Western Europe. The United States was able to use its power to keep others in line with its policy preferences, and the common threat of the Soviet Union created a need for unity and desire to avoid conflict. Today, the unifying threat of the Soviet Union is gone, and the recovery and growth of other economies has eroded U.S. hegemony. As a result, we are witnessing increasing conflict and tension over trade issues between the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia. Whether the liberal international order can be sustained in the face of declining U.S. hegemony is subject of intense debate.²⁸ If the thesis about the importance of U.S. hegemony is correct, we are likely to see more, not less, conflict over trade issues.

When we look at disagreements at the level of governments, we are largely in the realm of differences of degree. The Europeans and Japanese do not reject free trade in principle, but their commitment and attachment to free trade are weaker and more conditional. The same cannot be said of many of the social movements and groups protesting the move toward economic globalization. Many of these groups are animated by a much deeper and pervasive skepticism about the impact of free trade in the context of the contemporary global economy, which approaches an outright rejection of the principle of free trade. Whether these movements and groups prove to be a powerful enough force to erode the liberal trading order remains to be seen.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO), which emphasizes the importance of free and open trade, was created in the aftermath of World War II under the auspices of the United States.
- Free and open trade was deemed essential to the health of the U.S. economy, the preservation of democracy and peace, and the prospects for growth and prosperity around the world.
- In terms of reducing barriers to trade, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), created in 1947, was the most important element on the LIEO. GATT was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.
- The intellectual case for free trade was made first by liberal economists Adam Smith and, more important, David Ricardo, whose theory of comparative advantage remains the foundation of the case for free trade.
- According to the theory of comparative advantage, nations should produce those commodities that they produce more efficiently and trade them for those commodities that others produce more efficiently. Tariffs, quotas, and any other barriers to trade interfere with this process and promote economic inefficiency.
- Supporters of free trade emphasize that consumers (and everyone is a consumer) are always better off when they can buy the things they want and need for the lowest possible price, no matter where in the world they are produced. And if consumers in a nation are better off, the nation or community as a whole is better off.
- One of the earliest critiques of Ricardo's case for free trade was provided by German economist Friedrich List.
- Opponents of free trade usually concede that free trade promotes economic efficiency but argue that economic efficiency is not the only consideration that needs to be taken into account. There may be social, political, and strategic priorities that might outweigh purely economic considerations.
- List argued that nations, unlike the individuals within them, need to be worried about becoming dependent on other nations for necessary commodities. He suggested that in such cases, nations should maintain their industries even if the commodities could be purchased more cheaply from other nations.
- List also claimed that nations sometimes need to protect "infant" industries from foreign competition in the early stages of their development.
- The idea that the pursuit of individual interests necessarily results in the common good, an essential element of the case for free trade, is profoundly mistaken, according to List. Individual consumers cannot possibly know and evaluate the larger social consequences of their aggregated decisions. Thus, it is essential that the government regulate trade to protect the long-term interests of the nation as a whole.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. How might the economic logic and political dynamics of free trade come into conflict?
2. Are consumers always better off paying less for the goods they want and need, regardless of where in the world they are produced?
3. Although it is easy to see how tariffs and import quotas violate the principles of free trade, there are many other policies that do the same but are less obvious. For example, explain how government subsidies can be equally significant violations of free trade.
4. What is the significance of List's distinction between private economy and political economy in terms of evaluating free trade?
5. Why do some consider the distinction between *domestic* trade and *international* trade to be critical for evaluating the wisdom of free trade?

KEY TERMS

Adam Smith, 135
 Autarky, 137
 Corn Laws, 136
 David Ricardo, 135
 division of labor, 136
 dumping, 140
 economic nationalism, 135
 free rider, 140

Friedrich List, 142
 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 134
 infant industries, 145
 International Monetary Fund (IMF), 134

Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO), 134
 mercantilism, 135
 nontariff barriers, 139
 positive-sum game, 139
 predatory pricing, 145
 Richard Cobden, 136

strategic trade policy, 145
 theory of comparative advantage, 136
 World Bank, 134
 World Trade Organization (WTO), 135
 zero-sum game, 139

FURTHER READINGS

A good place to start looking into the debate over free trade is the original sources, because the main outlines of the debate have not changed very much. The case for free trade was first fully developed by David Ricardo in *On Protection to Agriculture* (London: J. Murray, 1822) and *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908). Ricardo's most forceful critic was Friedrich List, whose ideas are best conveyed in his *The National System of Political Economy* (New York: August M. Kelley Publishers, 1966 [1885]). The best contemporary defenses of free trade are Jagdish Bhagwati's *Protectionism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,

1988) and *Free Trade Today* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), and Douglas A. Irwin's *Free Trade Under Fire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002) and *Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). A good summary of the major arguments against free trade is presented by James Fallows, "How the World Works," *The Atlantic* (December 1993), pp. 61–87. For divergent views on the consequences of NAFTA, see Carla Hills, "NAFTA's Economic Upsides," and Jorge Casteneda, "NAFTA's Mixed Record," in *Foreign Affairs* (January–February 2014), pp. 122–127 and 134–141.

FREE TRADE ON THE WEB

www.wto.org

The Web site of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has been at the center of attempts to promote and halt multilateral open trade.

www.cato.org/trade-immigration

A pro-free trade Web site, sponsored by the libertarian Cato Institute, which is intended to "increase public awareness of the benefits of free trade and the costs of protectionism."

www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=531

Presents a much more negative perspective on NAFTA and similar trade agreements than the Cato Institute site.

www.usft.org

The Web site of United Students for Fair Trade. The focus is on how college students can work for "fair trade." The group is also now engaged in the fight against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement.

www.wfto.com

The Web site of the India-based World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).

NOTES

¹Don Lee, "The Trans-Pacific Partnership": Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why It Matters," *Los Angeles Times* (February 19, 2014). Accessed at www.latimes.com/nation/politics/politicsnow/la-pn-trans-pacific-partnership-20140219,0,6747764.story#ixzz2w6r9YNMh.

²Ian Ferguson and Bruce Vaughn, *The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2011), summary page.

- ³Stephen Krasner, "United States Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unraveling the Paradox of External Strength and Internal Weakness," ed. Peter Katzenstein, *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 51.
- ⁴Roger Lowenstein, "Tariff to Nowhere," *New York Times Magazine*, June 15, 2008, pp. 15–16.
- ⁵Douglas A. Irwin, *Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 217.
- ⁶An excellent account of the campaign to repeal the Corn Laws is William D. Grampp, *The Manchester School of Economics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960). Oddly, even though Ricardo influenced those who favored repealing the Corn Laws, he himself actually opposed their repeal. Grampp explains the unusual reasoning behind Ricardo's opposition. See also Charles Kindleberger, "The Rise of Free Trade in Europe, 1820–1875," *Journal of Economic History* 35, no. 1 (1975): 20–55.
- ⁷Clive Crook, "Beyond Belief," *The Atlantic*, October 2007, p. 47.
- ⁸David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), pp. 115–116.
- ⁹Irwin, *Against the Tide*, p. 79.
- ¹⁰Jagdish Bhagwati, *Protectionism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 33.
- ¹¹Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, p. 114.
- ¹²Paul Krugman, *Pop Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 84.
- ¹³Martha C. White, "Outdated Tariff System Means the Poor Pay More," *Washington Independent* (June 2, 2010). Accessed at <http://washingtonindependent.com/85893/outdated-tariff-systems-meansthe-poor-pay-more>.
- ¹⁴Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 500.

¹⁵Ben Bernanke, "Global Economic Integration: What's New and What's Not." Accessed on June 11, 2014, at: <http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/bernanke20060825a.htm>.

¹⁶Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy* [New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1966 (reprint of 1885 edition)].

¹⁷John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta, 1998), pp. 82–83.

¹⁸Crook, "Beyond Belief," p. 43.

¹⁹Irwin, *Against the Tide*, p. 127.

²⁰Edward Earle Meade, "Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, ed. Edward Earle Meade (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 131.

²¹The argument that industrial development has usually included elements of protectionism is also made in William Lazonick, *Business Organization and the Myth of the Market Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²²List, *National System of Political Economy*, p. 347.

²³Ibid., p. 165.

²⁴Ibid., p. 166.

²⁵James Fallows, "How the World Works," *The Atlantic* (December 1993), p. 70. See also James Fallows, *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System* (New York: Pantheon, 1994).

²⁶Fallows, "How the World Works," p. 70.

²⁷These differentiations are drawn by Jagdish Bhagwati in comments in an online debate about fair trade conducted by the *Economist* on May 4, 2010. Accessed June 2, 2014, at: www.economist.com/debate/days/view/508/print.

²⁸An influential examination of this issue is Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Should Free Trade Be Replaced with Fair Trade?

Unless one advocates complete economic self-sufficiency (autarky), some international trade is unavoidable. Because virtually no one favors this, the question is not whether to engage in international commerce, but rather the principles guiding it and the rules under which nations trade. One of the problems for critics of the postwar economic order is articulating a competing vision that does not smack of the self-interested protectionism that many hold at least partly responsible for the collapse of global trade and onset of the Great Depression in the 1920s. But what is the alternative to free trade? Is it merely a little less free trade, tinkering at the margins of the existing trading system? Or is there a different conceptual approach to international trade? These questions are central to the contemporary debate over “fair trade” reflected in the essays below. Echoing many of the familiar concerns about the impact of free trade, Devin Stewart makes the case for a “free *and* fair trade policy.” In “redefining” fair trade, Stewart argues that there is no inherent conflict between fair and free trade: Indeed, he suggests that increasing its fairness may be the only way to save the system of free trade. Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Pannagariya, on the other hand, see the movement for fair trade as a threat to free trade—little more than protectionism with a nicer name—which could do great damage to developing nations such as India.

PERSPECTIVE 1

United States Must Redefine “Fair Trade” (2010)

Devin T. Stewart¹



Globalization is again under attack. Commentators from many perspectives have argued recently that globalization has reached a turning point and will never recover. Global inequities, failures of international institutions, and resentment of American power, they say, will usher in worldwide protectionism, threatening to end the current era of globalization.

An end to the current state of globalization doesn’t have to lead to conflict, however, as did the pre-1914 era. Indeed, Washington’s new political makeup provides an opportunity to shape a globalization that benefits all. In the realm of international trade, a starting point may be to reconcile free and fair trade.

¹ Source: Devin T. Stewart, “United States Must Redefine ‘Fair Trade,’” Carnegie Council (January 29, 2007) © 2007 Carnegie Council, Reprinted with Permission.

After all, while the freest economies tend to be the richest, trade isn't an end in itself. Rather it is a tool to help increase living standards, lower poverty, and advance political freedom and human rights. U.S. Congressman Sandy Levin, the new trade subcommittee chairman, recently issued a statement to this effect, adding that the terms of international competition must be shaped to achieve both growth and equity.

The concept of freedom seems pretty straightforward, but fairness means different things to different people. Fair trade is often depicted as antithetical to free trade, or as protectionism in disguise. Nevertheless, freedom and fairness are decent principles to guide an ethical U.S. economic policy, and reconciling the two would help restore American moral leadership. Fairness in economics is often concerned with offsetting "unfair" advantages created by lower wages in trading partners, but this notion incorrectly views the global economy as a zero-sum game.

A new, fairer U.S. trade policy would aim to give more people the opportunity to enjoy the benefits from world trade flows. Although Congress may attempt to use the term fairness to protect vulnerable domestic industries, doing so would be a mistake. As Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson recently said: "Giving in to protectionist sentiment would send a terrible signal. We would be telling developing nations that while we have benefited from increased trade, we aren't going to allow them the same opportunity to develop." He concluded that such a direction would be "morally wrong."

Adam Smith showed that economic freedom allows people to maximize their potential to the benefit of all society. But total freedom, as Thomas Hobbes argued, leads to a short and nasty life. The Aristotelian notion of moderation might help reconcile this paradox: Trade should be neither too free nor too regulated.

This is the puzzle a group of philosophers, economists, and practitioners tackled last month at the Carnegie Council. The question posed was, is it possible to fashion a free and fair trade policy that will build a more sustainable and equitable trading system? And, how can the principles of a more moral trade policy be applied to extractive industries? Three "freedoms" are worth examining here.

Freedom to Trade Anything

As philosopher Christian Barry has noted, some goods are unfit for trade. For example, it is widely maintained that some services, such as those offered by an assassin, should not be traded. Goods obtained through coercion may also be deemed unfit for trade. When it comes to the trade in natural resources, it is not always clear that the sellers are the rightful owners of the goods as they may have obtained them through bullying.

The issue of rightful ownership pertains also to trade in intellectual property. One question under debate is how to protect cultural intellectual property. For example, Ghana imports traditional African textile prints from China. Exacerbating tensions over Chinese textiles in Africa and the resulting loss of African jobs, some scholars have begun to question the fairness of trade in another country's cultural goods. The answer may lie in determining whether these vendors are the rightful owners of this property.

The process of producing goods traded should respect human rights and a country's labor and environmental laws. Slavery, poor working conditions, and environmental degradation are particularly problematic in illegal mining and logging operations. As a result, multinational corporations have started carefully scrutinizing their supply chains. Ford Motor and General Motors, for example, recently stopped using Latin American pig iron produced by slave labor. DaimlerChrysler, Ford, GM, and Honda joined together last month to train suppliers to avoid buying materials made by slaves.

Freedom to Trade with Anyone

Makers of a decent trade policy should remember the premise that trade is meant to improve peoples' lives, and they should deliberate when considering the use of trade barriers, sanctions, and embargos. The record shows that these tools are blunt and inaccurate in achieving broad security goals. Policy toward North Korea, for example, is often thought to be a choice between advancing human rights or a proliferation regime—or both. Instead, we have witnessed nuclear proliferation and mass famine on the Korean Peninsula despite a politically gratifying U.S. trade embargo.

The other side of the coin concerns trading partners that fail to enforce their own labor, human rights, and environmental standards, jeopardizing another kind of security. Part of the problem is simply keeping tabs on corporate behavior and publicizing the findings. Oxfam and the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre have excelled in this area. A country's human rights record may matter little if the trading partner feels that the exported good, for example oil, is vital to its national security. The United States must do its part to lower oil demand and invest in renewable energies, helping oil-exporting nations to shed the resource curse.

Freedom to Trade with Impunity

As the greatest beneficiary of globalization, the United States has a responsibility to give back to the system from which it benefits. In practical terms, this means the United States has an interest in working toward nurturing freedom and fairness not only at home but also in the global economy. It can do so by promoting fair and ethical trade practices, socially responsible business models, expanded stakeholder rights, and a stronger global civil society. The responsibility is great but fair for the biggest consumer of the world's resources.

These limits on free action can guide a fairer trade policy. Constructive policies are available to implement that vision. The U.S. Congress has made a promising start by passing bills to raise the minimum wage, make higher education more affordable, and eliminate subsidies for the U.S. oil industry, shifting resources toward developing clean energy technologies. It is also hopeful that Max Baucus, the new chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, would like to renew the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. He also supports a broader "Global Adjustment Assistance" that would offer benefits to workers displaced not just by trade, but by all aspects of globalization.

Enacting Fair Trade

To combat protectionist temptation and build on the ability of the country to cope with the tides of globalization, U.S. trade policy should also tailor its primary and secondary education system to equip graduates with the skills to compete in a global economy by emphasizing science, engineering, and foreign languages. The United States will be forced to take a look at redirecting resources away from war and toward upgrading its own infrastructure. New York City's status as the preeminent financial center is threatened by cities like London and Tokyo.

To realize Baucus's goal of renewing fast track trade negotiation authority, the U.S. Congress must feel it has the capital to support trade agreements, otherwise fast track will be stuck in a pit stop. "Fair trade" agreements or comprehensive economic partnership agreements would continue the tradition of including labor and environmental provisions, like those with Jordan and Chile. A Washington trade journalist recently put it to me: "Labor and environmental enforcement is needed so that politicians feel comfortable enough to support FTAs [free trade agreements] without getting clobbered by labor groups. Then we can renew fast track."

These comprehensive agreements commit partners to enforce their own environmental and labor laws, which in turn comply with the International Labour Organization. They could also offer deeper integration in the areas of labor movement and port screening, for example, to trading partners that honor the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion. These three freedoms are good proxies for transparency, labor rights, and civil society, all necessary for the establishment of fair trade practices.

Other powerful approaches include fair trade and ethical trade initiatives. As clean energy consultant David Dell puts it: That which is truly profitable is also sustainable and that which is truly sustainable is profitable. Social entrepreneurs, local governments, and increasingly business gurus like Michael Porter have reached this axiom. To these ends, fair trade initiatives, such as HandCrafting Justice and Global Goods Partners, seek to cut out the middleman, pay producers fair wages, and reinvest in community health and education.

Ethically traded goods are those produced by companies that ensure labor standards are enforced within their own company and by their suppliers. Another idea is for companies to shoulder some of the burden of providing a safety net to those laid off when jobs are moved to take advantage of cheaper labor. Trade adjustment insurance and freer labor flows are part of the compact of free trade that is yet unfulfilled.

The above initiatives define corporate social responsibility: philanthropy and reinvestment, good labor practices, and business models that benefit people and the planet as a whole. They help sustain a healthy trading system and act as a de facto "trade Peace Corps," putting a human face to an American-led free market system. Given the services these initiatives provide to American leadership, the U.S. government should consider bolstering them by establishing a fund to support grassroots fair trade activities and giving tax breaks to socially responsible business models.

Notice that tariffs and competitive devaluations are not on the list. Although both of these approaches are advocated under the guise of protecting fairness and even human rights, history and economics tend to dispute those claims. Instead, openness—with the proper safety net—can help advance human rights.

For the United States to justify and prolong its international leadership, it must ensure that the rest of the world can access the benefits of globalization. It can start by promulgating a more thoughtful approach to trade—one that is neither protectionist nor free market fundamentalist. By finding a middle road between these extremes, the United States can realize its own dream of freedom and justice for all.

PERSPECTIVE 2

Protectionism's Other Names (2010)

Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya²



Lagging employment recovery and continuing high levels of unemployment have marked the macroeconomic scenario in the United States. So, it is natural that the United States, which chaired the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh, would use its privileged position as the host to invite the US secretary of labour, a well-known union activist, to convene a meeting of the employment and labour ministers on the jobs situation prior to the next G-20 heads of state meeting in Canada.

The macroeconomic aspects of the labour situation are indeed a proper focus of such a meeting. But the Pittsburgh declaration goes further and urges the G-20 countries not to “disregard or weaken internationally recognised labour standards” and to “implement policies consistent with ILO fundamental principles and rights at work”.

Led by their federation, the AFL-CIO, the US labour unions have had a long history of pushing for a “social clause” into trade treaties at every forum. For international economists familiar with this history and the stranglehold the unions exercise on the Democratic Party and Congress today, the G-20 declaration constitutes a carefully designed trap. It is drafted in a way in which the US and the European Union can get developing-country employment and labour ministers unfamiliar with the agenda and influence of developed-country unions, to endorse measures that have a “feel good” but are, in fact, a protectionist dagger aimed at our jugulars. Indeed, the US undersecretary of labour, Sandra Polanski, who has been put in charge of the meeting, is well known to us as a long-standing proponent of such measures and a relentless activist on their behalf.

When the unions in the US and the EU insist on a set of labour standards in the developing countries with which they compete for markets at home and abroad, they take an altruistic line: we are doing this out of solidarity; we are doing it for your workers. But when you push them hard, they always say: it is

² Source: Jagdish Bhagwati & Arvind Panagariya, “Protectionism’s Other Names,” *The Times of India* (February 23, 2010). © Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya. Reprinted by permission of the authors.

“unfair” to have to compete with others who do not have our standards. Now, the latter is an argument about competition; it is about losing out in trade. So it is an argument motivated by self-interest, not altruism.

The traditional demand by the American unions has been that others should have the same standards as the US does. But this argument is comic, were it not tragic. Is the US a paragon of virtue on labour standards? After all, less than 10 per cent of its private workforce is now unionised. And this is because the main weapon that unions have, the right to strike, has been crippled by the Taft-Hartley legislation of over 50 years ago. Even liberal universities have refused to let their administrative employees organise. In consequence, Human Rights Watch, which has investigated the right to unionise, a central feature of the ILO principles, has found that this is far from being guaranteed in the US.

So, US unions have shifted to asking for ILO “core standards” instead. But this will not wash either. The US has not even ratified many of these core conventions. So, in effect, this version is also to be aimed at others, not themselves.

The truth of the matter is that, frightened by competition from our exports, the American and European unions seek relief. This can be obtained by conventional import protectionism. But, if this is constrained by WTO obligations, then it can be obtained by raising the cost of production of the foreign rivals. Raising their labour obligations is one way of doing this. Therefore, we have called it a form of “export protectionism”, like the Voluntary Export Restraints, where the exporting country restrains its exports.

An alert must therefore be sounded and the matter discussed at the highest levels of the Indian government, with the labour minister fully briefed by trade experts and officials on the traps that await him at the impending meeting. We can also be sure that the US delegation will be assisted by Washington think-tank proponents of such protectionist proposals, many of them from the Carnegie Endowment (where Polanski sat during the Bush years), the Petersen Institute for International Economics (which has had a history of advocating trade-labour link), and the Centre for Global Development (which is captive to the protectionist notion of fair trade extending to labour standards in trade). Our best trade experts can effectively counter their arguments if only we use them.

But it is not enough to push back on proposals, which will harm us and the developing countries, more generally. India needs to be proactive and offer its own resolution that explicitly discourages the insertion of labour clauses into trade treaties and institutions. The intellectual argument is on our side on this issue. We should not be content to act as if we can eat at the banquet but have no say in the choice of the menu.

Bhagwati is university professor and Panagariya is professor of economics at Columbia University.



7

The IMF, Global Inequality, and Development

Key Controversy: What Are the Obstacles to Development?

Through the lens of the controversy surrounding the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this chapter explores the debate about the nature of the global economy and the obstacles to development. The immediate issue is the consequences of reforms enacted in many developing countries as a condition for receiving IMF loans. The purpose of these reforms was to promote economic development and reduce poverty. But as is often the case with disagreements on specific policies, there is a much deeper and more fundamental clash of worldviews informing this debate. The IMF's policies embody a liberal economic worldview in which pro-market policies and integration into the global economy are considered prerequisites for economic growth and development. From this perspective, the misguided policies of developing states have been the main obstacles to development. Critics of the IMF disagree. In their view, the primary obstacle to development is a global economic order that works systematically to the advantage of the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the poor and weak. Heavily influenced by a radical/Marxist analysis of global capitalism, this perspective portrays the IMF as an integral part of a global economic system that perpetuates poverty and inequality. ■

In January 2014, Oxfam released a report on global economic inequality, noting that “the wealth of the 1 percent richest people in the world amounts to \$110 trillion. That’s 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half of the world’s population...[which] owns the same as the richest 85 people in the world.” Although it is possible to quibble over some statistics, this general portrait of economic inequality is surely close to the mark. It has not always been like this. Just two centuries ago, inequalities of wealth on a global scale were relatively modest. When Napoleon’s armies marched across the continent, the average European was not much richer than the average Asian: everyone in the world was poor. The Industrial Revolution began to change this, as the European societies, where it began, rapidly became the most prosperous the world has ever seen.

The dramatic global inequalities that we continue to see were not a result of some people becoming poor; it was a consequence of some becoming very wealthy while others did not. As Hung and Kucinskas explain, “since the onset of industrial capitalism in late-eighteenth-century Europe, the income distribution of the world’s population has undergone a two-centuries-long process of polarization between the beneficiaries of industrial wealth in the developed world and those struggling to catch up.”¹ Although some have succeeded in this struggle, for most in the developing world, it continues, as does the debate over the obstacles to, and requirements for, success.

The Industrial Revolution and the emergence of global inequality were also accompanied by the second great wave of European colonialism (the first took place after the discovery of the new world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). Since colonialism was so closely linked with economic inequality, many expected or hoped that the unraveling of empires after World War II would spell the end of inequality. The postwar international economic order, after all, was based on the assumption that open markets and free trade benefit everyone in the long run—to reuse the cliché, a rising tide lifts all boats. Free trade was supposed to be good not only for wealthy industrialized nations, but also developing nations.

From Decolonization to Structural Adjustment

international division of labor Refers to the division between core nations, which have diversified manufacturing-based economies, and peripheral nations, which have specialized economies that rely on raw material exports.

The wave of post–World War II decolonization may have transformed the political map of the world, but it had relatively little impact on its economic landscape. The optimistic expectation that economic development would follow rapidly on the heels of political independence was quickly dashed, as sovereignty proved perfectly compatible with continuing economic inequality. Decolonization did nothing to alter the **international division of labor** that emerged over the previous century. Manufacturing was still concentrated in the North, whereas the newly independent countries of the South remained sources of primary products (e.g., unprocessed raw materials and agricultural goods). Not only were Third World economies still reliant on primary product exports, but also most of them depended on just one or two products for the bulk of their export earnings. They were highly specialized, not diversified, economies. It was (and still is) not unusual for a developing country to receive more than half of its export income from the sale of a single commodity. More than two decades after independence, for example, 96 percent of Uganda’s export earnings came from coffee, 89 percent of Zambia’s from copper, and 59 percent of Ghana’s from cocoa.²

By the late 1950s, this division of labor and specialization came to be viewed as an obstacle to development for two reasons. First, the prices of many primary products often fluctuated wildly from year to year, and the resulting instability in income created difficulties for planning and development. As Michael Latham explains with respect to Ghana and cocoa, “as prices for that commodity fluctuated on a volatile world market, the economy went through unpredictable cycles of boom and bust that made long-term development planning impossible.”³ Second, there was a general tendency for the price of primary products except oil to fall

without any similar reduction in the price of manufactured goods. Economists refer to this as **declining terms of trade**—that is, the prices for commodities that developing nations sell are going down, whereas prices for the manufactured goods they buy are not. For example, when fiber optic cable began replacing copper wire in the 1980s, the price of copper on the world market fell by nearly 80 percent. Nations like Zambia were devastated. Focusing on Latin America, Latham notes that “as foreign exchange earnings in primary exports … continued to fall behind manufactured imports, Latin American nations accumulated little domestic savings to invest in development programs.”⁴ Left unchecked, this trend would inexorably lead to even greater poverty and inequality.

The logical solution to this dilemma was for developing nations to reduce their reliance on primary products and shift to manufacturing. As Dani Rodrik observes, “[S]pecialize in commodities and raw materials, and you will get stuck in the periphery of the world economy…hostage to fluctuations in world prices.” But “if you can push your way into manufactures…you may pave a path to convergence with the world’s rich countries.”⁵ Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. The problem was that in the initial stages, manufactured goods from Third World countries would not be very competitive with those of established industries in North America, Europe, and Japan. How could developing nations create a manufacturing base in the face of competition from the already-industrialized economies? The solution adopted in Third World countries, particularly in Latin America and Africa, was **import substitution**. That is, domestically manufactured goods were substituted for previously imported manufactured goods. There were two components of this strategy. First, governments channeled investment into selected industries. Second, tariffs and quotas protected “infant industries” from international competition.

Import substitution met with some initial success during the 1950s and 1960s, with many Latin American and African countries experiencing high rates of economic growth. During this period, the focus was largely on low-tech industries such as nondurable consumer goods (shoes, clothes, etc.). These industries did not require huge investments and were very labor-intensive, allowing Third World nations to take advantage of their large pools of low-wage but low-skilled labor. Making the transition to high-tech, capital-intensive manufacturing, such as electronics and appliances, proved more problematic. Lacking the domestic capital for investment, Third World nations were forced to look abroad for investment capital. There were two potential sources—multinational corporations and international financial institutions. Both options had drawbacks. Relying on corporations increased their power and influence—something viewed with great suspicion in recently decolonized nations. Borrowed money, on the other hand, would have to be paid back, with interest. But because this investment was supposed to produce economic growth, paying back the loans a few years down the road was not expected to pose much of a problem.

By the 1970s, however, Third World economies began to stagnate. The situation was exacerbated when oil-producing nations, acting through the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** raised prices substantially, beginning in 1973 and again in 1979. Although higher oil prices inconvenienced wealthy industrial

declining terms of trade The tendency for the prices of raw material to decline relative to manufactured goods.

import substitution A policy designed to promote economic development by restricting foreign imports in order to replace them with domestically produced goods.

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Founded in 1960, OPEC was and remains an attempt to create a cartel of major oil producers for the purpose of raising the global price of oil.

debt crisis The inability of many developing nations to pay back foreign debts, beginning in the early 1980s.

conditionality The IMF's policy of requiring certain economic policies and reforms in order to receive loans.

structural adjustment policies The bundle of market-oriented reforms required for developing nations to receive IMF loans.

economies, they crippled many developing nations. Thus, by the mid- to late 1970s, many developing countries saw economic growth rates plummet and the cost of imported energy soar.

The cumulative result was the so-called **debt crisis**. Several major developing countries were unable to pay back the money borrowed during the 1970s. The most significant of the early crises involved Mexico. Throughout the 1970s, Mexico's debt burden grew faster than its economy as a whole. By the early 1980s, it was unable to pay back its loans on schedule. Fearing the consequences of a Mexican default, especially for major international banks, the IMF lent Mexico money to make its payments. The money did not come without strings, however. The IMF insisted that Mexico enact economic reforms that it thought were necessary to promote the economic growth needed for Mexico to repay its loans. This set the precedent for subsequent IMF bailouts throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia over the next two decades. The practice of requiring reforms in exchange for IMF assistance was known as **conditionality**. Although details differed, the same basic conditions were imposed on all nations seeking IMF assistance. Taken together, these were referred to as **structural adjustment policies**, and it is these policies that prompted the rising chorus of criticism directed against the IMF.

Structural Adjustment: Cure and Diagnosis

IMF structural adjustment programs were designed to solve a problem. Mounting debt combined with slow growth left many Third World nations on the verge of bankruptcy. On this there is little disagreement. But Jagdish Bhagwati reminds us that in economic policy, as in medicine, "the cure is defined by the diagnosis."⁶ To continue the medical metaphor, the debt crisis was the symptom and structural adjustment policies were the cure. But the nature of this cure depended upon the IMF's diagnosis of the problem. From the IMF's perspective, the immediate problem was the lack of economic growth, but this begs the more basic question: What was the cause of poor growth? The IMF blamed the misguided economic policies of developing nations.

In blaming misguided policies for poor growth, the IMF stepped into the center of the most enduring debate in development studies: the relative importance of domestic versus international obstacles to development. For the last several decades, debates about the causes of underdevelopment have been defined by two basic positions. One perspective sees the global economic system as the primary obstacle to genuine development, in that the dynamics of global capitalism ensure that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. An alternative analysis locates the obstacles to development in the policies of developing states. The IMF sided with the latter position.

The IMF and Neoliberalism

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a period of not only emerging crisis in much of the developing world, but also changing intellectual currents in the industrialized world. Since the end of World War II, economic thought in the

United States and Europe was dominated by the ideas of British economist **John Maynard Keynes** (1883–1946). While supporting the essential features of capitalism, Keynes advocated a greater role for government in moderating the ups and downs of the capitalist business cycle. During recessions, for example, when growth is low and unemployment high, governments should spend at a deficit to inject money into the economy to encourage growth and employment. By the mid-1970s, Keynesianism came under attack by economists such as **Milton Friedman** (1912–2006), who favored a diminished role for government. The election of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain was an indication of these shifting intellectual currents. Domestically, both Thatcher and Reagan pursued similar agendas: tax cuts, lower government spending (or at least slower rates of growth), fewer regulations, scaled-back social welfare programs, and privatization.

The growing influence of free market policies was bolstered by the total failure of state socialism and communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where decades of state planning and government control produced economic stagnation and social malaise. Even though the Soviet model of development appeared attractive to some in the developing world during the 1950s and 1960s because it held out the promise of rapid development, its luster was gone by the 1980s. The political and intellectual triumph of liberal democratic capitalism appeared universal. This vision of smaller government and increased reliance on the market came to be known as **neoliberalism**.

The developing world's debt crisis coincided with the ascendance of neoliberalism. The structural adjustment reforms imposed by the IMF and the policies that Reagan and Thatcher tried to enact were cut from the same intellectual cloth. There were several key reforms in virtually every structural adjustment plan, including:

1. **Fiscal austerity**, or balancing government budgets. This usually entailed either increases in government revenues (usually new fees for government services) or, more commonly, reductions in government spending.
2. *Reductions in government subsidies to domestic industries.* These subsidies had often been part of import substitution strategies.
3. *Reduction of tariffs, quotas, and other barriers to imports.* This would subject domestic industries to international competition.
4. **Capital market liberalization.** This is a technical term for reducing restrictions on foreign investment.
5. *Privatization*, or selling off government-owned industries to the private sector.

Taken together, these policies reflected the IMF's worldview “that market forces, liberalized [free] trade and payments, and general freedom in economic matters are usually more efficient and promote greater prosperity and a better allocation of resources than a system characterized by controls and restrictions.”⁷ This bundle of policies and the underlying liberal/neoliberal economic philosophy became known as the **Washington consensus**, a description reflecting the significant role of the United States in shaping these policies.

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) An influential British economist who advocated a substantial role for government in regulating the ups and downs of the business cycle through fiscal and monetary policy.

Milton Friedman (1912–2006) A Nobel Prize-winning economist influential in the resurgence of liberal/neoliberal (i.e., pro-market) economic policies and thought in the 1970s and 1980s.

neoliberalism A contemporary version of economic liberalism, emphasizing the importance of limited government, reduced regulation, and the market economy.

Fiscal austerity Controlling government spending and taxation with a preference for balanced budgets. Demands for fiscal austerity were central elements of the IMF's structural adjustment programs.

Capital market liberalization Removing barriers to foreign investment, a key element of IMF structural adjustment programs.

Washington consensus A label for the liberal ideas of free trade and limited government that guide many of the policies of the IMF toward developing nations, especially in the context of its structural adjustment loans.

Growth Is Possible: The Market and Development

The IMF and its supporters reject the argument that a liberal international economic order is an obstacle to development. If all the development efforts of the past fifty years had met with failure, there might be good reason to blame the global economic system. But this has not been the case. The past fifty years have produced some abject failures, some modest development, and even some truly remarkable success stories. David Landes notes that “since independence, the heterogeneous nations that we know collectively as the South, or as the Third World … have achieved a wide diversity of results. These have ranged from the spectacular successes of East Asia, to mixed results in Latin America to outright regression in such places as Burma and much of Africa.”⁸ This diversity of outcomes can be illustrated with some striking comparisons between Africa and East Asia. In the early 1950s, for example, Egypt had roughly the same average income as most East Asian nations, but today, incomes in East Asia are between five and thirty times greater. Landes is struck particularly by the different trajectories of Nigeria and Indonesia: “In 1965, Nigeria (oil exporter) had higher GDP per capita than Indonesia (another oil exporter); twenty-five years later, Indonesia had three times the Nigerian level.”⁹ Even more dramatic is a comparison of Ghana and South Korea: In 1957, Ghana had a larger gross national product (GNP) than South Korea, but by 1996, Ghana’s GNP stood at \$7 billion, whereas South Korea’s GNP had soared to \$485 billion, almost seventy times larger than Ghana’s.¹⁰

What does this diversity tell us about the causes of development and underdevelopment? To many observers, the fact that some nations have achieved genuine development and others have not indicates that “the basic obstacles to economic development [can be found] within the less developed countries themselves.” But what might these obstacles be? The list of possibilities is long indeed: war and frequent civil unrest, political instability, rampant government corruption, cultural and religious beliefs that inhibit initiative, and cumbersome bureaucracies, to identify just a few. One of the most commonly cited problems, however, is bad or misguided policies. From the IMF’s perspective, one thing was clear: Excessive government control of the economy and attempts to cut off developing economies from foreign trade and investment are definitely *not* routes to development; instead, “market openness, fiscal discipline and noninterventionism constituted the route to economic development.”¹¹

The poster children for economic development are the so-called East Asian tigers, or newly industrializing countries (NICs). As Robert Gilpin notes, “The most successful economies among the less developed countries are precisely those that have put their houses in order and that participate most aggressively in the world economy. They are the so-called Gang of Four: Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan.”¹² Do these cases support the neoliberal view that free market policies and integration into the global economy lead to development? Is this what Gilpin means by “putting their houses in order”? This is a difficult question. On one hand, there is no denying that East Asian governments were often heavily involved in directing investment into targeted industries. This was

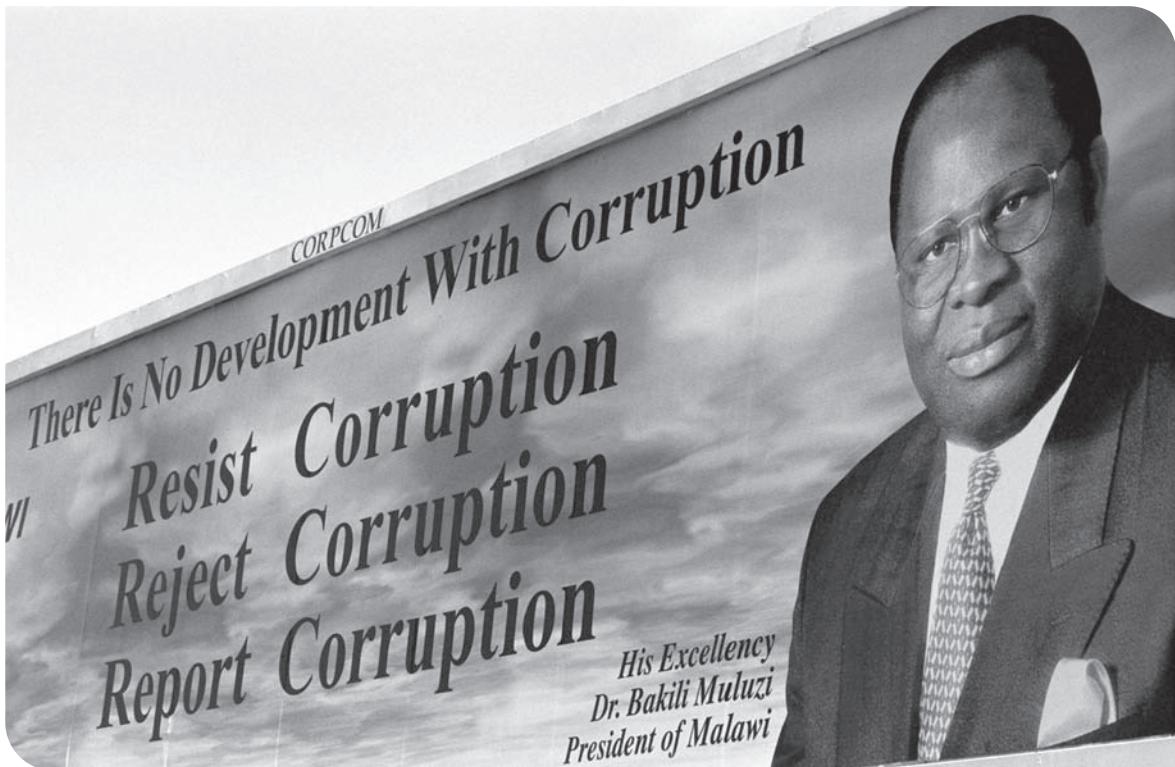


The skyline of prosperous Singapore, relatively poor a few decades ago, indicates for many the development is possible within the existing international economic order.

Source: © oksana.perkins/Shutterstock.com

development with a heavy dose of government guidance, which appears to contradict advice that such decisions are best left to the market. Nonetheless, their policies were more market- and trade-oriented than the import substitution policies of Latin America and many African nations. According to Stephen Haggard, “Intervention may have been extensive in the East Asian NICs … but it has been less extensive than in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.”¹³ In Gilpin’s opinion, East Asian development policies “have worked with the market and not against it … They have demonstrated that the liberals are quite correct in their emphasis on the benefits of the price mechanism in the efficient allocation of resources.”¹⁴ Most important, the East Asian nations clearly embraced international trade as the engine of the economic growth, even if their governments played a more active role domestically.

India provides a somewhat more clear-cut example of successful market-oriented policies. In the two decades following independence, India’s economic performance was disappointing. According to Jagdish Bhagwati, “The main elements of India’s policy framework stifled growth until the 1970s.” These elements included “extensive bureaucratic controls over production, investment and trade,”



Recognizing the role of corruption in hindering economic development, anticorruption campaigns have emerged in many developing countries.

Source: Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images News/Getty Images

as well as “inward looking trade and investment policies” and “a substantial public sector, going well beyond the conventional confines of public utilities and infrastructure.”¹⁵ Beginning in the 1980s (and especially after 1991), India undertook reforms to reduce government control and increase foreign trade and investment. The result has been consistently higher rates of economic growth and a substantial reduction in poverty. Although India’s reforms were not the result of IMF pressure, its experience is seen as confirmation of the IMF’s underlying market-oriented philosophy. Deirdre McCloskey makes the same point by including China: “the big economic story of our own times is that the Chinese in 1978 and then the Indians in 1991 adopted liberal ideas in the economy...and then China and India exploded in economic growth.”¹⁶

Chile provides a more controversial case. In the late 1970s, under the influence of economists trained by University of Chicago economists such as Friedman, the Chilean government adopted a radical free market agenda, opening the country’s economy to imports and foreign investment while reducing government spending, going so far as to privatize Chile’s version of social security. After some initial hardship, Chile enjoyed more than a decade of sustained economic growth that

went unrivaled in Latin America. Chile's example remains controversial for two reasons. First, its market reforms were indeed radical, going well beyond anything the IMF demands. Second, the reforms were enacted by a military dictatorship that did not have to worry about its unpopularity.¹⁷ The connection between military dictatorship and market reforms was not exactly a public relations success for advocates of similar reforms elsewhere in Latin America.

When these experiences are combined with the failure of state socialism in the Soviet bloc, the lessons seem clear. First, government interventions that work against the market are a recipe for economic inefficiency, stagnation, and perpetual underdevelopment. Second, those areas of the world that have prospered participate extensively in the global economy. P. T. Bauer, who advocated neoliberal policies before they became fashionable, saw this correlation: "The materially more advanced societies and regions of the Third World are those with which the West established the most numerous, diversified, and extensive contacts." Conversely, "the level of material achievement usually diminishes as one moves away from the foci of Western impact ... The poorest areas of the Third World have no external trade. Their condition shows that the causes of backwardness are domestic and that commercial contacts are beneficial."¹⁸

Recent evidence seems to support this position. In December 2001, the World Bank released a study of developing economies during the 1990s, focusing on the importance of trade as a measure of globalization. The most important indicator was a nation's ratio of international trade to overall national income (e.g., the significance of trade for its economy). The two dozen developing nations for whom trade was most significant saw their economies grow on average nearly 5 percent a year. Life expectancy and schooling levels increased as well. This was better than the 2 percent increase registered by developed nations. It was also much better than the rest of the developing world, for whom trade was less significant: Their GNP actually declined by 1 percent a year over the same period.¹⁹ The conclusion: trade is good for the developing world and its people. Douglas Irwin reflects the consensus among neoliberal economists, although he explains that trade must take place in a larger setting conducive to economic growth: "Recent experience suggests that developing countries can reap substantial benefits from adopting more open trade policies, but that such policies alone do not guarantee development, particularly when corruption, civil conflicts, and other institutional failings prevent local entrepreneurs from taking advantage of world markets."²⁰

The problem of corruption in particular has received a lot of attention in recent years, in part because there appears to be a fairly close correlation between levels of corruption and poverty/underdevelopment: the least corrupt countries tend to be the wealthiest, while the most corrupt are often the poorest. The World Bank has gone so far as to declare corruption "public enemy number one" in its battle to end extreme poverty by 2030.²¹ Anticorruption campaigns and protests are now common in many developing states. Like all aspects of the development debate, however, the importance of corruption in hindering development is controversial. Part of the problem is that "corruption" is a very broad category, encompassing everything from bribing petty government bureaucrats to

diverting and stealing huge sums of public money for private gain. It is also not clear how we determine levels of corruption, most of which undoubtedly occurs out of public view and is thus not easily measured in any direct way. The most commonly used figures are provided by Transparency International, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that regularly ranks countries from the most to least based on *perceptions* of how corrupt governments are, not hard data on the prevalence of actual corruption. But even if we could measure corruption and establish a correlation between corruption and poverty, there would remain the familiar problem of causality—that is, are developing countries corrupt because they are poor, or poor because they are corrupt? The answer to this question is critical in determining what problem needs to be tackled first—is reducing corruption a prerequisite for promoting development, or is development a prerequisite for reducing corruption? Either way, no one thinks that corruption is good for development or poverty reduction.²²

The (Neo)liberal Vision

It is important to understand how IMF policies reflect the fundamental assumptions of liberalism. The emphasis on the market and competition to spur development stems not only from a belief that it promotes economic efficiency, but also from a deeper assumption of a harmony of interests. When everyone pursues his or her own economic self-interest in the market, we are all better off in the long run. People and businesses prosper when they provide others with goods and services they want at prices they are willing to pay. In advancing their own interests, they are satisfying the needs and wants of others. Applying this assumption to the global economy, liberals reject any zero-sum analysis in which the wealth of the North comes at the expense of the South. Developing nations are not poor *because* others are rich. Ghanaians did not become poorer as South Koreans grew richer—they simply failed to keep pace. There is no need to choose between Northern prosperity and Southern development. There is no need to choose between multinational profits and Southern development. The rising tide of global economic growth can lift all boats if states pursue appropriate policies.

Neoliberalism as Neoimperialism

How can one argue with the apparent success of market policies and international trade in promoting development? Critics of the IMF, neoliberalism, and structural adjustment make three basic arguments. First, the neoliberal vision fails to recognize the fundamental obstacles to development that result from the unequal terms on which developing nations participate in the global economy. Second, after twenty years, there is little evidence that structural adjustment policies promote economic growth or reduce poverty. Third, developed nations are hypocritical in imposing a model of development that virtually none of them adopted when they were developing.

The Political Economy of Dependence and Exploitation

Although criticisms of the IMF and neoliberalism come from many perspectives, most critiques are rooted in **dependency theory**, which emerged in Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s to explain the region's lack of development. Unlike neoliberals, "all dependency theorists maintain that underdevelopment is due primarily to external forces of the world capitalist system and is not due to the policies of LDCs [less developed countries] themselves."²³ Dependency theorists see a world divided between an industrial **core** and an underdeveloped **periphery** (a category of **semi-periphery** has also been included to account for the very few developing nations that have managed to move out of the periphery, such as the East Asian economies). Although the troops and governors of formal colonialism left long ago, a new form of economic imperialism, referred to as **neoimperialism** or **neocolonialism**, has taken its place. The primary agent of this new imperialism is no longer colonial governments but multinational corporations, "the embodiment of international capital,"²⁴ which benefit from an impoverished periphery because it provides cheap commodities and inexpensive labor that allow them to reap windfall profits. This profiteering is done in conjunction with a domestic political-economic elite within Third World nations that, in this view, has been bought off by, and serves the interests of, international capital. This elite collaborates with foreign capital in its domination of peripheral nations and forms an "anti-nation" within the nation. Even when developing nations experience high rates of economic growth, the new wealth goes disproportionately to economic elites "who are able to enjoy the lifestyle and consumption patterns of developed countries of the North ... [while] large segments of the population experience no significant improvement in their standard of living."²⁵ The benefits of growth do not "filter" or "trickle" down to the masses. So-called economic growth in many developing nations has not always resulted in the reduction of poverty or improved living standards. Growth and development are not one and the same. Impressive statistics about economic growth are misleading and all too often obscure the growing inequality within developing nations.

Increasing inequality within developing nations is accompanied by a growing gap between developed and developing nations in the global economy. The periphery is systematically impoverished or underdeveloped as multinationals earn substantial profits that they send home to line the pockets of shareholders and corporate executives. Profits are not reinvested in the Third World nations where they were made. The result is a massive transfer of wealth from the periphery to the core. The contrast with the economic development of nations such as the United States is critical here. Although Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller raked in hundreds of millions in profits during the late 1800s and early 1900s, at least they reinvested most of their profits back into the U.S. economy, producing genuine development. But when corporations earn huge profits in the periphery today, these profits are *not* reinvested but rather siphoned away. This constitutes an exploitative process of unequal exchange that produces underdevelopment and exacerbates global inequality.

dependency theory A theory of global economics influenced by a Marxist understanding of capitalism. The world is seen as divided between a wealthy and powerful core and a poor and impoverished periphery that are locked in an unequal and fundamentally exploitative relationship. From this perspective, it is the global economic system, not just bad policies pursued in developing nations, that perpetuate international inequality.

periphery The division of the world into classes somewhat analogous to Marx's bourgeoisie and proletariat. The **core** is the small group of wealthy and powerful states exploiting the larger group of weak and impoverished states (i.e., the **periphery**).

semiperiphery In dependency theory, the small number of developing nations that have developed to the point where they can no longer be considered part of the periphery.

neoimperialism or **neocolonialism** A pattern and a policy of economic inequality, exploitation, and domination that have persisted despite the end of formal colonialism.

The fundamental difference between dependency theory and neoliberalism hinges on whether there is a harmony or a conflict of interests between North and South. As we have already noted, neoliberalism argues that Northern wealth does not require Southern underdevelopment. Brazil and Nigeria are not poor *because* the United States and Great Britain are rich. Northern and Southern nations can prosper simultaneously. Dependency theory makes the opposite assumption, seeing a basic conflict of interest in which Northern prosperity depends on the exploitation of an underdeveloped South. As Paul Baran explains, “Economic development in underdeveloped countries is profoundly inimical to the dominant interests in advanced capitalist countries. Supplying many important raw materials to the industrialized countries, providing their corporations with vast profits and investment outlets, the backward world has always represented the indispensable hinterland of the highly developed capitalist West.”²⁶

According to this analysis, the IMF is a vehicle for advancing the interests of the dominant capitalist states. As an almost physical manifestation of its role in the global economy, the IMF is headquartered just a few blocks from the White House and the World Bank in Washington, DC. This alone is telling. Voting within the IMF is weighted according to a nation’s contributions to the fund. Because it contributes 18 percent of IMF funds, the United States has an equivalent share of voting power; as a result, it is almost impossible for the IMF to do anything over the objections of the United States. Belgium and the Netherlands combined have more voting power than China, the world’s most populous nation, and Canada has more voting power than India, the second most populous nation.²⁷ In what some found to be a moment of rare candor, U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor once characterized the IMF as a “battering ram” for U.S. interests.²⁸

There are also less obvious sources of bias. Most IMF economists were trained at universities in the United States, where they were inculcated into the dominant economic ideology of neoliberalism. They attend cocktail parties in Georgetown and dine in swanky Manhattan restaurants, discussing abstract economic theory without ever confronting the reality of global poverty. Many of the fund’s top officials have close ties to investment banks and multinational corporations. Even though they may sincerely believe that they have the best interests of the developing world at heart, many observers think that they are deluding themselves. In the words of William Greider, the IMF and World Bank “serve as paternalistic agents of global capital—enforcing debt collection, supervising the financial accounts of poor nations, promoting wage suppression and other policy nostrums, preparing the poorer countries for eventual acceptance into the global trading system.”²⁹

The Failure of Structural Adjustment

The impact of structural adjustment programs is exhibit A in the brief against the IMF because there is little evidence that they have achieved their objectives. The IMF itself has been able to muster only cautious and lukewarm evaluations of its own programs. Withering critiques, on the other hand, are almost too numerous to count. The list of negative effects attributed to structural adjustment programs is long. It is difficult to think of any problem in the developing world that has not

supposedly been exacerbated by IMF policies. The most common criticism is that structural adjustment policies have had a devastating impact on the poor and most vulnerable in developing nations.

Take, for example, the demand for fiscal discipline and balanced budgets. There are only two ways to balance a budget—bring in more revenues or reduce expenditures. In most instances, the latter course is pursued, and reductions in government spending usually concentrate on social and welfare programs because cutting military spending runs the risk of angering politically powerful military establishments. As a result, “governments find it easier to trim their budgets by charging fees at rural clinics and schools than by firing soldiers or well-connected cronies.”³⁰ These cuts usually fall most heavily on those already living on the edge. Even minor increases in fees could be crushing for people who live on the equivalent of one or two dollars a day.

Feminists have drawn particular attention to the impact of such cuts on women: “A measure which has an immediate impact on women is the reduction of state expenditures on social services, with women expected to expand their domestic responsibilities to compensate for decreasing state investment in children’s education or health.”³¹ Increases in fees for government services such as health care and education can also have a perverse impact on girls from poor families in societies that have a gender bias in favor of male children. When families must choose which of their children get medical care or go to school, girls often lose out. And when government subsidies to industry are reduced, women workers are often the first to be laid off.

Some of the most significant disagreements between the IMF and its critics concern foreign investment and its consequences. One of the goals of structural adjustment is to reduce barriers to foreign investment and create a stable economic environment that will attract investment. Building factories, hiring and training workers, and introducing new technologies all supposedly contribute to economic growth and development. Critics disagree. Foreign corporate investment tends to be limited to those things that contribute to the bottom line—profits. In the long run, genuine development requires a basic infrastructure—transportation systems, hospitals, and schools—that facilitates commerce and creates a healthy, educated workforce. Corporations, however, do not build roads, schools, and hospitals. Only governments can undertake these basic public investments. But saddled with huge debts, and under IMF pressure to balance budgets and reduce spending, most developing nations are unable to make these investments. Denied the resources to provide the infrastructure that only governments can, any escape from poverty and underdevelopment is unlikely. In this context, foreign investment will exploit underdevelopment, not reverse it. Foreign investment may contribute to economic growth in the sense that some people get richer, but this does not necessarily result in development in a broader sense or the alleviation of poverty.

Structural adjustment has even failed on its own terms. According to the IMF, the primary goal of structural adjustment was economic growth. The problem is that it does not appear to have created much growth. The IMF’s own study concluded that growth rates in countries under structural adjustment increased from –1.5 percent in the 1980s to 0.3 percent in the early 1990s and 1 percent by the

mid-1990s. This is certainly improvement, but nothing to get terribly excited about.³² Other studies failed to find any improvement. A 2001 World Bank found “no evidence for a direct effect of structural adjustment on growth.”³³ As Rodrik points out, “countries in Latin America and elsewhere that jettisoned ISI [import-substitution industrialization] in favor of the Washington consensus ended up, for the most part, with considerably lower rates of growth.”³⁴

The Hypocrisy of Neoliberalism: Do as We Say, Not as We Did

Developing nations also see a large measure of hypocrisy in demands for neoliberal reforms made upon them. Not only do they think that neoliberal policies are unlikely to produce development in the future, but such policies have never done so in the past. The United States and other developed nations are caught in the grips of a mythology about their own history and development that bears little resemblance to reality. In his book *Business Organization and the Myth of the Market Economy*, economic historian William Lazonick examined the policies that today’s developed states followed during their development. The notion that free trade and limited government intervention propelled their development is, as his title suggests, mythical. Every nation (except the first to develop, Great Britain) followed the same pattern—they protected industries from foreign imports until they were able to compete. In the United States, for example, basic industries were protected from European (especially British) competition in the latter part of the 1800s and early 1900s. As Rodrik explains, “The United States put up very steep tariffs on manufactured imports during the Civil War and kept them high throughout the century.”³⁵ And contrary to the expectations of current neoliberal development orthodoxy, this was a period of tremendous economic growth during which the United States displaced Great Britain as the world’s largest economy. Only after World War II, when it emerged as the world’s only unscathed industrial economy, did the United States convert to free trade. It is almost comical to hear U.S. officials pontificate about the evils of tariffs and quotas, given their nation’s development history. Rick Rowden explains that “the conditions attached to IMF and World Bank loans are nothing like the policies of industrialized countries over the past 150 years.” In contrast to the mythical history of free market development, the growth of “Europe, the United States, Japan, and the four tigers of Asia … involved several decades or more of government providing protective tariffs, large subsidies to domestic industry, … tax breaks, and other incentives.” The IMF, however, requires that developing nations eliminate subsidies and leave their industries open to foreign competition. But “since no country in history has ever industrialized under such a process, structural adjustment programs are essentially a massive, radical experiment foisted on the poorest two-thirds of the world’s population.”³⁶ Harsher critics of the IMF find it both curious and telling that the developed world imposes policies that have not led to development in the past. This suggests that the IMF is not really interested in promoting genuine development. Perhaps the real purpose of these policies is to advance the economic interests of the developed states, Northern banks, and multinational corporations.

Conclusion

Despite the somewhat depressing figures on global inequality contained in the Oxfam report mentioned earlier, there is some good news. In 2012, World Bank economists noted that “the world has become considerably less poor in the last three decades...in 1981, almost three quarters of the citizens of the developing world lived on less than \$2 a day. The rate has dropped dramatically, so now 43 percent are poor.” At an even lower level of the income spectrum, “extreme poverty declined even more...[as] the share of those living on less than \$1.25 a day...has fallen by more than half.” During the 1980s and 1990s, almost all of this reduction in poverty could be traced to economic growth in India and China, but in recent years, a similar trend is evident elsewhere, even in sub-Saharan Africa, which continues to have the greatest number of people in poverty. But even this good news needs to be tempered by a realization that “1.29 billion people [still] live in abject poverty.”³⁷ That is about 1 in 6 people on the planet subsisting, if it can be called that, on less than \$1.25 a day.

But even as millions of Indians and Chinese were being lifted out of poverty in the 1990s, a study by the United Nations highlighted continuing, perhaps even increasing, levels of inequality that it deemed “grotesque.” It noted that “as of 1998, the three leading billionaires—Bill Gates, the head of Microsoft Corp., the Sultan of Brunei, and the Walton family who owns the Wal-Mart grocery store chain—had amassed at least \$135 billion in combined assets, more than the total GNP of all 43 countries categorized by the United Nations as ‘least developed.’”³⁸ Although the fortunes of Bill Gates and the Walton family fluctuate with the value of their stock, even in a bad year for Wall Street, their wealth is still striking. The same basic theme is evident in the more recent Oxfam report indicating that the world’s 85 richest people had a combined wealth exceeding that of the world’s poorest 3 billion people. One need not be a radical egalitarian socialist to think there is something not quite right about a world in which one or two families possess more wealth than entire nations.

Although the debate over the IMF touches on many of the critical issues facing developing economies, it barely scratches the surface in other respects. In some parts of the Third World where the prospects for development are bleakest, the bad news just keeps coming. The obstacles to development appear so numerous, intractable, and interrelated that it is hard to know where or how to begin addressing them. One feels trapped in an endless series of catch-22s. The interrelated problems of poverty, political instability, and lack of investment provide one example. Extreme poverty often contributes to political instability as various segments of society compete over meager resources. So long as the political situation remains volatile, foreign companies are hesitant to risk investment (and because domestic savings are so low in poor countries, foreign investment is essential). But without this investment, it is hard to overcome the poverty that contributes to political instability in the first place. Societies end up caught on the horns of a dilemma: Without economic growth, there will be no stability, but without stability, there can be no economic growth. One can also look at the relationships among

economic growth, education, and health care. Economic growth requires a decently educated and healthy workforce, but without economic growth, how do developing nations provide the education and health care that their people need? The list goes on and on. Poverty and the lack of development seem *overdetermined*—that is, there are so many obstacles that the elimination of just one or two would barely make a dent in the larger scheme of things. The knot is so tight and complex that it is difficult to know what strings to pull to loosen it.

Even in those areas where the statistics suggest only limited progress, however, some see signs of great hope. After travelling extensively through sub-Saharan Africa, journalist Dayo Olopade realized the inadequacy of western narratives of Africa as a conflict-ridden basket case of starving children and rampant corruption. It was not that conflict, starvation, and corruption are unknown on a continent of 54 countries and a billion people, but rather that this imagery has overshadowed anything that contradicts it. In city after city, she saw not a depressing landscape of despair but a vibrant, resilient, young continent (with 60 percent of the population younger than 35) of savvy, ambitious entrepreneurs who have managed to overcome and work around very real obstacles to, for example, build internet and cell-phone networks that rival those of much wealthier countries. It was “a place teeming with commercial opportunities and technological innovations.”³⁹ Reflecting on past efforts to promote development and alleviate poverty with an eye toward the future, she notes that “we’ve poured trillions of dollars of aid, we’ve tried rock stars, we’ve tried celebrity-led campaign ads, we’ve tried all sorts of things to help Africa” to no avail. The lesson she draws is that “the tools to help Africa really lie within the region, and that’s really not necessarily aid flows but human capital.”⁴⁰ Whether this is sufficient to overcome the obstacles that everyone recognizes are there remains to be seen.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Contemporary global disparities in wealth and income are a relatively new feature of global politics and reflect the unequal impact of the Industrial Revolution, in which some prospered and others remained poor.
- Originally founded to help nations deal with balance of payments problems, since the late 1970s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has played an increasingly controversial role in providing loans and policy advice to developing nations in response to the so-called debt crisis.
- As a condition for granting these loans, the IMF required economic reforms that reflected a neoliberal view of the global economy and development. Convinced that previous development strategies failed because of excessive government interference in the economy and misguided attempts to limit foreign trade and investment, the IMF's structural adjustment programs called for reducing the role of government and opening developing economies to greater trade and investment.
- By requiring these reforms to spur economic growth and development, the IMF implicitly assumes that the major obstacle to development has been the policies of developing nations themselves.
- Pointing to the success of several East Asian nations, the IMF and its supporters reject the notion that development is impossible within the existing global economy. Only the differing policies of developing nations, not some fundamental feature of the global economy, can explain the diversity of outcomes.
- From the IMF's perspective, the evidence of the past fifty years reveals one basic lesson: Market-oriented policies at home and integration into the global economy through trade and investment are the routes to growth and development, but socialism, state control, and isolation are a recipe for stagnation.
- Although the IMF draws criticism from across the ideological spectrum, the harshest and most sustained critiques are informed by dependency theory, which sees poverty and inequality as inherent features of the global capitalist economic order.
- From this perspective, IMF policies are designed to advance the interests of the wealthiest states and multinational corporations at the expense of the poorest and most vulnerable in developing countries.
- As a result, critics are not surprised that structural adjustment policies have failed even on their own terms—they have not produced economic growth or reductions in poverty.
- More important, critics reject the underlying assumption that limited government interference and opening the domestic economy to foreign competition and investment pave the path to development. This is not the model that successful nations have followed in the past, and it will not work for developing countries in the future. Such a development strategy is actually a recipe for inequality, poverty, dependence, and exploitation.
- Concerns about the IMF and structural adjustment aside, it is important to recognize the magnitude of global inequality and the multitude of obstacles to development that many Third World nations confront. Even the “right” policies, whatever those are, might not be enough in some of the most problematic areas.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the main elements and criticisms of the Washington consensus?
2. What lessons can we draw from the diversity of outcomes in development over the past 40 or 50 years?
3. Why do the East Asian economies such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore play such a controversial role in debates over the causes of underdevelopment?
4. In what sense is “neoliberalism” liberal?
5. Why do some charge the IMF and others in the developed world with hypocrisy in their prescriptions for developing nations?

KEY TERMS

Capital market liberalization, 165
conditionality, 164
core, 171
debt crisis, 164
declining terms of trade, 163
dependency theory, 171

Fiscal austerity, 165
import substitution, 163
international division of labor, 162
John Maynard Keynes, 165
Milton Friedman, 165

neocolonialism, 171
neoimperialism, 171
neoliberalism, 165
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 163
periphery, 171

semiperiphery, 171
structural adjustment policies, 164
Washington consensus, 165

FURTHER READINGS

For those interested in the IMF and structural adjustment policies, an excellent and accessible account is James R. Vreeland's *The IMF and Economic Development* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). In terms of the larger debate about the global economy and development, it might be useful to begin with two influential statements of dependency theory: Fernando Enrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) and Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979). One of the few attempts to subject dependency theory to empirical testing is Vincent Mahler, *Dependency Approaches to International Political Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Perhaps the most forceful (and quite harsh) critique of dependency theory is Robert Packenham, *The Dependency Movement: Scholarship and Politics in Development Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). Although not explicitly intended as critiques of dependency theory, two works that reject its underlying assumptions are David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of*

Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some Are So Poor (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), and Nathan Rosenberg and L. E. Bridzell Jr., *How the West Grew Rich: The Economic Transformation of the Industrial World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). An effort to explain the success and failure of development in terms of cultural values is Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). And an excellent overall survey of international economics is Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). Two works presenting very different perspectives, especially on the controversial issue of foreign aid, are Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities of Our Time* (New York: Penguin, 2005) and William Easterly, *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor* (New York: Basic Books, 2014). Finally, no one interested in development can ignore a new classic in the field: Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2013).

THE IMF, GLOBAL INEQUALITY, AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE WEB

www.imf.org

The official Web site of the IMF.

www.worldbank.org

The Web site of the World Bank, which features a lot of data on economic development and links to the organization's annual *World Development Report*.

www.transparency.org

The Web site of Transparency International, a source for widely cited data on levels of international public corruption.

www.cedpa.org

The Web site of the Center for Development and Population Activities, an organization that emphasizes the role and status of women in developing countries.

www.jubileeusa.org

An organization dedicated to relieving developing nations of crippling foreign debt.

NOTES

¹Ho-fung Hung and Jamie Kucinskas, "Assessing the Impact of the Rise of China and India, 1980–2005," *American Journal of Sociology* 116 (5; March 2011), 1478.

²Peter Korner et al., *The IMF and the Debt Crisis: A Guide to the Third World's Dilemma* (London: Zed Books, 1986), p. 35.

³Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 85.

⁴Ibid., p. 124.

⁵Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), p. 156.

⁶Jagdish Bhagwati, *India in Transition: Freeing the Economy* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 71.

⁷Bahram Nowzad, *The IMF and Its Critics, Essays in International Finance*, no. 146 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Department of Economics, 1981), p. 8.

⁸David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Nations Are So Rich and Some Are So Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 433.

⁹Ibid., p. 499.

¹⁰This comparison is drawn from Keith R. Richburg, "Why Is Africa Eating Asia's Dust?" *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, July 20–26, 1992, p. 11.

¹¹Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 312.

¹²Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 268.

¹³Stephan Haggard, *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in Newly Industrializing Countries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 14.

¹⁴Gilpin, *Political Economy of International Relations*, p. 302.

¹⁵Bhagwati, p. 46.

¹⁶Deirdre McCloskey, "Bourgeois Dignity: A Revolution in Rhetoric," *Cato Unbound* (October 4, 2010). Accessed at: <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2010/10/04/deirdre-mccloskey/bourgeois-dignity-revolution-rhetoric>.

¹⁷See Juan Gabriel Valdes, *Pinochet's Economists: The Chicago School in Chile* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, *The Commanding Heights: The Battle Between Government and the Marketplace That Is Remaking the Modern World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), pp. 238–240.

¹⁸P. T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 70, 76.

¹⁹"Going Global: Globalisation and Prosperity," *The Economist* (December 8, 2001), p. 67.

²⁰Douglas A. Irwin, *Free Trade Under Fire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 160.

²¹www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/12/19/corruption-developing-countries-world-bank-group-president-kim.

www.oxfam.org.uk

The Web site of Oxfam, one of the oldest and most influential organizations interested in assistance to developing nations.

²²For a good overview, see Ruben Berrios, "Corruption as a Drag on Development," *Latin American Research Review* 45: 2 (2010), pp. 245–52.

²³Gilpin, *Political Economy of International Relations*, p. 286.

²⁴Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 34.

²⁵The Report of the South Commission, *The Challenge to the South* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 38.

²⁶Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1962), pp. 11–12.

²⁷David Crane, "Global State No Longer a Reflection of Reality," *Toronto Star* (January 29, 2007). Accessed at <http://www.thestar.com/article/175804> on February 14, 2007.

²⁸Cited in Michael Camdessus, "A Talk with Michael Camdessus About God, Globalization, and His Years Running the IMF," *Foreign Policy* (September/October 2000): 34.

²⁹William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997), p. 281.

³⁰"Nothing to Lose But Your Chains: Aid for Africa," *The Economist* (May 1, 1993), p. 44.

³¹Robert O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multinational Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 37.

³²IMF Policy Development and Review Group, "Experience Under the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility," *Finance and Development* (September 1997): 32–35. Another study that departs from conventional wisdom and offers a modestly positive assessment of the effect of structural adjustment is David E. Sahn, Paul A. Dorosh, and Stephen D. Younger, *Structural Adjustment Reconsidered* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³³William Easterly, "IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs and Poverty," paper prepared for the World Bank, February 2001.

³⁴Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox*, p. 171.

³⁵Ibid., p. 26.

³⁶Rick Rowden, "A World of Debt," *The American Prospect* (Summer 2001). Accessed at www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V12/12/rowden-r.html.

³⁷Pedro Olinto and Jamie Saavedra, "An Overview of Global Income Inequality," *Inequality in Focus* 1(1), April 2012, p. 1.

³⁸Colum Lynch, "U.N. Cites Disparities in Wealth," *Washington Post* (July 13, 1999).

³⁹See Dayo Olopade, *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2014).

⁴⁰"Africa Can Teach the World to Innovate, Says Author," CNN, accessed at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/BUSINESS/08/02/dayo.olopade.africa.innovation/>.

Does Foreign Aid Promote Development?

Whether or not foreign aid helps developing nations is one of those arguments that just never seem to go away. Whenever an international organization or NGO urges developed nations to increase their aid budgets, development economists renew the debate about the benefits and pitfalls of aid. As with most arguments about which policies will promote development, debates about aid are often rooted in unstated assumptions about the causes of underdevelopment in the first place. Opponents of such aid see no evidence that past efforts have helped much at all, sometimes going so far as to argue that aid inhibits development by promoting dependency and enriching powerful and corrupt elites who care little for their people's well-being. Supporters acknowledge that previous efforts were often poorly administered but claim that well-conceived aid programs can help deal with some of the major obstacles to development. Two of the more prominent figures in the contemporary debate are William Easterly, an economist who spent more than fifteen years with the World Bank, and Jeffrey Sachs, an economics professor at Columbia University. Why, according to Easterly, does foreign aid usually accomplish so little? In what way does Sachs think aid programs can make valuable contributions? To what extent does their disagreement about aid reflect differing views about the causes of underdevelopment?

PERSPECTIVE 1

The Handouts That Feed Poverty (2006)

William Easterly¹



Foreign aid today perpetrates a cruel hoax on those who wish the world's poor well. There is all the appearance of energetic action—a doubling of foreign aid to Africa promised at the G-8 summit ... [in July 2005], grand United Nations and World Bank plans to cut world poverty in half by 2015, and visionary statements about prosperity and democracy by George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and Bono. The economist Jeffrey Sachs even announced the "end of poverty" altogether by 2025, which he says will be "much easier than it appears."

No doubt such promises satisfy the urgent desires of altruistic people in rich countries that something be done to alleviate the grinding misery of the billions

¹ Source: "The Handouts that Feed Poverty" by William Easterly, World Hunger Notes, April 30, 2006 from www.worldhunger.org/articles/06/editorials/easterly.htm. Reprinted by permission of the author.

who live in poverty around the world. Alas, upon closer inspection, it turns out to be one big *Potemkin* village [facade]. These grandiose but unreal visions sadly crowd out better alternatives to give real help to real poor people.

The new proposals to end world poverty are, for one thing, not new. They are recycled ideas from earlier decades that have already failed. There was, for instance, the idea of the 1950s and 1960s that aid is necessary to finance a “Big Push” to allow poor countries to escape a “poverty trap” and climb the ladder toward prosperity.

This push has been underway for four decades now—and has resulted in the movement of \$568 billion in foreign aid from the rich countries to Africa. The result: zero growth in per capita income, leaving Africa in the same abysmal straits in which it began. Meanwhile, a number of poor countries that got next to no aid had no trouble escaping the “poverty trap.”

Hence, it is a little surprising to see Sachs, who is director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and an influential advisor to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, announcing once again that aid is necessary to finance a “Big Push” to allow poor countries to escape a “poverty trap” and climb the ladder toward prosperity.

Where did all the aid money go? The \$2.3 trillion, that is, that has been sent to all the world’s poor countries over the last five decades. Well, for one thing, it was stuck (and remains stuck) in a “bureaucracy-to-bureaucracy” aid model in which money gets lost all along the way.

The way it works is that a large aid bureaucracy such as the World Bank (with its 10,000 employees) or the United Nations designs a complicated bureaucratic plan to try to solve all the problems of the poor at once (for example, the U.N. Millennium Project announced ... [in 2005] laid out 449 steps that had to be implemented to end world poverty). The aid money is then turned over to another bureaucracy in the poor country, which is asked to implement the complicated plan drawn up by out-of-country Westerners. (How complicated? Tanzania—and it’s not an unusual case—is required to issue 2,400 different reports annually to aid donors.)

In the best case, the bureaucracy in the poor country is desperately short of skilled administrators to implement complex top-down plans that are not feasible anyway—and report on their failure to do so. In the worst, but all too common, case—such as that of the corrupt dictator Paul Biya of Cameroon, who will get 55 percent of his government revenue from aid after the doubling of aid to Africa—the poor country’s bureaucrats are corrupt or unmotivated political appointees.

It shouldn’t be too surprising, then, that aid money doesn’t reach the poor and instead goes to such dubious projects as the \$5-billion Ajaokuta steel mill in Nigeria, which was begun in 1979 and has yet to produce a bar of steel (thanks to the corruption and incompetence of local bureaucrats).

Nor is it surprising that the poor of Cambodia have trouble benefiting from aid-financed education when corrupt schoolteachers “supplement their income by soliciting bribes from students, including the sale of examination questions and

answers.” (The quote comes from the U.N. Millennium Project, which nevertheless concluded that corruption was not a significant hindrance to aid.)

A new initiative by Sachs calls for aid-financed “Millennium Villages” (moving the Potemkin village out of the realm of metaphor into reality). It envisions a whole package of quick fixes, ranging widely from fertilizer, grain storage, rainwater harvesting, and windmills to Internet connections—which would, supposedly, alleviate poverty in a handful of specifically targeted rural villages around Africa.

This much-trumpeted idea once again shows the amazing recycling ability of the aid industry—because a similar package of fixes called “Integrated Rural Development” was already tried in the 1970s (minus the Internet connections). It failed.

Flying in foreign experts to create a miniature village utopia has little to do with the complex roots of poverty, such as corrupt, autocratic and ethnically polarized politics; absent institutions for efficient markets, and dysfunctional bureaucracy. Millennium Villages are to world poverty what Disney World is to urban blight.

Bureaucrats have never achieved the end of poverty and never will; poverty ends (and is already ending, such as in East and South Asia) by the efforts of individuals operating in free markets, and by the efforts of homegrown political and economic reformers.

What are the better alternatives? If the aid agencies passed up the glitzy but unrealistic campaign to end world poverty, perhaps they would spend more time devising specific, definable tasks that could actually help people and for which the public could hold them accountable.

Such tasks include getting 12-cent doses of malaria medicines to malaria victims; distributing ten-cent doses of oral rehydration therapy to reduce the 1.8 million infant deaths from dehydration due to diarrheal diseases last year; getting poor people clean water and bed nets to prevent diarrheal diseases and malaria; getting textbooks to schoolchildren, or encouraging gradual changes to business regulations to make it easier to start a business, enforce contracts and create jobs for the poor.

True, some of the grand plans include some of these tasks—but to say they have the same goals is like saying that Soviet central planning and American free markets both aimed to produce consumer goods. These tasks cannot be achieved as part of the bureaucratically unaccountable morass we have now, in which dozens of aid agencies are collectively responsible for trying to simultaneously implement 449 separate “interventions” designed in New York and Washington to achieve the overall “end of poverty.” That’s just nuts.

The end of poverty will come as a result of homegrown political and economic reforms (which are already happening in many poor countries), not through outside aid. The biggest hope for the world’s poor nations is not Bono, it is the citizens of poor nations themselves.

Foreign Aid Is in Everyone's Interest (2006)

PERSPECTIVE 2

Jeffrey D. Sachs²

The developing world often seems like highway traffic. Countries such as China, India, and Chile are in a slipstream of rapid economic growth, closing the technological gap with the industrialized countries, while nations such as Nepal, Niger, and Sudan are rushing in the reverse direction, with rising unrest, confrontation, drought, and disease.

The costs of the economic failures are enormous for the whole world because conflicts, terrorism, the drug trade, and refugees spill across national borders.

But drivers can change direction, and so can countries. India, China, and Chile were hardly success stories in the 1960s and 1970s. All were in turmoil, beset by poverty, hunger, and political instability. Their economic transformations show that today's "basket cases" can be tomorrow's emerging markets.

Those who contend that foreign aid does not work—and cannot work—are mistaken. These skeptics make a career of promoting pessimism by pointing to the many undoubted failures of past aid efforts. But the fact remains that we can help ensure the successful economic development of the poorest countries. We can help them escape from poverty. It's in our national interest to do so.

The first step out of rural poverty almost always involves a boost in food production to end cycles of famine. Asia's ascent from poverty in the last 40 years began with a "green revolution." Food yields doubled or tripled. The Rockefeller Foundation helped with the development and propagation of high-yield seeds, and US aid enabled India and other countries to provide subsidized fertilizer and seeds to impoverished farmers. Once farmers could earn an income, they could move on to small-business development.

A second step out of poverty is an improvement in health conditions, led by improved nutrition, cleaner drinking water, and more basic health services. In the Asian success stories, child mortality dropped sharply, which, in turn, led to smaller families because poor parents gained confidence that their children would survive to adulthood.

The third step is the move from economic isolation to international trade. Chile, for instance, has become the chief source of off-season fruit in the US during the past 20 years by creating highly efficient supply chains. China and India have boomed as exporters of manufacturing goods and services, respectively. In all three, trade linkages were a matter of improved connectivity—roads, power, telecommunications, the Internet, and transport containerization.

Today, the skeptics like to claim that Africa is too far behind, too corrupt, to become a China or India. They are mistaken. An African green revolution, health revolution, and connectivity revolution are all within reach. Engineers and scientists have already developed the needed tools. The Millennium Villages project,



²"Foreign Aid Is in Everyone's Interest" by Jeffrey Sachs. Copyright © 2006 by Jeffrey Sachs, originally appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, used by permission of The Wylie Agency Incorporated.

which a group of colleagues and I developed, is now rapidly expanding in ten countries in Africa and is showing that this triple transformation—in improved agriculture, health, and connectivity—is feasible.

Improved seed varieties, fertilizers, irrigation, and trucks have all helped convert famine into bumper crops in just one or two productive growing seasons.

Malaria is under control. Farmers have access to capital to make the change from subsistence to cash crops. Children are being treated for worms and receive a midday meal to help keep them healthy and in school.

Skeptics said that African peasants would not grow more food, that fertilizers would go missing, that bed nets would be cut up to make wedding veils, and that local officials would block progress.

The truth is the opposite. In any part of the world, the poorest of the poor want a chance for a better future, especially for their children. Give them the tools, and they will grasp the chance.

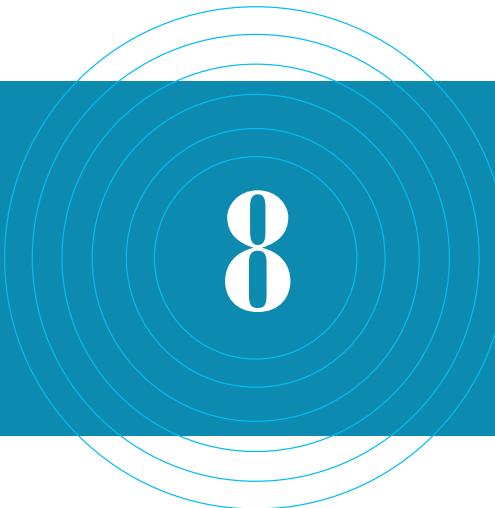
Aid skeptics such as professor William Easterly, author of the recent book *The White Man's Burden*, are legion. Instead of pointing to failures, we need to amplify the successes—including the green revolution, the global eradication of smallpox, the spread of literacy, and, now, the promise of the Millennium Villages.

The standards for successful aid are clear. They should be targeted, specific, measurable, accountable, and scalable. They should support the triple transformation in agriculture, health, and infrastructure. We should provide direct assistance to villages in ways that can be measured and monitored.

The Millennium Villages project relies on community participation and accountability to ensure that fertilizers, medicines, and the like are properly used.

Millennium Promise, an organization I co-founded, champions and furthers the development of the Millennium Villages project. It has partnered with the Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN Foundation, Centers for Disease Control, and the World Health Organization to get antimalaria bed nets to the children of Africa.

In this fragile and conflict-laden world, we must value life everywhere by stopping needless disease and deaths, promoting economic growth, and helping ensure that our children's lives will be treasured in the years ahead.



8

Globalization and Sovereignty

Key Controversy: Is Globalization a Threat to National Sovereignty?

This chapter explores a central aspect of the larger debate over what has become known as *globalization*—whether national societies and governments are becoming part of a single global society. The question is whether globalization is robbing nations of their ability to shape their own policies and destinies. Some believe that economic and technological trends are taking critical decisions out of the hands of national governments, placing them at the mercy of supranational forces, actors, and institutions. Economic actors such as multinational corporations are increasingly able to escape the power of national governments. Observers from a variety of perspectives—liberal, Marxist, and feminist—agree that globalization is occurring, but they disagree on whether this process is essentially beneficial or harmful. Others, particularly realists, believe that these arguments are wildly exaggerated: National boundaries, communities, and governments are still paramount, and the world remains fundamentally a collection of national communities rather than a truly global society or economy. ■

A walk down the Kurfürstendam, Berlin’s major shopping street, would come as something of a disappointment to a first-time visitor hoping to be overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of a different culture and society. Were it not for the fact that most people were speaking German (and many would not be), one might just as well be walking down Fifth Avenue in New York or Michigan Avenue in Chicago. The clothes would look familiar—Levi jeans and Nike sneakers abound. The food would taste familiar—it takes little effort to find a McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, or Starbucks. The music would sound familiar, and larger-than-life posters of pop stars known to any American teenager grace the windows of record stores. Automatic teller machines (ATMs) make access to one’s checking account no more difficult than at home, after a long day buying items that you could just as easily have purchased in the United States. You could check your email all day on your cell phone. Back at your

hotel, an episode of *Game of Thrones* is likely to be on television, and you can catch the news on CNN before falling asleep. This would not have been the experience of someone making the same transatlantic journey forty years ago, when traveling to another country was, well, like traveling to another country.

globalization The multifaceted process by which the nations and societies of the world are increasingly being merged into a single global society and economy.

The sense that Berlin is no longer much different from Chicago is a manifestation of something we call **globalization**. When people refer to globalization, they generally mean that traditional divisions and boundaries that used to mark global society are no longer what they once were. In clichéd terms, the world is becoming a smaller place. Martin Albrow provides the most succinct and general definition of globalization as “all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society.”¹

Globalization is, of course, a multifaceted phenomenon. Although many focus on its economic aspects—and perhaps rightly so—those are not the be-all and end-all of globalization. There are important environmental, cultural, and even medical aspects of globalization. It is no understatement, for example, to note that “the globalization of trade is inextricably linked to the globalization of disease....



Starbucks in Beijing's Forbidden City. Many Chinese objected when the Seattle-based coffee company began peddling lattes in this place where only their emperors used to walk. The spread of such international brands is only the most vivid symbol of globalization.

Source: Stephen Shaver/AFP/Newscom

With globalization, widespread diseases are literally a plane ride away.² The worldwide spread of AIDS and fears of avian flu are dramatic examples of the globalization of disease. And the same technologies that allow us to move consumer goods and legitimate investments around the world with ease can be utilized to traffic in illegal narcotics and funnel money to terrorist organizations. The Internet might undermine totalitarian governments by making it easier for people to access ideas and information, but it is also “emerging as the critical dimension of twenty-first century global terrorism, with Web sites and electronic bulletin boards spreading ideological messages, perpetuating terrorist networks, [and] providing links between operatives in cyberspace.”³ The technology and process of globalization are neutral and can be used for good or ill.

What Is at Stake

Beneath very general observations about our shrinking world, there is tremendous debate and unease about the nature and consequences of globalization. The debates are both empirical and normative. Empirically, there is disagreement about the extent of globalization—are nations, economies, and cultures really as interconnected as some believe, or is such talk exaggerated “globaloney”? Normatively, the issue is whether globalization is a progressive force to be welcomed and encouraged or a malignant process to be condemned and resisted.

Obviously, it is not possible to do justice to all aspects of the globalization debate in a single chapter. Fortunately, many of the issues associated with globalization are dealt with in other chapters. We have already looked at the debates over free trade and development, both central elements of the larger globalization controversy. Later, in future chapters, we will examine global environmental issues. Meanwhile, this chapter focuses on another issue that lies at the heart of debates about globalization—whether it is undermining national sovereignty. The fear is that nations are gradually losing the ability to determine their own fate as the forces of globalization shift power and decision making to other entities. According to this **constrained state thesis**, “changes in the international political economy have radically restricted policy choice and forced policy shifts that play to the preferences of global investors and mobile corporations, rather than to the needs of the domestic political economy and its citizenry.”⁴ Dani Rodrik frames the stakes in the globalization debate most succinctly and dramatically, arguing that “we cannot have hyperglobalization, democracy, and national self-determination all at once.”⁵ If this is the case, which of the three should we be prepared to sacrifice?

constrained state thesis

The idea that the forces driving globalization are profoundly weakening or limiting the ability of national states to shape their own policies and destinies.

The Vision of a Borderless World

Interdependence was the buzzword of the 1970s. Middle East crises, oil embargoes, and long gas lines brought home how interdependent the economies of the world had become. *Globalization* appears to have entered the lexicon of international

relations in the early 1980s and reflected a sense that *interdependence* no longer captured the full magnitude of how much our world was changing. Interdependence suggested that increasing levels of international trade and investment were creating mutual dependencies among different national economies. Globalization conveys something more—not merely increasing interdependence, but the emergence of a single global economy. To use an analogy, we usually do not describe the economy of Minneapolis as being dependent on the economy of St. Paul. These are not two separate economies dependent on each other, but rather two parts of a single economy. This is what globalization implies—not just greater interdependence, but something well beyond that.

No one has been more articulate in presenting a vision of globalization as eroding national sovereignty than Kenichi Ohmae. In his boldly titled books *The Borderless World* and *The End of the Nation State*, Ohmae argues that economic and technological trends are rendering the nation-state increasingly irrelevant and impotent. This effect can be seen most vividly in the global economy: “On the political map, the boundaries between countries are as clear as ever. But on the competitive map, a map showing the real flows of financial and industrial activity, those boundaries have largely disappeared.”⁶ If we erase the political borders from a map and focus only at the patterns of economic activity, we would no longer be able to redraw the world’s political boundaries or tell one country from another.

This disconnect between economic and political realities, however, cannot last forever. Ohmae thinks a readjustment is already well under way: “the modern nation-state itself—the artifact of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—has begun to crumble.”⁷ Nicholas Negroponte outdoes even Ohmae in consigning the nation-state to the dustbin of history: “Like a mothball, which goes from solid to gas directly, I expect the nation-state to evaporate.”⁸ And Anthony Giddens joins the funeral chorus: “Nations have lost the sovereignty they once had, and politicians have lost their capability to influence events.... The era of the nation-state is over.”⁹ But why? Why might globalization be eroding the nation-state’s sovereignty, or even threatening its extinction? The answer is to be found in technological and political changes that have made it easier to move, communicate, and trade regardless of location and national borders.

Ending the Tyranny of Location

Throughout most of human history, people lived in local economies. They either grew their own food or bought it from local producers, and most of their possessions were made nearby. Today, hardly anything on our supermarket shelves is grown locally—the tomatoes are from New Jersey, the pineapples from the Philippines, and the broccoli from Chile. Virtually nothing in our homes was produced within even a hundred miles of where we live. We no longer live in localized economies. Certainly global trade is nothing new—the Dutch East India Company was global in scope back in the 1500s and 1600s, and people in Europe enjoyed spices from Asia. But in the larger scheme of things, the volume of such trade was minuscule and unimportant in the lives of most people.

The process of moving from local to national economies and from national economies to an international economy has taken several centuries and involves developments allowing people to overcome previous obstacles to long-distance commerce. Before the Industrial Revolution, transporting goods across great distances was either extremely expensive or impossible (e.g., one could hardly transport fresh produce from Brazil to France without refrigeration). The advent of the internal combustion engine, the railroad, the steamship, and the telegraph helped overcome many of these obstacles. Advances in transportation drove the first wave of globalization in the 1800s and early 1900s. The current wave of globalization rests more on revolutions in communications (though easy and cheap air transportation is part of contemporary globalization). As Thomas Friedman explains, “Today’s era of globalization is built around falling telecommunications costs—thanks to microchips, satellites, fiber optics and the Internet....technologies now allow companies to locate different parts of their production, research and marketing in different countries, but still tie them together ... as though they were in one place.”¹⁰ The head of Levi-Strauss provides an illustration: “Our company buys denim in North Carolina, ships it to France, where it is sewn into jeans, launders these jeans in Belgium, and markets them in Germany using TV commercials developed in England.”¹¹

Limited technology, however, was not the only obstacle to the emergence of a genuinely international economy. Except for relatively rare and brief periods of free trade, tariffs, quotas, and other barriers made international commerce difficult. In order for a truly global economy to emerge, the technological *and* political obstacles had to be overcome. The creation of a liberal trading order after World War II provided the political foundation for the emergence of a global economy. As Martin Wolf explains, “before markets, modems, and manufacturers could do their work, political changes had to take place ... the foundations of the globalized business world are political.”¹²

Thus, until the Industrial Revolution economic production and exchange suffered from the **tyranny of location**—that is, a business’s prospects depended to a significant degree where it was physically. In the contemporary world, however, this no longer matters very much. A company producing cars in my hometown enjoys no significant competitive advantage over one on the other side of the globe. This may not remain the case indefinitely, however. Jeff Rubin and Benjamin Taj warn that “Globalization is reversible. Higher energy prices are impacting transport costs at an unprecedented rate. So much so, that the cost of moving goods, not the cost of tariffs, is the largest barrier to global trade today.”¹³ We have not reached a point where rising energy costs have derailed the process of globalization, but it is important to realize that the obstacles that once imposed a tyranny of location could reemerge one day.

tyranny of location

Conditions in which a producer’s geographical proximity to sources of supply or markets is a critical determinant of its ability to compete effectively.

The Mobility of Capital

When location mattered a great deal, businesses often had no alternative but to locate in certain places. Take the hypothetical example of a tire company. If it wants to sell tires in Cleveland and the U.S. government imposes a tax on imported

tires, companies producing in the United States enjoy a price advantage because they avoid the import tax. Similarly, if it costs a lot of money to ship tires 1,000 miles, then the company should probably locate its factory close to Cleveland. But if transporting products is cheap, the company can locate anywhere in the continental United States. And if there are no import taxes, it can locate anywhere in the world. Diminishing technological and political obstacles to trade increases what we call the **mobility of capital**, allowing our tire company to locate in Cleveland, Georgia, or Indonesia.

When corporations enjoy such freedom, the relative power between governments and business shifts. This is the critical point. If a business needs to locate in a certain place, the government controlling that territory has leverage that allows it to tax and regulate. The stronger the shackles of location, the stronger are the powers of governments to control and regulate business. But as businesses enjoy greater mobility, they can simply relocate if governments enact policies that they do not like.

We can see this on a small scale when companies shop around for places to build plants. The scenario is familiar. Company X announces that it has narrowed its choice for a new factory to three cities. City leaders then engage in a feverish competition to offer the best deal, usually involving exemptions from local taxes. In such cases, one has to wonder who is really in charge: Are governments regulating businesses, or are businesses regulating governments? Martin and Schumann frame the problem in stark terms: “It is no longer democratically elected governments which decide the level of taxes; rather, the people who direct the flow of capital and goods themselves establish what contribution they wish to make to state expenditure.”¹⁴ The fear of “capital flight” allows businesses to dictate what policies, regulations, and tax levels governments can impose: Give us what we want, or we (and our jobs) move elsewhere.

The Race to the Bottom

race to the bottom The proposition that globalization is exerting downward pressure on wages, regulations, taxes, and social welfare benefits as corporations relocate in search of lower wages, fewer regulations, and lower taxes.

The ability of capital to dictate policies is most clearly seen in what critics of globalization refer to as the **race to the bottom**. If corporations are no longer tied to any particular location, what determines where they will set up shop? There are, of course, a host of considerations that businesses take into account. But surely the costs of doing business are paramount. All other things being equal, businesses prefer to locate where the costs of production are lowest because this maximizes profits. And when costs rise and profits decline, there always seems to be somewhere else to go. This dynamic is evident in Asia, where China used to be the place where corporations went to find cheap labor. But since wages in China’s manufacturing sector have increased by over 70 percent since 2008, companies have started looking elsewhere. The case of Samsung cell phone production is illustrative:

Samsung Electronics...built the world’s largest smartphone business by tapping China’s cheap and abundant workforce. Not for much longer: it’s shifting output to Vietnam to secure even lower wages and defend profit margins as growth in sales of high-end handsets slows. By the time a new \$2 billion plant reaches full production in 2015, China’s communist neighbor will be making more than 40 percent of the phones that generate the majority of Samsung’s operating profit.¹⁵

But there is no need to look to the other side of the world for examples. Immediately south of the U.S.–Mexican border, a host of U.S. companies manufacture everything from auto parts to kitchen appliances. Why not locate a few miles away in Texas instead? A large part of the answer has to be the lower costs of production—lower wages, fewer benefits, and less regulation. Because the final product can be imported into the United States without barriers thanks to free trade agreements, it would make little economic sense to locate in the United States, where the costs of production are higher.

This ability to move around in search of lower costs is what propels the race to the bottom. In a globalized free market economy, workers everywhere compete as companies like Samsung go shopping for the best deal. If the workers in China ask for too much, Vietnam awaits. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that labor does not share the same level of mobility. Because restrictions on immigration (i.e., the movement of people) remain in force while barriers to investment decline, workers are not free to seek out the highest wages with anything like the ease that capital can chase the lowest wages. This imbalance of mobility puts workers at a systematic disadvantage. There is nothing new about fears that trade with poorer countries will depress wages at home. As early as the seventeenth century, John Pollexfen worried about the impact of British trade with India: “This [goods] from India must otherwise be the cheapest, and all people will go to the cheapest markets, which will affect the rents of land and bring our working people to poverty.”¹⁶

Wages are only the most obvious cost of business in which there can be a race to the bottom. Businesses are also keen to reduce their regulatory burden, whether it involves workplace safety codes or antipollution measures. After more than 500 (mostly female) workers were killed when a clothing factory near Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed in April 2013, some pointed to the tragedy as revealing the dark underbelly of globalization, one normally hidden from public view:

Although American workers won improved labour laws and enforcement from disasters like New York’s 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the 21st century’s rapid globalization and outsourcing of jobs have made the plight of offshore workers, and responsibility for their safety, more remote. And the competition for expanding profits—and shrinking costs—has launched a race to the bottom for worker’s safety, working conditions, and wages. That, watchdog groups say, has put standards and their enforcement in peril, along with workers’ lives: even in countries with existing laws, government laxity and a faulty system of inspection makes them unenforceable.¹⁷

The problems continue. Globalization is also seen as a threat to the poor by endangering social welfare programs that provide a safety net. Businesses, like individuals, generally prefer lower taxes to higher taxes. Although wealthy celebrities and executives can escape to tax havens or hide their money in foreign banks, the average person is stuck paying whatever taxes the government or governments impose where they are. But when corporations can move themselves or their money to places where taxes are minimal, national governments with generous

welfare programs are placed in a bind. If they impose high taxes on businesses to finance social welfare spending, they run the risk that the businesses will simply pick up and move. This leaves two very unpalatable options. First, governments can raise taxes on people and businesses that are unable to move. Rodrik explains that this effectively “shifts the tax burden from capital, which is internationally mobile, to labor, which is much less so.”¹⁸ Second, governments can just cut programs financed through taxation. Thus, the race to the bottom in corporate taxes can also become a race to bottom in social welfare programs, further harming those already vulnerable to the pressures of globalization.

Thus, the mobility of capital creates a race to the bottom on numerous levels—wages, environmental and safety regulations, corporate taxes, and social welfare benefits. Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello summarize the problem in their vividly titled *Global Village or Global Pillage*: “Corporations can now outflank the controls governments and organized citizens once placed on them by relocating.... So each [government] tries to reduce labor, social, and environmental costs below the others. The result is a ‘downward leveling’—a disastrous ‘race to the bottom’ in which conditions for all tend to fall toward those of the poorest and most desperate.”¹⁹ And to the extent that individual states must respond to these pressures or risk the flight of capital, they have been robbed of their effective sovereignty. Corporations now tell governments what they can and cannot do, rather than the other way around. It is not only business and the global market that threaten national sovereignty. Nations also have to deal with increasingly powerful international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. As discussed in Chapter 7, many Third World nations borrowed money during the 1970s and found themselves unable to pay back these loans in the 1980s. The IMF and the World Bank stepped in to deal with this crisis. As a condition for rescheduling debt payments or granting new loans, the IMF required nations to adopt structural adjustment programs, which included reductions in social spending, the elimination of deficit spending, privatization, and opening markets to international competition. The IMF deemed these policies essential for attracting foreign investment and thus for promoting economic growth. Not coincidentally, critics are quick to point out, these policies also “neatly coincide with the agenda of mobile capital.”²⁰ Such is the power of the IMF that noted economist Jeffrey Sachs describes it as “an all-too constant presence, almost a surrogate government in financial matters.... These governments rarely move without consulting the IMF staff, and when they do, they risk their lifelines to capital markets, foreign aid, and international respectability.”²¹ The characterization of the IMF as a surrogate government highlights the issue of lost sovereignty.

Taken as a whole, the race to the bottom thesis embodies three key fears about globalization. The first encompasses the possible erosion of national sovereignty and the ability of governments to pursue independently determined policies. The second includes the further immiseration of poor, working-class, and marginalized people around the world as wages are depressed, environments degraded, and social welfare benefits slashed. The third is the erosion of democratic governance as international markets, corporations, and organizations shape, influence, or even dictate policies to national governments. When the corporations and the unelected

leaders of the IMF and World Bank can tell elected leaders what to do, both sovereignty and democracy are compromised. As a result of globalization, national policies are increasingly determined by forces, people, and institutions that no one ever voted for. This results in a **democratic deficit**. “The fear is that the global economy is undermining democracy by shifting power from elected national governments to faceless global bureaucracies.... Power is going global but democracy, like politics, still stops at frontiers.”²²

democratic deficit A problem created when critical decisions are taken out of the hands of democratic and representative institutions.

The Myth(s) of Globalization

In our overview of international history (Chapter 1), we noted that one of the recurring difficulties in analyzing world politics is evaluating the significance of that which is new relative to what is enduring. This is problematic because there is always a tendency to focus on things that are changing, if only because novelty is more interesting than continuity. The problem can be seen in debates about the extent and magnitude of globalization. The question is not whether international trade, investment, and cultural diffusion are increasing. It would be silly to contend otherwise. The issue is whether patterns of international interactions are changing in ways and to a degree so that it makes sense to talk about a borderless world or demise of the nation-state. For globalization skeptics, such talk is wildly premature at best, resting on a persistent pattern of exaggeration and selective evidence.

Location Still Matters

There is no denying that advances in transportation and communications have helped overcome the obstacles of distance. But skeptics caution against confusing this with an “end” of geography. Is location less important for commerce today than two hundred years ago? Certainly. Is geography even close to becoming irrelevant? Probably not. Most accounts of globalization focus on companies and plants that relocate production in order to illustrate the irrelevance of location. But do these examples tell the full story? Skeptics see a tendency to focus on examples (often derided as “anecdotes”) that conform to the thesis of globalization. The technical term for this is *selection bias*—that is, focusing on firms that relocate while ignoring those that stay put inevitably biases analysis in favor of the declining significance of location. Local papers, after all, tend not to report on the factories that remain, only those that relocate. But a full and fair evaluation requires that both be taken into account.

Somewhat tongue in cheek, Micklethwait and Wooldridge wonder what Bill Gates and Microsoft’s recent legal troubles tell us about the mobility of business. Although the object of some extremely expensive antitrust lawsuits by the U.S. Department of Justice, Gates did not move his company from the comfortable confines of Seattle’s suburbs to escape the long arm of the law. Why not? If companies can move for cheaper labor and discipline governments by threatening to relocate, why hasn’t Bill Gates moved, and why has the U.S. government not been disciplined? The answer is that “Bill Gates could not have threatened to move his

operation to the Bahamas, even though Microsoft has relatively few fixed assets... [because] Microsoft depends not just on a supply of educated workers (who would have refused to move) but also on its close relationship with American universities.”²³ Focusing on the same case, Thomas Friedman reminds us “even when a U.S. firm becomes a much-envied, world-class gemz like Microsoft, it still has to answer to a Justice Department antitrust lawyer making \$75,000 a year.”²⁴

Perhaps Microsoft is not a good example. As a high-tech firm, it might have connections that tie it to the United States in ways that many other firms do not confront. Would the same apply, for example, to a company making T-shirts or notepads instead of software? Perhaps not: there are also plenty of examples of low-tech firms staying put. According to Michlethwait and Wooldridge, “Wander around Los Angeles, America’s main manufacturing center, and you will find squadrons of low-tech factories turning out toys, furniture, and clothes, all of which could probably be made cheaper elsewhere.” Why do they remain in Los Angeles? These authors explain that “they stay partly for personal reasons (many are family owned), partly because they can compensate for high labor costs by using more machines, but mostly because Los Angeles is a hub of all three industries—a place where designers, suppliers, and distributors are just around the corner.”²⁵ That is, in many respects, it does still matter where businesses are located. These examples are also just anecdotes. But for skeptics, they at least begin to balance grandiose proclamations about the irrelevance of geography and location.

The Myth of a Borderless World

Kenichi Ohmae argued that if we look at a map of the world indicating flows of trade, investment, and production, we would not be able to redraw the political map because economic movements no longer conform to political boundaries. Interestingly, Ohmae did not actually provide a map that allows us to test his neat idea. For globalization skeptics, there is a very good reason that he did not—instead of supporting his position, such a map would actually prove him wrong.

In his book *How Much Do National Borders Matter?* John Helliwell takes up Ohmae’s challenge, focusing on the United States and Canada—two of the world’s closest trading partners, who share one of its most porous borders. If Ohmae is correct, the political border separating these two countries should be nearly unnoticeable if we look at trade statistics. Given the specifics of the U.S.–Canada case, this should be a relatively easy test of the borderless-world thesis. Helliwell’s findings are not good news for Ohmae. Even though the importance of trade between the United States and Canada has been increasing, the significance of trade *within* both nations still dwarfs trade *between* them. He compares patterns of trade between Ontario and British Columbia (Canadian provinces) with trade between Ontario and Washington State. If Ohmae is correct about the borderless world, there should be little difference in the patterns of intra-Canadian trade compared to its trade with the United States. In fact, there is a marked difference: “Ontario’s exports to British Columbia were more than twelve times larger than those to Washington.”²⁶ On a map showing trade flows, there would be twelve arrows

pointing from Ontario to British Columbia for every one connecting Ontario and Washington. On this basis, most would assume that British Columbia and Ontario were part of the same political unit, but Washington and Ontario were not. And, of course, they would be correct.

Again, there is no denying that the relative importance of trade across national borders is on the rise. In 1960, exports were less than 10 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), meaning that more than 90 percent of goods and services were consumed in the countries where they were produced. By 2010, that figure approached 30 percent, a threefold increase. But this still means that slightly more than 70 percent of goods and services are consumed in the countries where they are produced. For the United States, exports have remained below 20 percent of GDP, which is another way of indicating that more than 80 percent of goods and services produced in the United States are consumed domestically. There also remains a substantial “home bias” in terms of investment. While there is no evidence that residents of New York are more likely to invest in companies headquartered in their home state, citizens of the United States are much more likely to invest in American than foreign companies. Indeed, the national bias is quite dramatic: “domestic companies represent 90 percent of the holdings in an average U.S. investor’s stock portfolio—even though U.S. stocks represent only 49 percent of the world market.”²⁷ So while national borders are indeed becoming more porous, they have hardly disappeared.

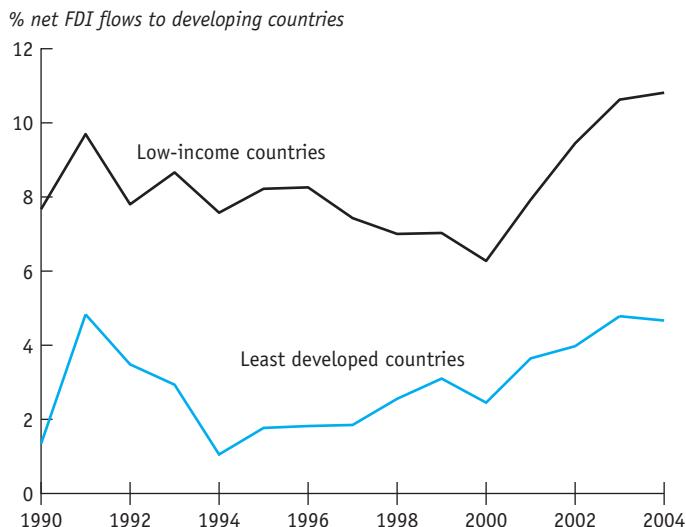
The Myth of a Race to the Bottom

The race to the bottom is usually presented as an integral element of globalization. The argument makes intuitive sense. Even Jagdish Bhagwati, an enthusiastic supporter of globalization, concedes that “it is certainly possible that closer integration by richer nations with the poor countries, with a more abundant supply of unskilled labor, will depress the wages of richer countries’ workers.”²⁸ Daniel Drezner agrees that “the race-to-the-bottom hypothesis appears logical, though he ultimately concludes that it is wrong: Indeed, the lack of supporting evidence is startling.”²⁹ No doubt there are many examples of companies moving plants to reduce costs. But the race-to-the-bottom thesis suggests more than that. This movement of capital is portrayed as a significant, if not dominant, feature of the global economy, occurring on a scale sufficient to depress wages and reduce regulations worldwide. It is not just a handful of companies or even a few economic sectors; it is a fundamental feature of the new global economy.

What sort of evidence beyond specific examples of plant relocation would validate the race-to-the-bottom thesis? If there is a race to the bottom, we should see an inverse relationship between overseas investment and wage/regulation levels. That is, countries with relatively high wages and greater regulation should attract a significantly declining share of global investment, whereas countries with low wages and few regulations should attract an increasing share. The evidence on this front is less than compelling. As an example, Figure 8.1 presents World Bank data on the share of overall foreign investment in developing nations. We see that between 1990 and 2004, the least-developed countries attracted between 2 percent

FIGURE 8.1

Share of net FDI inflows to low-income and least-developed countries, 1990–2004

Source: Based on World Bank, *Global Development Finance 2005*.

and slightly more than 4 percent of foreign investment. For low-income countries, the fluctuation is between 8 percent and slightly more than 10 percent. But there does appear to have been an uptick more recently. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported in 2012 that countries that it classifies as “developing” attracted more than half of global investment for the first time. One caveat is that countries such as Hong Kong, one of the wealthiest places in the world (but technically not a country), were still included in that category, as was China. The smaller subset of countries that it classifies as “least developed” still accounted for less than 2 percent of global investment.³⁰ And between 2007 and 2011, nine of the top ten countries in terms of attracting foreign investment were wealthy, developed economies (China was the lone exception). As the *Economist* notes, “The United States and the developed European Union are the main recipients of foreign direct investment.”³¹ Hirst and Thompson reach the same conclusion: “Capital mobility is not producing a massive shift of investment and employment to the developing countries. Rather, foreign direct investment (FDI) is highly concentrated among the advanced industrial economies.”³²

Why aren’t companies flocking to places where they can take advantage of lower costs? According to Micklethwait and Wooldridge, fears of a race to the bottom rest on a simplistic misconception that reducing costs is the only way for companies to improve their bottom line. This misconception fails to distinguish the *cost of labor*, which is not terribly important, from the *value of labor*, which is critical. Although “some companies will undoubtedly move routine tasks to parts of the world where hourly wages are lower, ... what employers want is not cheap workers but productive ones. And the most productive workers are usually

those with the best education, access to the best machinery, and a support system that includes things like a good infrastructure.³³ All other things being equal, businesses prefer to pay lower wages. But in the real world, all other things are rarely equal. In addition to lower wages, businesses also want political stability, low levels of corruption, and effective legal systems, all of which are in much greater supply in countries with high wages and more regulations. This is why most transnational corporations continue to invest overwhelmingly in Europe, the United States, and Japan despite the option of places where wages and regulations are much lower.

None of this implies that wages for unskilled workers in developed countries are not declining. In fact, many supporters of globalization agree that wages for these workers have stagnated or declined since the mid-1980s. And because this also happened to be a period of accelerating globalization, it is easy to see why many would connect the two trends. Bhagwati and other economists, however, trace the problem to labor-saving technologies that are increasingly replacing unskilled workers.³⁴ Wages are being depressed as a result of competition from technology and machines, not lower-paid workers overseas. If this is the case, halting or reversing globalization would do little to address the problem. The only solution is education and training that transforms unskilled workers into skilled workers.

Conclusion

Is a single global society emerging in which traditional national divisions are increasingly meaningless? Is the sovereign state on its way to the dustbin of history? Is this process beneficial or detrimental? These questions lie at the heart of debates over globalization. This chapter has tried to focus on the first two questions, but it is extremely difficult to separate the empirical and normative controversies. In the most general sense, answers to these questions combine to provide three general perspectives on globalization. The skeptics, often realists, answer “no” to the first two questions, believing that the case for globalization relies on selective trends and statistics rather than more substantial evidence pointing to the continuing centrality of nations and national communities. Since skeptics answer the first two questions in the negative, the third becomes moot. Liberals and Marxists/radicals generally answer the first two questions in the affirmative but part company on the third. Liberals, despite some reservations, are essentially optimistic in their assessment of globalization, whereas Marxists, who see globalization in the context of their analysis of capitalism, offer a more pessimistic analysis.

Realist Skepticism

Realists typically focus on the enduring features of world politics; as a result, they are usually skeptical of claims of fundamental transformation. Realists see globalization, which Kenneth Waltz referred to as “the fad of the 1990s,” as either wildly exaggerated or mythical. Realists remind us that many of the same arguments

associated with contemporary globalization were made a hundred years ago, another period in which national boundaries appeared to be increasingly porous. International trade exploded in the second half of the nineteenth century, and by the eve of World War I, it reached levels comparable to what we see today. Unfortunately, two world wars and the Great Depression brought this earlier globalization to a screeching halt. It took the peace of the post–World War II period to sustain what Findlay and O'Rourke refer to as the “reglobalization” of the world.³⁵ In 1999, for example, U.S. exports were 20.5 percent of GDP, more than double the 9.5 percent seen in 1960. Advocates of globalization frequently point to such statistics, but they fail to note that 20.5 percent is roughly the same as it was in 1900. So even though trade as a percentage of GDP has doubled since 1960, it is unchanged since 1900. Kal Raustiala points out that “for many historians, this early wave of globalization differs not that greatly in magnitude from the current wave; some even think we have just begun to surpass the achievements of the late 19th century.”³⁶ On the issue of overseas investment, Robert Wade points out that “today, the stock of U.S. capital invested abroad represents less than 7 percent of the U.S. GNP. That figure is, if anything, a little less than the figure for 1900.”³⁷ Robert Gilpin summarizes the basic argument: “Trade, investment, and financial flows were actually greater in the late 1800s, at least relative to the size of national economies and the international economy, than they are today.”³⁸ Furthermore, in at least one respect, the world was even more globalized in 1900: People moved with greater ease, with large-scale immigration to the United States being the most prominent example. At the time, there were also optimists who saw an emerging world of trade, prosperity, and peace, at least until World War I and the Great Depression put a damper on things.

In terms of contemporary globalization, realists do not reject the evidence of globalization. Most of the facts are not in dispute. But facts do not speak for themselves; they need to be selected and interpreted. In 1986, for example, exports accounted for 7 percent of U.S. GDP. By 2008, this had risen to 13 percent.³⁹ There is no disagreement about this fact. Those who see a process of globalization under way find it remarkable that the importance of exports has almost doubled in just two decades. But even after this large increase, 87 percent of all goods and services produced in the United States were consumed domestically. Realists and globalization skeptics wonder which figure tells us more about the extent of globalization, 13 percent or 87 percent?

Realists also reject the view of globalization as an irreversible process threatening state sovereignty. On the contrary, realists see globalization as a process promoted and enabled by states. Whether it be free trade policies, rules and regulations conducive to foreign investment, or the adoption of a common currency in Europe, states have advanced globalization as a political project. Globalization will again come to a screeching halt if the major states reverse the policies that sustain it. Martin Wolf, for example, worries what will happen if globalization comes to be viewed in negative terms. “Political elites in the U.S., Asia, and Europe are struggling to convince citizens that globalization is not just a game that benefits the rich.” “If the argument is lost in any of the major world economies,” Wolf says, “the political consensus that underpins globalization could

unravel.”⁴⁰ But there would be nothing to fear if governments were powerless to halt or reverse globalization. As is the case today, many argued in the early twentieth century that the economic and technological forces bringing the world together were irreversible. They proved to be woefully wrong. Realists argue that those enamored of contemporary globalization (both pro and con) may be equally wrong. After observing that “the world has seen globalization collapse once already....in 1914,” Dani Rodrik asks, “could we witness a similar global economic breakdown in the years to come?” “The question,” in his view, “is not fanciful.”⁴¹

Liberal Optimism

Whenever asked what he thinks about globalization, Thomas Friedman answers that he “feel[s] about globalization a lot like I feel about the dawn. Generally speaking, I think it’s a good thing that the sun comes up every morning. It does more good than harm. But even if I didn’t much care for the dawn, there isn’t much I could do about it.”⁴² This observation embodies two typical liberal reactions to globalization—that it is largely an irreversible and beneficial process. The growth of trade and the elimination of barriers are embraced for the same reasons that liberals have always favored free trade. The belief that globalization works to the advantage of all reflects the underlying liberal assumption of the harmony of interests. But there is more to the liberal vision of globalization than economics. Globalization is as much about the spread of ideas as commerce, particularly notions of human rights and political democracy. As we have observed elsewhere, the world has witnessed a dramatic expansion of democracy over the past two or three decades, and this is just as much a part of globalization as the spread of McDonald’s and Starbucks. Globalization, trade, and democratization are part of the same process. When all the various elements are brought together, liberals view globalization “as the latest in a series of Enlightenment grand narratives purporting to outline a universal civilization and a common destiny for mankind: in this sense, it simply incorporates and resurfaces the belief in progress and becomes its current embodiment.”⁴³

Even though Thomas Friedman thinks globalization does more good than harm, this still implies that it does some harm. There are forces in the world that have reacted negatively to the modernizing dynamics of globalization, such as fundamentalist religious movements that feel threatened by what they see as the secular and amoral values that are part of the emerging global culture. For these movements, opposition to globalization is easily converted into hostility toward the United States because for many globalization is tantamount to Americanization.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of globalization, however, is the widening gap between the haves and have-nots of the world. Whereas some critics see this widening gap as an integral and unavoidable consequence of globalization, liberals are more inclined to see insufficient globalization as the primary culprit. The problem is not that people and nations are being impoverished by globalization, but rather that some are being left behind, excluded from the process of globalization. The poorest of the poor among and within nations lack the basic resources—technology, infrastructure, and education—to take advantage of the opportunities

that globalization presents. This holds for large sections of the Third World (particularly Africa) and the former Soviet Union, as well as some groups within wealthy nations. For liberals, the solution is to find ways to include these people and nations in the process of globalization: We need more, not less, globalization.

Marxist Resistance

For Marxists and many others on the left, globalization is inseparable from global capitalism. According to Bertell Ollman, “‘Globalization’ is but another name for capitalism, but it’s capitalism with the gloves off and on a world scale. It is capitalism at a time when all the old restrictions and inhibitions have been or are in the process of being put aside.”⁴⁴ And since the current global(izing) order is at its core a capitalist system, it suffers from all the shortcomings of capitalism that Karl Marx identified more than a century and a half ago: the concentration of capital, the increasing misery of the working class, the widening of economic inequalities, and the sacrifice of all values to the imperatives of the market. Although Marx might not have foreseen globalization in all its details, he would not be surprised by it, either.



A television factory in China. The relocation of such manufacturing to low-wage countries is one of the prominent manifestations of globalization.

Source: AP Images/Imaginechina

William Greider believes that “the ghost of Marx hovers over [today’s] global landscape, perhaps with a knowing smile” because “the gross conditions that inspired Karl Marx’s original critique of capitalism in the nineteenth century are present and flourish again.” In Greider’s view, “the world has reached … the next great conflict over the nature of capitalism. The fundamental struggle, then as now, is between capital and labor … and capital is winning big again … and the inequalities of wealth and power that Marx decried are marching wider almost everywhere in the world.”⁴⁵

Hopes and Fears

For critics, globalization conjures up images of tacky fast-food joints, escapist Hollywood entertainment, rampaging multinational corporations, the loss of cultural identities, and faceless, unelected international bureaucrats telling national governments what they can and cannot do. For its supporters, globalization means increased trade, prosperity, the spread of liberal values of democracy and human rights, the sharing of cultures and traditions, and the erosion of the artificial boundaries that have divided human societies. Following the debate over globalization, one is reminded of the famous inkblot (Rorschach) tests used by psychologists to gain insight into their patients’ mental state. Because the images are so nebulous, they are open to numerous interpretations. The assumption is that the patients’ interpretation will reveal more about them than the image. It is tempting to see the Rorschach test as an especially good metaphor for the globalization debate. Because globalization is such a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, economic, and political trends, there are many places where we might look for evidence, and much of what we find remains vague, preliminary, and contradictory. It is not surprising that observers from different perspectives can find evidence that allows them to see wildly divergent realities.

Although in this sense it is no different from other debates that we are examining, the controversy over globalization appears more intellectually and politically charged. Perhaps this is because very few debates touch upon so many of the basic issues that divide competing perspectives—for example, the nature of the state system, the dynamics of international conflict, and the nature of international capitalism. But there is more to it than that. If globalization is occurring, it portends a fundamental transformation of international relations and global society on a scale that we might not have witnessed since the rise of the modern state system. Because the ambiguities of globalization combine with the possibility of a historic transformation, it engages not only divergent beliefs about how the world works today, but also hopes and fears about the future of global society.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Over the past twenty years, the concept of globalization has gradually made its way from academic to popular thinking about international relations. In general terms, the term *globalization* refers to the multifaceted social, cultural, technological, economic, and political processes that are gradually merging the world's nations and societies into a single, larger global society.
- Although references to globalization are common, there is an intense debate about the reality and consequences of this process. One of the major points of disagreement is the effect of globalization on the ability of national governments and communities to shape their own destinies in the face of multinational and supranational actors, forces, and institutions.
- Those convinced that globalization is real claim that technological trends and economic policies are reducing the importance of geographic location, particularly in terms of economic production and commerce. The economic map of the world is increasingly becoming "borderless."
- The declining significance of location is seen as shifting power away from nations and governments to forces and actors that are able to transcend national boundaries, including multinational corporations, mobile capital, and more amorphous global "market forces."
- This shift in power is most vividly demonstrated in the notion of a "race to the bottom," in which wages, regulations, and social welfare programs are reduced as corporations and mobile capital move freely about the world in search of low wages, few regulations, and low taxes.
- Skeptics question the evidence supporting dramatic claims of a "borderless" global economy and society. The data on economic production, trade, and investment demonstrate the continued relevance, not the disappearance, of national boundaries.
- Globalization skeptics also point out that contrary to the predictions of those who see a race to the bottom, the overwhelming majority of corporate investment occurs in those nations with high wages, numerous regulations, and high taxes.
- The debate over globalization involves at least two basic questions. First, are we seeing the emergence of a single global society? Second, if so, is this development beneficial or harmful? Realists tend to answer the first question in the negative, which makes the second irrelevant. Others, including liberals and Marxists, answer the first question in the affirmative but disagree on the second. On balance, liberals are inclined to see globalization as a positive force. But largely because globalization is synonymous with global capitalism, Marxists view it as a harmful process.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. In what sense have new technologies been necessary, but not sufficient, for the current wave of globalization?
2. To some extent, the debate over globalization and sovereignty is also a debate about globalization's "inevitability." Explain.
3. In a recent analysis of globalization, Dani Rodrik points to what he sees as "one of the central truths of

the global economy: National democracy and deep globalization are incompatible."⁴⁶ What is the source of this incompatibility?

4. What do we mean by a "borderless world" in the context of the debates over about globalization?
5. Social and economic change always benefits some and harms others. Who are the winners and losers in the process of globalization, and why?

KEY TERMS

constrained state thesis, 187
democratic deficit, 193

globalization, 186
mobility of capital, 190

race to the bottom, 190
tyranny of location, 189

FURTHER READINGS

For those interested in globalization, there are few better places to start than Thomas Friedman's popular *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), an enjoyable yet informative analysis of globalization in terms that laypersons can easily understand. The "borderless world" thesis is advanced most forcefully in Kenichi Ohmae's two works, *The End of the Nation-State* (New York: Free Press, 1995) and *The Borderless World* (New York: Harper Business, 1999). One of the more favorable and enthusiastic analyses of globalization is John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Promise of Globalization* (New York: Random House, 2002). A very critical and influential critique of globalization is Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (New York: Picador, 2002). Another interesting and more eclectic critique is John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta Books, 1998). Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson's *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1999) casts doubt on the extent

of globalization. A recent work skeptical of claims of the constrained state thesis is Linda Weiss, ed., *States in the Global Economy: Bringing Domestic Institutions Back In* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For a spirited defense of globalization, particularly in terms of its benefits for the world's poor, see Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). A much more critical perspective is provided by William K. Tabb, *Economic Governance in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). For an even-handed evaluation of globalization's impact on the poor, see Jay R. Mandle, *Globalization and the Poor* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The most recent indispensable analysis of globalization is Dani Rodrik's *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2011).

GLOBALIZATION ON THE WEB

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/>

An interesting and constantly updated collection of articles and studies on all aspects of globalization, with a tendency to challenge simplistic and widely held assumptions (e.g., "cultural globalization" being synonymous with "Americanization").

www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/index.htm

A Web site with information on many aspects of globalization.

www.globalization101.org

A self-described "student's guide to globalization."

NOTES

¹The Albrow quotation is found in Jan Aart Scholte, "The Globalization of World Politics," in *The Globalization of World Politics*, ed. John Baylis and Steven Smith (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 15.

²Richard Ernst, "Globalization of Disease Is Overlooked," *The Gazette* (Montreal, Quebec) (March 6, 2001), p. B2.

³Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 12.

⁴Linda Weiss, "Introduction: Bringing the State Back In," in *States in the Global Economy*, ed. Linda Weiss (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), p. 3.

⁵Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), p. 200.

⁶Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 7.

⁷Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World* (New York: Harper Business, 1999), p. 18.

⁸Quoted in John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta Books, 1998), p. 68.

⁹Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 26.

¹⁰Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), pp. xv-xvi.

¹¹Quoted in Jan Aart Scholte, "Global Trade and Finance," in Baylis and Smith, *Globalization of World Politics*, p. 526.

¹²Martin Wolf, "The Political Threats to Globalization," *Financial Times* (April 7, 2008), p. 24.

¹³Jeff Rubin and Benjamin Taj, "Will Soaring Transportation Costs Reverse Globalization?" *StrategEcon* (May 27, 2008), p. 4. Accessed June 15, 2014, at: cfile215.uf.daum.net/attach/18193B0F4C355FF41177BE.

¹⁴Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann, *The Global Trap: Globalization and the Assault on Democracy and Prosperity* (New York: Zed Books, 1996), p. 201.

- ¹⁵Jungah Lee and Jason Folkmanis, "Samsung Shifts Plants from China to Protect Profit Margins," *Bloomberg News* (December 12, 2013). Accessed at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-11/samsung-shifts-plants-from-china-to-protect-margins.html>.
- ¹⁶Douglas A. Irwin, *Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 53.
- ¹⁷Olivia Ward, "Bangladesh Factory Collapse: Disaster Spurs Concern for Workers' Safety, Rights," *Toronto Star* (May 4, 2013). Accessed at: http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/05/04/bangladesh_factoryCollapse_disaster_spurs_concern_for_workers_safety_rights.html.
- ¹⁸Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox*, p. 193.
- ¹⁹Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Reconstruction from the Bottom Up* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), pp. 20, 24.
- ²⁰David Ranney quoted in *ibid*, p. 56.
- ²¹Quoted in William K. Tabb, *The Amoral Elephant: Globalization and the Struggle for Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), pp. 79–80.
- ²²R. C. Longworth, "Resisting Globalization's 'Democratic Deficit,'" *Chicago Tribune* (October 15, 2000), pp. 1, 6.
- ²³John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, "The Globalization Backlash," *Foreign Policy* (September/October 2001): 22.
- ²⁴Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, p. 301.
- ²⁵Micklethwait and Wooldridge, "Globalization Backlash," p. 20.
- ²⁶John Helliwell, *How Much Do National Borders Matter?* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 1998), p. 17.
- ²⁷Matthew Davis, "Why Don't Americans Hold More Foreign Stock?" *National Bureau of Economic Research* (April 2, 2014). Accessed at: www.nber.org/digest/may02/w8680.html.
- ²⁸Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 123.
- ²⁹Daniel Drezner, "Bottom Feeders," *Foreign Policy* (November/December 2000): 64.

³⁰<http://unctad.org/en/pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/Annex-Tables.aspx> (see Annex Table 1).

³¹<http://www.economist.com/node/9723875>.

³²Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1999), p. 2.

³³Micklethwait and Wooldridge, "Globalization Backlash," p. 22.

³⁴Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*, p. 127.

³⁵Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 473.

³⁶Kal Raustiala, "Globalization and Global Governance." Accessed at: <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2007/06/13/kal-raustiala/globalization-and-global-governance/>.

³⁷Robert Wade, "Globalization and Its Limits: Reports of the Death of the National Economy Are Greatly Exaggerated," in *National Diversity and Global Capitalism*, ed. Suzanne Berger and Ronald Dore (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 72.

³⁸Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 364.

³⁹Figures on trade and GNP are from the World Bank and can be accessed at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS>.

⁴⁰Martin Wolf, "The Political Threats to Globalization," p. 24.

⁴¹Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox*, p. xvi.

⁴²Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, p. xviii.

⁴³Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, pp. 41, 35.

⁴⁴Bertell Ollman, "Bertell Ollman on Globalization." Accessed at www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/OllmanGlobalism.htm.

⁴⁵William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997), p. 39.

⁴⁶Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox*, p. 188.

What to Do About the Race to the Bottom?

A race looks very different depending on one's position in it. The frontrunner follows one strategy in attempting to maintain the lead, while those at the back of the pack pursue another strategy in trying to make up some ground. The same could be said of the race to the bottom that many associate with globalization. In wealthy nations with high wages and stringent regulations, we tend to think about the race from the perspective of the leader who fears falling behind. But in countries where wages are already low and regulations lax, workers view the race from the back/bottom, wondering if there is any possibility of gaining ground. The two essays here approach the race to the bottom from these differing perspectives, the top and the bottom.

In an article from Germany's leading news magazine *Der Speigel*, Alexander Jung and Wieland Wagner illustrate the race's dynamics from the perspective of China, which is, or at least was, at the bottom. With a pool of labor larger than the population of the United States willing to work for a fraction of the wages enjoyed by American and European workers, China was often seen as a major force driving the race to the bottom. The fear of losing jobs to China fueled concerns about a race to the bottom beginning in the mid-1980s, when the country began to reform and open up its socialist economy. Interestingly, Jung and Wagner explain that China no longer finds itself at the bottom. The same companies that came in search of low-wage labor a decade or two ago are now fleeing to Vietnam and elsewhere. Rather than attracting business with its low wages, China is losing factories due to increasing wages and regulations. Rather than fret, however, the Chinese see this as a good thing. While movement to places like Vietnam is consistent with the dynamics of the race to the bottom, it raises several critical questions. First, how and why has China managed to improve its position in the race and move out of the bottom position? And second, does the ability of countries like China to raise wages and increase regulations undermine the validity of the race to the bottom thesis?

While Chinese workers are interested in moving out of the bottom, American workers worry about sliding to the bottom. A supporter of free trade and globalization, Lawrence Summers nonetheless sees a problem in a "decoupling of the interests of businesses and nations," arguing that the costs of globalization are increasingly borne by labor. He fears that unless something is done to address the problem, political support for policies that sustain globalization will erode. Because Summers sees globalization as an essentially positive phenomenon with some negative side effects, he proposes policies to prevent a race to the bottom harmful to American workers in order to promote a "healthy globalization." What does Summers mean by "a decoupling of the interests of business and nations"?

What does he suggest be done at the domestic and international levels to deal with the consequences of this decoupling? From what you know about the dynamics of international politics in general, what are the potential obstacles for implementing his policies? And do you see any conflict between policies to keep workers in high-wage countries out of the bottom and policies allowing low-wage countries to move out of the bottom?

PERSPECTIVE 1

Vietnam Is the New China: Globalization's Victors Hunt for the Next Low-Wage Country (2008)

Alexander Jung and Wieland Wagner¹

What can Western companies do when China's factory workers start demanding better wages and conditions? Easy—just transfer production to a cheaper country. China's loss is Vietnam's gain.



The world's manufacturing powerhouse needs new low-wage workers, which is why the man in the dark suit is talking himself hoarse. "Do not delay," he calls out to the people gathered around him, pressing his mouth to the microphone. "We will handle everything in minutes, and you'll have work right away."

The man, whose name is Zhou Liang, works for a private employment agency, which has its office in a bus terminal in Shenzhen, the southern Chinese industrial center. Buses are constantly arriving at the terminal from all across China, bringing in fresh supplies of young migrant workers.

But Zhou, the employment agent, sounds desperate, like someone trying to hawk a product no one wants. Posters on the wall advertise some of the lowest-paid jobs in the world. A wide range of factories are seeking workers, but they pay only the minimum monthly wage of 750 yuan, or about €70 (\$107), and that [is] for an eight-hour day, five days a week. But by working overtime and on weekends, Zhou calls out, hoping for takers, workers can easily earn twice as much.

He has finally managed to drum up 40 applicants, and he asks them to line up in three rows. One of them is 20-year-old Zhong Xia from Sichuan province. Her luggage consists of a suitcase and a plastic bucket. The bucket is so she can wash her clothes in the factory dormitory where she is likely to be living soon, sharing a room with several other women.

The young woman is given a job assembling electric components, including cables and plugs. It's a start, and better than nothing, she says quickly before her group is led away to a waiting row of minibuses that will take the workers to factories. The entire process is designed to happen as quickly as possible, to deter workers from changing their minds at the last minute. Labor has become a scarce commodity in China these days.

¹Source: Alexander Jung and Wieland Wagner, translated from German by Christopher Sultan. "Vietnam Is the New China: Globalization's Hunt for the Next Low-Wage Country," *Spiegel Online* (May 18, 2008) © Spiegel 2008, Reprinted with Permission.

There is a shortage of 2 million workers in the Pearl River Delta alone, China's industrial zone abutting Hong Kong, where companies from Adidas to Mattel have their products manufactured. The manufacturers there compete relentlessly for labor, fighting desperately for each worker. This struggle marks a new chapter in the history of globalization.

For a long time, it seemed as if China, with its 1.3 billion people, offered the world an inexhaustible reservoir of low-wage workers. It was the basis of the recipe for success that reformer Deng Xiaoping prescribed for the country 30 years ago. Foreign companies would outsource the production of simple products to China. And the communists would provide them with the workers they needed.

Everyone benefited from the arrangement. About 300 million Chinese were liberated from deep poverty, and China transformed itself into a principal supplier for the industrialized countries. Consumers in the West were pleased they could buy cheap T-shirts and sneakers.

But now this symbiotic system is no longer working as smoothly as it did in the past. A booming economy in the country's poorer western provinces has caused the influx of migrant workers to subside, as many Chinese prefer to look for work closer to home. This in turn has forced businesses to completely revise their assumptions.

Costs are on the rise everywhere. The labor shortage has made production more expensive, as workers can now command higher wages. A more stringent labor law, more expensive raw materials and the revaluation of the Chinese yuan against the dollar have also contributed to rising costs. Inflation recently climbed to 8 percent. China's role as the ultimate low-cost production location is fast becoming history.

German investors, once lured to the Far East by low costs, have recently begun to realize that the financial advantages of outsourcing production to China have all but vanished. "Turning a profit is becoming increasingly rare," reports consultant Wilfried Krokowski, who specializes in helping German companies enter the Chinese market.

As result, production regions like the Pearl River Delta are experiencing a veritable exodus. According to a survey by the US Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, one in five companies [is] already considering pulling out of China. Many are taking their factories to places where wages are now lower, like Vietnam, Bangladesh or India.

Or they shut down completely, like the Boji Company. Until recently, Boji was one of the world's largest producers of artificial Christmas trees, employing 20,000 people. Now its complex of buildings in Shenzhen is abandoned and its factory stores closed. "We want our money," angry suppliers have scrawled on the walls.

In December and January alone, more than 1,000 companies left the Pearl River Delta. Most were from Taiwan or neighboring Hong Kong. But they are merely the tip of the iceberg. According to Stanley Lau, the deputy head of a Hong Kong federation of businesses, 10 percent of the up to 70,000 small and mid-sized manufacturers in the area will likely close up shop this year. About 4,000 companies in the shoe industry, says Lau, have already shut down.

What is most surprising about this exodus is that no one in China is concerned about the departure of these sweatshops. There have been no major protests or desperate appeals from politicians. On the contrary, the change is intended.

China's planners know that their country has no future as a low-cost producer. Following in the footsteps of Japan and South Korea, they are converting their industrial base, hoping to catapult Chinese industry to the high-tech level. It is a change that Beijing's communist strategists are promoting as energetically as only dictatorships can.

Beijing recently eliminated some incentives for foreign investors, including exemptions from corporate income tax and tax discounts for many export goods. As a result, it has become nearly impossible to turn a profit exporting certain products, like shoe leather.

At the same time, Beijing seeks to promote the social "harmony" that Communist Party leader and President Hu Jintao constantly touts. It is a campaign meant to counteract growing dissatisfaction in the People's Republic. Beijing's subjects are becoming aware of their rights and are no longer willing to be exploited.

Every few days, workers at Clever Metal & Electroplating in Shenzhen suddenly stop working. Wearing blue uniforms with yellow numbers attached to them, they squat on the side of the road, looking harmless enough—almost as if they were having a picnic. But the mood is tense.

The workers say that they have been waiting for their pay for two weeks. They speculate that the company's managers are running out of money, just as they are gradually losing patience. "I spray-paint metal frames for up to 12 hours a day," complains one worker, "and even the thin mask I wear doesn't keep out the stench."

Conditions still haven't improved significantly in many Chinese factories. The employers pay starvation wages, neglect to give credit for overtime hours and ruin the health of their employees. A worker with Taiway, a supplier to the sporting goods industry, describes how rough life is behind the scenes in a Chinese factory.

Using a device only slightly larger than a toothbrush, she spends up to 10 hours a day applying glue to shoe soles. The stench is terrible and she often suffers from headaches. Although the company has distributed face masks, the worker says, they are so ineffective that hardly anyone wears them—except when the inspectors visit.

Every night, she falls into bed, exhausted. She shares a room with six other women in the company-owned dormitory. There are no showers for the workers, who must carry hot water in buckets to wash themselves.

In the past, the Chinese would have quietly tolerated such conditions. But now they are no longer willing to accept them, and they can even expect support from the very top. The new labor law, introduced at the beginning of the year, provides employees with improved protections against dismissal and higher settlement payments. It also drives up costs for companies, especially low-wage producers.

A Strategy to Promote Healthy Globalization (2008)

PERSPECTIVE 2

Lawrence Summers²

Last week, in this column, I argued that making the case that trade agreements improve economic welfare might no longer be sufficient to maintain political support for economic internationalism in the US and other countries. Instead, I suggested that opposition to trade agreements, and economic internationalism more generally, reflected a growing recognition by workers that what is good for the global economy and its business champions was not necessarily good for them, and that there were reasonable grounds for this belief.

The most important reason for doubting that an increasingly successful, integrated global economy will benefit US workers (and those in other industrial countries) is the weakening of the link between the success of a nation's workers and the success of both its trading partners and its companies. This phenomenon was first emphasised years ago by Robert Reich, the former US labour secretary. The normal argument is that a more rapidly growing global economy benefits workers and companies in an individual country by expanding the market for exports. This is a valid consideration. But it is also true that the success of other countries, and greater global integration, places more competitive pressure on an individual economy. Workers are likely disproportionately to bear the brunt of this pressure.

Part of the reason why US workers (or those in Europe and Japan) enjoy high wages is that they are more highly skilled than most workers in the developing world. Yet they also earn higher wages because they can be more productive—their effort is complemented by capital, broadly defined to include equipment, managerial expertise, corporate culture, infrastructure and the capacity for innovation. In a closed economy anything that promotes investment in productive capital necessarily raises workers' wages. In a closed economy, corporations have a huge stake in the quality of the national workforce and infrastructure.

The situation is very different in an open economy where investments in innovation, brands, a strong corporate culture or even in certain kinds of equipment can be combined with labour from anywhere in the world. Workers no longer have the same stake in productive investment by companies as it becomes easier for corporations to combine their capital with lower priced labour overseas. Companies, in turn, come to have less of a stake in the quality of the workforce and infrastructure in their home country when they can produce anywhere. Moreover businesses can use the threat of relocating as a lever to extract concessions regarding tax policy, regulations and specific subsidies. Inevitably the cost of these concessions is borne by labour.

The public policy response of withdrawing from the global economy, or reducing the pace of integration, is ultimately untenable. It would generate resentment



²Source: Lawrence Summers, "A Strategy to Promote Healthy Globalization," *Financial Times* (May 5, 2008). Reprinted by permission of the author.

abroad on a dangerous scale, hurt the economy as other countries retaliated, and make us less competitive as companies in rival countries continue to integrate their production lines with developing countries. As Bill Clinton said in his first major international economic speech as president, “the United States must compete, not retreat.”

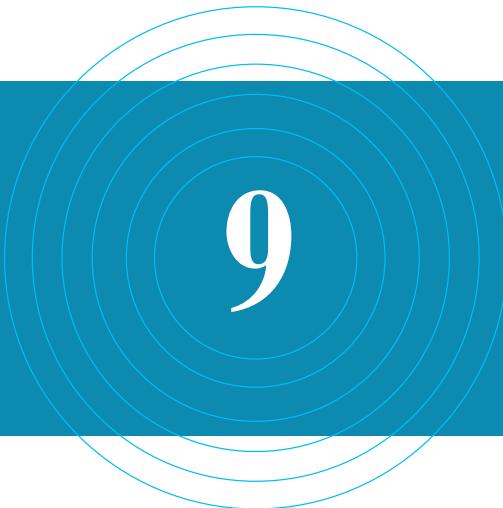
The domestic component of a strategy to promote healthy globalisation must rely on strengthening efforts to reduce inequality and insecurity. The international component must focus on the interests of working people in all countries, in addition to the current emphasis on the priorities of global corporations.

First, the US should take the lead in promoting global co-operation in the international tax arena. There has been a race to the bottom in the taxation of corporate income as nations lower their rates to entice business to issue more debt and invest in their jurisdictions. Closely related is the problem of tax havens that seek to lure wealthy citizens with promises that they can avoid paying taxes altogether on large parts of their fortunes. It might be inevitable that globalisation leads to some increases in inequality; it is not necessary that it also compromise the possibility of progressive taxation.

Second, an increased focus of international economic diplomacy should be to prevent harmful regulatory competition. In many areas it is appropriate that regulations differ between countries in response to local circumstances. But there is a reason why progressives in the early part of the 20th century sought to have the federal government take over many kinds of regulatory responsibility. They were concerned that competition for business across states, and their ease of being able to move, would lead to a race to the bottom. Financial regulation is only one example of where the mantra of needing to be “internationally competitive” has been invoked too often as a reason to cut back on regulation. There has not been enough serious consideration of the alternative—global co-operation to raise standards. While labour standards arguments have at times been invoked as a cover for protectionism, and this must be avoided, it is entirely appropriate that US policy-makers seek to ensure that greater global integration does not become an excuse for eroding labour rights.

To benefit the interests of US citizens and command broad political support, US international economic policy will need to focus on the issues in which the largest number of Americans have the greatest stake. A decoupling of the interests of businesses and nations may be inevitable; a decoupling of international economic policies and the interests of American workers is not.

Lawrence Summers is the Charles W. Eliot university professor at Harvard University.



9

International Law

Key Controversy: Does International Law Matter?

Discussions of international law are often framed by the extremes—those who dismiss international law as an ineffective sham versus those who see it as a tool for dramatically improving international order. Those who question the value of international law argue that because it is so diverse, vague, and contradictory, nations can find a legal basis or justification for just about anything they do. And given the absence of an effective international legal system, it is easy for states to ignore international law when it serves their interests. Although realists usually do not dismiss international law completely, they are inclined to see its role as extremely limited, especially when it conflicts with the interests of powerful states. Liberals have historically offered a more favorable assessment. Although few contemporary liberals suggest that we can eradicate war or other problems simply by making them illegal, they believe that international law embodies norms widely shared in international society. The existence of these laws does influence states in the same ways that domestic laws influence individuals. Constructivists share this more robust view of international law: International law may not prevent states from pursuing their national interests, but it does influence how states define their national interests and what behaviors are considered appropriate in pursuit of national interests. ■

States are always eager to claim they are acting in accordance with international law. Teams of lawyers in foreign ministries the world over provide detailed legal justifications for almost everything their nations do. Supposed violations of international law are even cited as grounds for using force against other states. But at some levels, the whole concept of international law might appear puzzling. International society is anarchic, lacking a central political authority. Unlike domestic politics, there is no higher authority that states feel obligated to obey. This raises the obvious question: How can there be international law without an international government to make and enforce it? The absence of government would seem to imply the absence of law. In the famous passage from his

Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes expressed this point of view: “Where there is no common power, there is no law.”¹ This skepticism is never far from the surface in debates about international law: As Goldsmith and Posner note, “international law has long been burdened with the charge that it is not really law.”²

Despite the “no law without government” argument, most agree that international law does indeed exist. Modern international law is usually traced to the early seventeenth century, when the modern sovereign state began to emerge from the maelstrom of the Thirty Years War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Reacting in part to the horrors of that conflict, **Hugo Grotius** (1583–1645), often considered the father of international law, devised a system of rules specifying acceptable and unacceptable behavior in war. Although there was no overarching government, he argued that sovereign states still formed a society or community in which regular interactions took place within the framework of rules and norms of behavior. Some of these rules could be found in formal agreements, while others were reflected in customary behavior. More ambitiously, Grotius argued that states were bound to obey a higher moral code even in the absence of higher political authority. But where did this code come from? One possible source was God (or religious texts). Grotius, however, preferred a more secular foundation, arguing that human reason is an adequate basis for a code of moral conduct necessary for the preservation of a civilized community of states. Although he accepted the existence and legitimacy of sovereign states, Grotius provided a vision of a more humane international order in which shared moral values could tame the excesses witnessed during the Thirty Years War. For Grotius, there was no necessary contradiction between state sovereignty and international law.³

The debate over international law focuses primarily on its impact and significance, not on its existence. Some remain skeptical that international law offers much of a constraint on state behavior. At the margins and on some relatively insignificant issues, international law may influence states, but power and interests usually trump law and justice. Others have a more favorable view, claiming that international law provides not only direct constraints on state behavior, but shapes and embodies the norms that influence what states consider appropriate behavior.

What Is International Law, and Where Does It Come From?

International law is most commonly defined as “the customs, norms, principles, rules, and other legal relations among states and other international personalities that establish binding obligations”⁴ or the “body of rules which binds states and other agents in world politics with one another.”⁵ This is, admittedly, a messy way of thinking about law. Domestic (or *municipal*) law has the virtue of centralization—it usually originates from easily identifiable government institutions and is enforced by agents of the state. International law is decentralized both in its origins and enforcement.

Historically, international law has focused on states—that is, how states were supposed to behave vis-à-vis other states. The preceding definitions of international

law make some allowance for “other” agents, largely because international law has gradually moved beyond a sole focus on states. Human rights, for example, are increasingly part of international law. This area of international law involves rules about how states should behave vis-à-vis their own citizens. We will have more to say about this new role for individual rights in international law in the next chapter. At this point, it is enough to note that the general strengths and weaknesses of international law are relevant in this area as well.

If there is no international government to enact laws, where do they come from? Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice identifies four (or five, depending on how one counts) sources of international law. In order of declining significance, these are:

1. International conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by consenting parties.
2. International custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law.
3. The general principles of law recognized by civilized nations.
4. Judicial decisions and the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations.⁶

Treaties and conventions are formal documents specifying behaviors that states agree to engage in or refrain from. Some treaties, such as nuclear arms control agreements signed by the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War, were bilateral (i.e., involving only two nations), whereas others, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968) involve virtually all nations. But whether a treaty involves two or two hundred nations, it obligates signatories to abide by its terms. Treaties in international law are the equivalent of contracts in domestic law. Thus, when we say that a state has violated international law, this assertion is usually accompanied by a reference to the specific treaty or convention whose terms have been violated.

The fact that most international legal obligations derive from treaties and conventions immediately indicates one of the major differences between domestic and international law. Domestic laws are usually binding on everyone. If a state legislature decides to impose a speed limit, it applies to all, regardless of any individual’s approval. Laws are not circulated among citizens for signatures. We do not get to choose which laws apply to us. In international law, nations are only obligated to abide by those treaties and conventions they consent to. E. H. Carr explains that “a treaty, whatever its scope and content, lacks the essential quality of law: it is not automatically and unconditionally applicable to all members of the community whether they assent to it or not.”⁷ Thus, international law relies on voluntary consent to a much greater degree than domestic law.

Not all international law is codified in written documents. Practices and norms that states have come to adopt and routinely abide by form an unwritten body of **customary law**, which Paul Campos describes as “a somewhat mysterious concept that comes down to the idea that, if enough of the international community has over time come to treat certain actions as legal [or illegal], then those actions eventually become legal [or illegal], even if states have not (yet) formally bound

customary law One of the major sources of international law. The fact that states routinely and consistently abide by a particular norm is often considered sufficient for that norm to attain the status of law, even if it is not codified in any actual agreement or treaty.

themselves to that conclusion via treaties.”⁸ Customary law does not require explicit consent; instead, consent is inferred from behavior. Sometimes customary rules find their way into actual agreements, but not always. Many laws regarding the conduct of diplomacy, such as diplomatic immunity (about which there will be more to say later), began as customs that evolved gradually over time. It was only with the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic (1961) and Consular Relations (1963) that these norms acquired the status of written law. Similarly, the prohibition on slavery and the slave trade was part of international customary law before the formal Slavery Convention of 1926.

Interestingly, although customary international law is often more difficult to identify than treaty-based law, in exceptional cases, it can be more powerful because it may apply universally, regardless of state consent. David Bederman provides the example of genocide. Although there is an international convention against genocide, it is possible to argue that genocide is also a violation of customary law. As a result, “two states may not conclude a treaty reciprocally granting themselves the right to commit genocide against a selected group.” The rule against genocide may be one of those “rules of custom that are so significant … that the international community will not suffer States to ‘contract’ out of them by treaty.”⁹ Even those not party to the genocide convention are bound by the customary prohibition.

Although custom should not be overlooked as a source of international law, it remains very difficult to know when a norm has entered the realm of customary international law. How many states, one might wonder, must abide by the norm, and for how long, before it can confidently be classified as a law? It is even harder to gauge when an international custom has reached a level where it becomes binding on all states even if they claim not to accept it, as would be the case with genocide and slavery. Even experts in international law such as Bederman have no clear answer: “How these particular rules of ‘super-custom’ are designated and achieve the exceptionally high level of international consensus they require is a bit of [a] mystery.”¹⁰

The ambiguities of customary international law are evident in recent discussions regarding whether prohibitions on the use of chemical and biological weapons have entered the realm of a super-custom. Although there are treaties against the use of these types of weapons to which almost all nations are party, there remain a handful of holdouts. The question is whether these countries are allowed under international law to use chemical and biological weapons on the grounds that they have not agreed to refrain from their use; or is the norm against the use of such weapons now so powerful that the lack of consent no longer matters? Would the use of chemical weapons by a country that was not a party to these treaties be the same as a nation claiming that it had the right to engage in genocide because it was not party to the treaty banning it? This is not a hypothetical issue. When the Syrian government was accused of using chemical weapons against its own citizens in the spring of 2013, for example, it was one of the few nations not party to the treaty that banned their use. In the absence of explicit consent in the form of treaty ratification or a super-custom prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, there is a case to be made that Syria’s use of such weapons was not a violation

of international law. So while its use of chemical weapons may have been cruel, it remains unclear whether it violated international law.¹¹ The fact that it was killing lots of civilians with all kinds of weapons may have been a violation of other international laws, but the question is whether the use of chemical weapons *per se*, which is the action that sparked particularly intense outrage and calls for intervention, was illegal.

The Weakness of International Law

The harshest rejections of international law simply dismiss it by definition: because there is no international government, international law does not exist. This might be a clever debating strategy, but it does not really help us understand how most people, critics and supporters alike, think about international law. Most critics concede that international law exists. What remains uncertain is its influence. Those who question the value of international law make several arguments. First, international law is a contradictory and vague mass of agreements and norms that offers few clear guidelines. Second, even if we could specify the contents of international law, the absence of an effective legal system severely limits its impact. Third, to the extent that international law does influence state behavior, it is on issues of relatively minor importance: When it comes to the most pressing issues of international politics involving the great powers, security and war and peace, international law gives way to power and national interests.

Vague and Conflicting Obligations

What exactly is the content of international law? Which behaviors are condoned or condemned? Even when we rely on written agreements, answers to these questions are not always easy. The first problem is that most nations are parties to literally thousands of treaties, conventions, and other international agreements entered into over decades, if not centuries. Since 1945, more than 40,000 international treaties, agreements, and conventions have been signed throughout the world. It would be unrealistic to expect all of these agreements to be perfectly consistent with one another (indeed, it is not unheard of for the same treaty to contain seemingly contradictory provisions). This lack of consistency sometimes makes it very difficult to even know what a nation's treaty obligations are. Of course, this is also a problem domestically: legislatures pass laws that contradict other laws already on the books, and states pass laws that are inconsistent with federal law. But on the domestic level, there are mechanisms for dealing with conflicts of laws—namely, courts, which decide what laws take precedence. The problem is much greater at the international level for two reasons: first, the decentralized nature of laws (not only treaties, but also nebulous customary law) increases the likelihood of conflicts; and second, the lack of an authoritative legal system makes the resolution of these conflicts problematic.

Treaties create not only problems of conflicts of laws, but also vagueness. This is particularly the case when it comes to treaties and conventions signed by

many nations. Hans Morgenthau explains what frequently happens: “In order to find a common basis on which all those different national interests can meet in harmony, rules of international law embodied in general treaties must often be vague and ambiguous, allowing all the signatories to read the recognition of their own national interests into the legal text agreed upon.”¹² As with conflicts of laws, vagueness and ambiguity are not unknown in domestic laws. Lawmakers often adopt vague wording to get the votes needed to pass legislation. This is one of the reasons that courts frequently have to interpret laws—if the laws were crystal clear in the first place, interpretation would not be necessary. And to repeat a point that should not need repeating, there is no judiciary to do the same at the international level.

Contradictory and vague laws create dilemmas for even the disinterested observer. For those with a vested interest, there is much room for self-serving uses (or abuses) of international law. With references to the right treaties and a generous interpretation of ambiguous wording, critics charge, almost any action can be supported with a plausible legal justification. Foreign ministries in all countries, including the U.S. State Department, employ staffs of very smart lawyers to do just that. The number of times that they have been unable to do so can be counted on a few fingers. Nations rarely alter their behavior to conform to international law. It is more likely that nations will twist their interpretation of international law so that it conforms to their behavior.

No Effective Legal System

compulsory jurisdiction

When legal bodies can force parties to appear before them and be bound by their final decisions. Domestic legal systems usually enjoy compulsory jurisdiction, whereas international legal bodies do not.

International Court of Justice

(ICJ) Also known as the *World Court*, the legal judicial branch of the United Nations. Any state believing that its rights under international law have been violated is free to bring suit in the ICJ against the offending parties.

optional clause A critical component of the treaty that created the ICJ, this clause gives states the option of agreeing or not agreeing in advance to be bound by the decisions of the court.

To be meaningful and effective, laws must be implemented. It is not enough that laws exist; there must be a legal system with the tools and powers to enforce them. And in order for a legal system to work properly, it must enjoy **compulsory jurisdiction**. Carr explains that domestic legal systems are effective because “the jurisdiction of national courts is compulsory. Any person cited before a court must enter an appearance or lose his case by default; and the decision of the court is binding on all concerned.”¹³ Individuals charged with crimes cannot opt out of the process. Imagine the state of domestic law if people were free not to appear in court and ignore verdicts that they disliked. But this is precisely the state of the international legal system.

Among existing international courts, the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** (also known as the *World Court*), headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands, is the most important. The ICJ is the judicial branch of the United Nations. Any state can bring a case when it believes that its rights under international law have been violated. The ICJ, however, is not a terribly busy court, hearing less than five “contentious cases” a year since 1947, often only one or two.¹⁴ The U.S. Supreme Court, in contrast, hands down written decisions in about 80 to 90 cases a year.

The problem for the ICJ is that nothing compels states to attend trials or abide by its verdicts. The Statute of the International Court of Justice (the treaty creating the ICJ) contains an **optional clause** allowing states to choose whether to be subject to the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ. Less than one-third of states have accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ by signing the optional clause. Even nations that sign the optional clause can specify conditions under which

they will not automatically recognize the court's jurisdiction. When the United States signed the optional clause in 1946, it stipulated reservations so broad as to totally negate the principle of compulsory jurisdiction.

This lack of compulsory jurisdiction can be illustrated with a case involving the United States. During the 1980s, the administration of Ronald Reagan pursued a controversial policy of aiding anticommunist rebels fighting to overthrow the Marxist Sandinista government of Nicaragua. In addition to providing money and arms to the "contra" rebels, the United States also mined harbors within Nicaragua's territorial waters. In 1984, Nicaragua asked the ICJ to determine whether U.S. actions violated international law. The United States first challenged the ICJ's jurisdiction over the matter. The ICJ rejected this challenge and heard the case, issuing a preliminary opinion ordering the United States to cease its mining of Nicaraguan harbors. The United States ignored the order and removed itself from the entire process in January 1985. In 1986, the ICJ ruled in favor of Nicaragua, declaring the United States in violation of international law.



The ICJ prepares to hear a case. Although it remains the preeminent international legal body, the ICJ's powers are severely restricted by the decentralized nature of the international system.

Source: AP Images/Serge Ligtenberg

The United States simply ignored the court's ruling. When Nicaragua brought the matter before the UN Security Council to have sanctions imposed, the United States exercised its veto as a permanent member of the council, which was pretty much the end of the matter.¹⁵ The United States is not unique in this respect. In September 2008, the former Soviet republic of Georgia requested an emergency ruling from the ICJ against Russia's military actions in disputed Georgian territory. Although the court dismissed Georgia's complaint, even if it had prevailed, any sanctions would have had to be imposed by the UN Security Council. Because Russia enjoys a veto (because like the United States, it is a permanent member), the likelihood that this would have happened is minimal. To those skeptical of the value of international law, this is perhaps its most critical weakness, because "no legal system can be effective in limiting the activities of its subjects without compulsory jurisdiction over their disputes."¹⁶

The general problem and inherent weakness of the ICJ is the enduring principle of state sovereignty. As Ian Hurd notes in his discussion of ICJ, "it is unavoidable in the very definition of a court that it should have power to impose its decision on the losing party, and yet the rules of state sovereignty have been developed over the centuries precisely to insulate countries from such outside and overarching influence." Even though Hurd describes the court's decisions as "final and binding on all states," he admits that "its authority is sharply limited by the fact that it only has jurisdiction over disputes in which all parties consent to its involvement."¹⁷

Judicial hierarchy The chain of command in legal systems in which the decisions of higher courts possessing greater authority are binding on lower courts.

In addition to compulsory jurisdiction, a clear **judicial hierarchy** is an essential element of an effective legal system. Such a hierarchy requires the existence of lower and higher courts, with a definite line of authority. Higher courts fulfill several functions. First, parties unsatisfied with lower-court decisions can sometimes appeal to higher courts. Second, when lower courts issue contradictory rulings, higher courts decide which ruling prevails. Third, the highest courts, such as the Supreme Court in the United States, establish *precedents*, or interpretations of laws that lower courts are bound to obey. The international legal system does not have an effective legal hierarchy. The ICJ does not take precedence over national courts in the same way that the U.S. Supreme Court does over district or state courts. Although treaties signed and ratified by the United States become the law of the land and acquire the status of domestic law, the U.S. Supreme Court does not have to abide by the decisions of the ICJ. Indeed, in conflicts between the U.S. Constitution and international law, the Constitution prevails: "It is now a well-established principle that neither a rule of customary international law nor a provision of a treaty can abrogate a right granted by the Constitution."¹⁸ The U.S. Supreme Court might take the ICJ's decisions and interpretations into account in its own deliberations, but it does not recognize the ICJ as a superior authority.

This lack of an international judicial hierarchy was evident in another case involving the United States and a Mexican national, Jose Medellin, who was arrested in Texas in 1993 along with several other gang members for a particularly brutal murder in the gang rape of two teenage girls. He was eventually found guilty and sentenced to death. The international legal issue is that upon his arrest, Medellin was not allowed to contact the Mexican consulate, a right granted to

people arrested in foreign countries under the Geneva Convention. On this basis, Mexico brought a case against the United States to the ICJ in 2003 and prevailed, with the court ruling that because Texas authorities violated the Geneva Convention, to which the United States was a party, Medellin was entitled to a reconsideration of his case and conviction. The ICJ decision became the basis of an appeal by Medellin's lawyers, but Texas courts ruled that the ICJ's decision was not binding on U.S. state courts. On appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Medellin v. Texas*, agreed: Contrary to the ICJ's ruling, Medellin was not entitled to any reconsideration. That was the end of the legal road for Medellin, who was executed by the state of Texas in August 2008. So while the ICJ may be the highest international court, its ruling was not considered binding on "lower" courts in the United States.

Law and Power

Historically, realists have been most skeptical about the value of international law. It is easy to understand why. Realists typically emphasize the fundamental difference between domestic and international politics—namely, the absence of a central political authority on the global level. This is the "first fact" of international politics for realists. To the extent that criticisms of international law stress the absence of institutions to create and enforce laws, they reflect this basic realist tendency to see the international realm as distinct from the domestic realm. Realists would also agree with James Brierly's conclusion that "the fundamental difficulty of subjecting states to the rule of law is the fact that states possess power."¹⁹

On the rather mundane day-to-day issues that nations deal with, they may indeed abide by thousands of international laws. But this is not the point. The real test of international law is not whether it constrains relatively weak states on issues of lesser importance, but rather whether it has any impact on the actions of great powers on the pivotal issues of international politics, war and peace, and the use of force. When national power and interests come into conflict with international law, which prevails? Is there any chance that law trumps power and interests? For realists, the answer is "no." And some realists take the argument even further: It is not just that international law *will* be pushed aside when critical national interests are at stake, but that it *should* be ignored if it conflicts with fundamental national interests.

At an even deeper level, realists (and, interestingly, Marxists) argue that international laws and norms are themselves reflections of power. International law does not just appear out of nowhere. It originates in concrete social-political settings in which power and resources are unequally distributed. The norms and rules that prevail in any society, domestic or international, are likely to be consistent with the interests of those with the power to create and enforce them. Most contemporary international law originated in Europe beginning in the 1600s and developed over the course of the last four hundred years. As Peter Malanczuk points out, "most developing countries were under alien rule during the formative period of international law, and therefore played no part in shaping that law."²⁰ As a result, it would be naïve to assume that international law has not been influenced

by the particular values and interests of European societies: “Law has the inclination to serve primarily the interests of the powerful. ‘European’ international law, the traditional law of nations, is no exception to this rule.”²¹ Such principles as freedom of the seas and the protection of private property no doubt serve the interests of those with the power to use the seas and possess the property. According to Lenin, law (domestic and international) is but the “formulation, the registration of power relations … and expression of the will of the ruling class.”²² On this issue at least, realists would agree with Lenin.

The Enduring Value of International Law

Defenders of international law appear to have a fairly steep uphill battle to make their case. Most of its weaknesses need to be conceded at the outset: “International law has no legislature … there is no system of courts … and there is no executive governing authority … there is no identifiable institution either to establish rules, or clarify them or see that those who break them are punished.”²³ How, then, does one make a case for international law? There are essentially three arguments advanced by those who see international law as a powerful constraint on state behavior. First, critics of international law tend to exaggerate its shortcomings by focusing on a handful of spectacular failures and attacking an unrealistic, almost straw man, vision of what international law can accomplish. Second, nations almost always abide by international law, for many of the same reasons that people abide by domestic laws even in the absence of a government. Third, critics tend to underestimate how powerful international laws and norms can be in altering and shaping state behavior.

The False Lessons of Spectacular Failures

Extreme criticisms of international law as a worthless sham often highlight some of its more spectacular failures, and there are plenty to choose from. A favorite example from the 1920s is the **Kellogg-Briand Pact** (1928), or the “General Treaty for the Renunciation of War,” which was signed by sixty-five states, including Italy and Japan. The pact obliged signatories to renounce war as an instrument of policy and to settle their disputes peacefully. Although many at the time saw the treaty for what it was—an unenforceable statement of moral aspirations—others actually believed that it could transform international politics. Although the attempt to abolish war by treaty appears silly in retrospect, the failure of the Kellogg-Briand Pact provides a good basis for beginning to understand what international law realistically can and cannot accomplish. Even those who think that international law is generally effective and worthwhile recognize that it has limits, as does domestic law; after all, laws prohibiting the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s fared about as well as the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

In thinking about the promise and limits of international law, we need to understand two very different approaches for deciding what should and should

Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)

Formally known as the *General Treaty for the Renunciation of War*, the agreement obliged signatories to renounce war as an instrument of policy and to settle their disputes peacefully.

not be illegal. Over the past several centuries, the **natural law tradition** and the **positive law tradition** have shaped the thinking about the sources and functions of law, domestic and international.²⁴ A natural law approach is driven by a moral analysis, whereas a positivist approach rests on a behavioral analysis. A natural law approach starts with an abstract standard of moral absolutes—the delineation of what behaviors are morally right or wrong—and then translates these absolutes into law. “Natural lawyers,” according to Lea Brilmayer, “suggested that international law followed from the basic universal principles of morality.”²⁵ These moral principles are derived without reference to actual behavior. Morality, after all, is not a popularity contest. If people are already behaving in accordance with these absolutes, so much the better. But what if they are not? In this case, the law becomes a tool for changing the way people behave—sometimes dramatically.

Positivist legal theory adopts a very different approach: “Applied to international law, positivism … regard[s] the actual behavior of states as the basis of international law.”²⁶ Positivists try to identify those norms of behavior that states generally adhere to in reality. These norms then become the basis for law. In many cases, these behavioral norms are also consistent with moral absolutes. We are fortunate, for example, that laws against murder are consistent with both moral absolutes and actual behavior. But there are also many instances in which behavior and abstract principles diverge. In these cases, the law needs to be reconciled to prevailing behavior. Laws that dictate behaviors at great variance with actual behavior are doomed to failure. Brierly explains that “the real contribution of positivist theory to international law has been its insistence that the rules of the system are to be ascertained from observation of the practice of states and not from *a priori* deductions.”²⁷ One of the earliest positivists, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) warned of the dangers of excessive moralism: “The gulf between how one should live and one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the hard way to self-destruction.”²⁸ From a positivist perspective, the purpose of law is not to radically alter behavior, but rather to punish and alter the behavior of the handful of people who are inclined not to follow these norms.

Treaties such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact are problematic in their excessive ambition, attempting to apply a moral standard that bore little resemblance to the way that statesmen actually thought and behaved. Although the signatories of the treaty certainly consented to its terms, there was an almost surreal disconnection between the treaty’s lofty sentiments and the depressing realities of world politics. The logic of Kellogg-Briand was simple: if war was wrong, it should be illegal—case closed. Its goal was to fundamentally transform international politics. It tried to alter the political reality rather than work within it. The pact was the international equivalent of domestic laws against alcohol consumption. But it is easy to overlearn the lessons of such failures. It would be a wild exaggeration to use examples such as Kellogg-Briand to support any sweeping denunciation of international law as a worthless collection of rules, just as the failure of Prohibition in the United States cannot be used to support a blanket condemnation of domestic law. The point here is simple: We need to have a reasonable expectation of what international law can accomplish. Criticizing the law for failing to achieve the unattainable is a decidedly

natural law tradition A tradition that holds that universal moral principles should form the basis for laws. Usually contrasted with the positive law tradition.

positive law tradition A tradition that holds that laws need to take into account the ways in which people (and states) actually behave. Attempts to translate moral principles into law rigidly, without regard for the realities of human behavior, are unlikely to be very successful.

pointless endeavor. Consequently, we may not be able to end alcohol consumption by legal fiat, but perhaps we can keep it out of the hands of minors or prevent drunk driving. Similarly, maybe international law cannot eliminate war, but maybe it can ban certain egregious means of waging it or ensure the humane treatment of prisoners of war. One has to be realistic about what laws can accomplish in both the domestic and international spheres.

States Usually Abide by International Law

It is easy to produce a long list of violations of international law. But this proves little. It would be just as easy to compile a similarly long list of violations of domestic laws. If laws were never violated, there would not be much need for them in the first place. The value of international law does not depend on universal compliance. Occasional violations of law should not be allowed to obscure the frequency with which it is obeyed. Unfortunately, compliance never draws much attention: There are never headlines announcing the millions of people who are *not* robbed or murdered every day. But an accurate evaluation of international law requires an assessment of both compliance and violation. And virtually everyone agrees with Stanley Michalak's assessment that "most of the time, states do obey international law; most of the time, they do get along with their neighbors; and most of the time, they do cooperate on countless issues and problems."²⁹ And even Hans Morgenthau, a realist who spends a lot of time discussing the weaknesses of international law, concedes "that during the four hundred years of its existence, international law has in most instances been scrupulously observed."³⁰

Why Do States Abide by International Law?

identitive compliance The fact that people and nations usually abide with laws not out of fear of punishment, but because the laws embody norms that are viewed as right.

If there is no central enforcement mechanism, why do states abide by international law, even when they might derive some immediate benefits from ignoring it? As with individuals and domestic law, states typically have a variety of motives for abiding by international law. The first set of reasons fall under the rubric of **identitive compliance**. When we think about why we usually abide by domestic laws, the most prominent reason is that they embody norms of behavior that we agree (i.e., identify) with. How many of us would engage in rape, murder, or theft even if we were certain of never being caught or punished? Fortunately, not many. For the vast majority of laws, especially those that seek to protect people from direct harm, the threat of punishment is not the primary reason why people comply. Undoubtedly, "some people do in fact obey laws because law-breaking will bring them into unwelcome contact with the police and courts ... but no community could survive only through an ever-present fear of punishment."³¹ The threat of punishment deters the relatively small number of people who would not be restrained by their own conscience. Similarly, most nations refrain from attacking their weaker neighbors and committing genocide or kidnapping foreign diplomats, simply because such actions are considered wrong. The importance of good conscience should not be underestimated, even in the supposedly cutthroat world of international politics.

States also abide by international law because it is in their interests to do so, which we refer to as **utilitarian compliance**. Even if they suffer some immediate cost by following international law, nations recognize that in the long run, they benefit from upholding the overall system of law. Take an example that sometimes infuriates people—international laws that prohibit trying and punishing foreign diplomats who commit crimes, known as **diplomatic immunity**. Typically, these are relatively harmless but nonetheless annoying violations, such as United Nations (UN) diplomats who rack up tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid parking tickets. But occasionally there are more serious examples: Foreign diplomats have abused children and killed people in drunk driving accidents without being prosecuted or arrested. In these cases, the host government has two options: First, it can ask the diplomat's government to waive their diplomatic immunity; or second, the diplomat can be declared *persona non grata* and expelled. Despite these (admittedly rare) horror stories, it remains in the interest of the United States, as well as of other countries, to respect the norm of diplomatic immunity. Why? Because U.S. diplomats are stationed all over the world in nations whose laws and legal systems might not be to the liking of the United States. Without diplomatic immunity, a U.S. diplomat caught with alcohol or a *Playboy* magazine in some countries might be subject to draconian punishments and might be tried in corrupt courts. Thus, the overall benefits of abiding by diplomatic immunity vastly outweigh the occasional costs.

A related motivation for compliance is a *fear of chaos*. There is value to international law as a whole that transcends such narrow calculations regarding individual laws. States benefit from the preservation of a certain measure of international order and stability. Even if immediate benefit might be gained by violating a given law, states recognize that they have a more fundamental, long-term interest in upholding the general system of international law. “The ultimate explanation of the binding force of all law,” explains Brierly, “is that man, whether he is a single individual or whether he is associated with other men in a state, is constrained, in so far as he is a reasonable being, to believe that order and not chaos is the governing principle of the world in which he has to live.”³² The preservation of order depends on reciprocity—if you expect others to abide by the rules, you need to do so yourself. If states begin violating some laws in order to gain an advantage, this encourages other states to do likewise. If the entire system begins to unravel, the costs are almost certain to outweigh the gains from the initial violation.

States also abide by international law because they fear punishment. This might seem odd, given the absence of a central political authority to enforce laws and impose punishment. The mere fact that there is no central authority, however, does not preclude the possibility of punishment; it simply requires that punishment be imposed in a decentralized fashion by other states. International law recognizes a right of **reprisal** or retaliation—that is, the right of states to take actions that otherwise would be impermissible in response to another state’s violation of international law. For example, when Iranian radicals took U.S. diplomats hostage in 1979 with the approval and support of the Iranian government, this was universally recognized as a violation of longstanding international law. As a result, the United States had the right to take actions in reprisal that would normally not be

utilitarian compliance When people or states abide by laws because they think that it is in their interests to do so.

diplomatic immunity The principle that nations cannot try and punish diplomats of other nations who violate their domestic laws. This is an example of an international law that emerged first through custom, but was eventually codified in treaties.

reprisal An act that is normally a violation of international law, but that is permitted as a response to another nation’s violation of international law.

collective reprisal Under international law, the ability or obligation for all states to punish those who violate international law (as opposed to only those states whose rights were violated).

allowed, such as seizing Iranian assets in the United States. Furthermore, international law recognizes a right of **collective reprisal**. Even though it was U.S. diplomats who were taken hostage, all nations had a right to punish Iran on behalf of the United States if they wanted. The seizure of the U.S. embassy was seen as an assault on the entire system of law on which international diplomacy depended, so all states had a right to punish Iran for its transgressions. The right to punish is not restricted to the state whose rights were violated because it is the obligation of all states to uphold international law.

The Iranian hostage case provides an example of yet another reason why states usually abide by international law: In the event that a state's rights are violated in the future, other nations are less likely to come to its aid if that state has violated international law in the past. States need to care about their reputations, something Iran would soon find out. Several years after the hostage crisis, Iran found itself embroiled in a bitter war with Iraq, during which chemical weapons were used against Iranian targets in clear violation of international law. When Iran protested that its rights were being violated, it got little sympathy or support because of its own recent violations of international law. Nations cannot violate the rights of others and then expect others to care very much when their own rights are violated. Thus, nations are usually unwilling to be saddled with the reputation of violating international law for fear that their ability to call on the international community for help in the future will be diminished.

Liberalism and the Promise of International Law

Liberals have traditionally seen a greater scope for common interests in international relations than realists. But like realists, liberals recognize that the uncertainties and insecurities of anarchy make it difficult for states to cooperate to achieve their common interests. This is one of the valuable functions of international law. Because nations usually do comply, international law gives states some reasonable assurance, if not a guarantee, about how other states will behave. International law lessens some of the uncertainties of anarchy. As Hedley Bull explains, “international law provides a means by which states can advertise their intentions with regard to the matter in question [and] provide one another with a reassurance about their future policies in relation to it.”³³ Thus, it is not that states abide by international law only when it is in their interests to do so, but rather that a system of law makes it possible for states to achieve common interests that would be untenable without international law.

Although they agree that self-interest is a powerful motive for state compliance with international law, liberals are more likely to interpret state behavior as resulting from ethical and moral considerations (i.e., identitive compliance). When we look at the reasons why people and states usually abide by laws, motives other than self-interest are paramount. Is it self-interest that stops people from assaulting, killing, and robbing each other? No. People refrain from such activities because they believe that such acts are wrong. Similarly, is it self-interest that stops nations from attacking each other more often? Probably not. For liberals, the emphasis on self-interest, fear of punishment, or both is an unduly pessimistic assessment of



The U.S. Representative to the United Nations casts a veto in the Security Council. A no vote from any permanent member can kill any motion, making it difficult for the United Nations to act against the interests and wishes of these countries.

Source: AP Images/Mary Altaffer

state motivation. Remember that liberals view people as essentially rational, reasonable, ethical, and moral beings. Because states are collections of people, state behavior reflects many of the same traits. This perspective provides a much more optimistic vision of the potential of international law.

There are limits to liberal optimism, however. Most liberals have long since abandoned the utopian view of international law that informed the Kellogg-Briand Pact and other attempts to transform international politics through legalistic fiat. There is a realization that international law cannot completely ignore the realities of power politics. But utopian idealism does not have to be replaced with dismissive cynicism. Even if international law cannot bring world peace, it can

significantly ameliorate the imperatives of power politics. The realist inclination to reduce all aspects of international politics to relations of power provides a caricature of how the world works. There has always been more to international politics than narrow national interests—there is also restraint, common interests, enlightened self-interest, and, yes, even morality and a commitment to do what is right.

Constructivism, Law, Norms, and the National Interest

For constructivists, the relationship between international law and national interests is a bit more complicated than realists (or liberals) suggest. To say that states abide by international law primarily (and perhaps only) when it is in their national interest to do so ignores the critical issue of how and why nations arrive at their definitions of the national interest. The national interest is not something nations discover, like scientists discovering the laws of physics. It is not an objective fact; *national interest* is a subjective and variable social construction. Nations think about their national interests today very differently than in centuries past. They also reject as unacceptable, even unthinkable, practices that used to be routine for advancing national interests. David Lumsdaine cites a few examples: “Two centuries ago it was acceptable to wage war with hired foreign mercenaries; now it is not. Killing and enslaving the inhabitants of conquered countries, a common if brutal practice in Thucydides’ day, would make a state a total outlaw today. Wars to acquire territory, normal enough in the seventeenth century, are increasingly regarded as unacceptable.”³⁴ Most states today would not dream of doing certain things that were once perfectly legitimate. Why not? Because we adhere to very different notions about what states should be allowed to do; state behavior has changed along with our evolving moral standards.

Realists ask whether international law constrains nations in the pursuit of their national interests, and they conclude that generally, it does not. For constructivists, this is not only the wrong answer, but also a very simple-minded way of thinking about the relationship between international law and national interests. Once we accept the idea that definitions of the national interest evolve over time, a whole new set of possibilities opens up. Is it possible, for example, that prevailing conceptions of morality and rules of law help shape the way that nations define their interests? Not only is it possible, but it also seems self-evident. Thus, the relationship among national interests, state behavior, and international law is more complicated than is often believed. “Norms are not simply an ethical alternative to or constraint on self-interest,” Audie Klotz tells us, “rather, in the constructivist view … norms play an explanatory role.... Thus international actors—even great powers such as the United States—inherently are socially constructed; that is, prevailing global norms … partially define their interests.”³⁵ We noted earlier that laws, domestic and international, are typically obeyed because people identify with the norms of behavior that they embody. This is consistent with the constructivist view that states behave on the basis of shared understandings (i.e., norms) of appropriate behavior. So merely looking for instances where international legal norms constrained state behavior underestimates their importance; we also need to appreciate how legal norms influence definitions of national interest in the first place.

Conclusion

Discussions of international law used to be defined by the extremes: at one end of the spectrum, international law was dismissed as a nonexistent or worthless sham; at the other, it was presented as an alternative to power politics and the use of force. Contemporary thinking about international law generally rejects both positions in favor of a more nuanced view. There is, in fact, a substantial amount of agreement in the debate over the value of international law. At a general level, Peter Malanczuk comes closest to summarizing prevailing opinion: “The role of international law in international relations has always been limited, but it is rarely insignificant.”³⁶ There is also a consensus that the vast majority of states abide by international law the vast majority of the time. But there are still differences, particularly concerning the motives for compliance, that reflect underlying disagreements about the forces that shape state behavior.

Realists argue that states are primarily motivated by concerns about power and national interest. International anarchy requires that states prioritize power and interests because those that do not will suffer at the hands of those who do. The scope for moral behavior is severely limited in the competitive arena of international politics. The fact that states usually comply with international law is seen as perfectly consistent with this view. For realists, this compliance is driven largely by considerations of national interest, and when there is a conflict between international law and national interests, the latter will certainly prevail. States do not obey international law out of moral commitment. Sometimes the moral and legal course of action is also in the national interest, but this is merely a happy coincidence.

Liberals and constructivists are united in rejecting realist attempts to explain everything in terms of power and national interest. Although morality may or may not be the predominant reason for compliance with international law, it is certainly not the insignificant factor that realists would have us believe. The realist argument, however, is very difficult to counter, largely because the concept of national interest is so vague and elastic that it can account for almost anything states do. Those convinced that calculations of national interest dictate how states behave will always be able to explain their actions in these terms. The “national interest” is like Rorschach tests that psychologists show patients and ask them to tell what they see. You can usually see pretty much anything you want—if you want to see a tiger, there it is; if you want to see your mother, there she is. If a state abides by international law, you can show that it was in its national interest to do so; if it violated the same law, you could show how that, too, was in its national interest. The realist position is almost impossible to disprove. But even if we accept the realist position that national interests determine state behavior, this only leads to the more fundamental question of how states arrive at their definitions of national interests. Conceptions of national interest do not exist independent of international laws and norms. Certainly, definitions of national interest are reflected in laws and norms, but these laws and norms also influence how states think about their national interests.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Despite the absence of a world government, most agree that there is a body of rules and norms of behavior that make up international law.
- International law has often been viewed from two different (and extreme) positions. Skeptics see international law either as nonexistent or as a worthless sham that can be easily ignored when it clashes with power and interests. Its more enthusiastic supporters have sometimes seen international law as a powerful tool to shape and change the behavior of states for the better.
- There are several major sources of international law, the most important being customs and treaties or conventions. Decisions of international legal bodies and writings of widely recognized legal authorities are secondary sources of international law.
- The major weakness or limitation of international law is the conflicting and often vague provisions in international treaties and conventions, as well as a legal system that lacks compulsory jurisdiction and an accepted hierarchy.
- The ability of nations, particularly the most powerful, to ignore and escape the restrictions of international law provides the most vivid illustration of the weakness of international law.
- Supporters point out that in the vast majority of instances, nations scrupulously abide by international law for a variety of reasons (e.g., they agree with the laws, doing so is in their self-interest, and they fear punishment by other states). This fact is often obscured by some of the more dramatic failures of international law, such as the attempt to “outlaw war” in the 1920s.
- Even supporters realize that international law has its limits, as does domestic law. An effective legal code needs to reconcile itself to the actual behavior of individuals, states, or both and not try to radically remake them according to abstract moral principles.
- International law also has a profound impact on how states define their national interest and what types of actions they consider acceptable in pursuit of these national interests.
- In general, realists are most skeptical of the value of international law, whereas liberals and constructivists believe that it is, and can be, an important force shaping the behavior of states.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. How can there be international law without a world government?
2. How do liberal, constructivist, and realist perspectives on international law differ?
3. Why is compliance with international law generally so strong in spite of the absence of a world government to enforce it?
4. What lessons about international law can we learn from the failure of efforts such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact?
5. How is international law different from and similar to domestic law?

KEY TERMS

collective reprisal, 224
compulsory jurisdiction, 216
customary law, 213
diplomatic immunity, 223

Hugo Grotius, 212
identitive compliance, 222
International Court of Justice (ICJ), 216

judicial hierarchy, 218
Kellogg-Briand Pact, 220
natural law tradition, 221
optional clause, 216

positive law tradition, 221
reprisal, 223
utilitarian compliance, 223

FURTHER READINGS

The essential reference work in international law, which provides the texts of most of the important treaties, is Burns H. Weston, Richard A. Falk, and Hilary Charlesworth (eds.), *Supplement of Basic Documents to International Law and World Order* (St. Paul, MN: West, 1997). Excellent overviews of the sources, content, strengths, and weaknesses of international law are J. R. Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1963), and Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law* (New York: Routledge, 1997). For conflicting views on the role of

international law, see Lewis Henkin, Stanley Hoffman, and Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Right vs. Might: International Law and the Use of Force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991). A theoretically challenging discussion of international law from a constructivist perspective is Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989). A more recent discussion on the merits of international law is Jack L. Goldsmith and Eric A. Posner, *The Limits of International Law* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

INTERNATIONAL LAW ON THE WEB

www.icj-cij.org

The Web site of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) provides information on current and past cases before the court, as well as international law more generally.

www.un.org/law

The UN's international law Web site offers a wealth of information on international legal bodies, as well as treaties.

www.asil.org

The Web site of the American Society of International Law provides information on all aspects of international law, including how it relates to current events.

<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>

Maintained by the Yale Law School, this Web site posts texts of almost every significant treaty and legal document of the last five hundred years.

http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/Pages/default.aspx

The Web site of the International Criminal Court provides information on past and pending cases.

NOTES

¹Cited in Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *The Global Philosophers: World Politics in Western Thought* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992), p. 165.

²Jack L. Goldsmith and Eric A. Posner, *The Limits of International Law* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3.

³Kauppi and Viotti, *The Global Philosophers*, pp. 172–174.

⁴Catha Nolan, *The Longman Guide to World Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1995), p. 177.

⁵Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in International Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 127.

⁶See J. L. Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 56.

⁷E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper&Row, 1964), p. 171.

⁸Paul Campos, "Striking Syria Is Completely Illegal," *Time* (September 5, 2013). Accessed at: <http://ideas.time.com/2013/09/05/obamas-plan-for-intervention-in-syria-is-illegal/>.

⁹David J. Bederman, *International Legal Frameworks* (New York: Foundation Press, 2001), p. 23.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 23–24.

¹¹Syria did sign and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention in September, 2013, as part of its deal to disarm in order to avoid intervention. On the issue of chemical weapons and super-customs, see Kenneth Anderson, "Legality of Intervention in Syria in Response to Chemical Weapons Attacks," *ASIL [American Society of International Law] Insights* (August 30, 2013). Accessed at: <http://www.asil.org/insights/volume/17/issue/21/legality-intervention-syria-response-chemical-weapon-attacks>.

¹²Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 269.

¹³Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁴See the complete list of the ICJ's cases at www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=2#2010.

¹⁵See Robert Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 257; and David P. Forsythe, *The Politics of International Law: U.S. Foreign Policy Reconsidered* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), pp. 31–63.

¹⁶Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 277.

¹⁷Ian Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 187 and 206.

¹⁸Bederman, *International Legal Frameworks*, p. 153.

¹⁹Brierly, *Law of Nations*, p. 48.

²⁰Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 29.

²¹B. V. A. Roling, cited in *ibid.*, p. 33.

²²Cited in Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 176.

²³Malcolm N. Shaw, *International Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.

²⁴See Bederman, *International Legal Frameworks*, pp. 4–5.

²⁵Lea Brilmayer, *American Hegemony: Political Morality in a One-Superpower World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 98.

²⁶Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, p. 16.

²⁷Brierly, *Law of Nations*, p. 54.

²⁸In Kauppi and Viotti, *Global Philosophers*, p. 151.

²⁹Stanley Michalak, *A Primer in Power Politics* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), p. 3.

³⁰Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 265.

³¹Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 176.

³²Brierly, *Law of Nations*, p. 56.

³³Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. 142.

³⁴David Lumsdaine, *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 26.

³⁵Audir Klotz, "Norms Reconstituting Interests: Global Racial Equality and U.S. Sanctions Against South Africa," *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 460.

³⁶Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, p. 6.

Should the International Criminal Court Deal with the Syrian Conflict

Since the end of World War II, several treaties and conventions have outlawed particularly egregious violations of human rights—crimes against humanity, genocide, and other war crimes. Until recently, however, there was no international judicial body designed to prosecute *individuals* suspected of engaging in these proscribed behaviors. The ICJ hears cases against *states*, not individuals. Typically, it has created ad hoc courts to hear cases against individuals, such as the one trying those suspected of mass killings in the former Yugoslavia. During the 1990s, there was a movement to establish a permanent court to deal with such cases. These efforts were successful, and on July 17, 1998, 120 nations voted in favor of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Only seven nations voted against the establishment of this court, including China, Israel, Iraq, and the United States. As of September 2002, 81 countries had ratified the statute; the United States was not among them. The Clinton administration claimed to support the idea of the ICC, but it opposed some provisions of the actual treaty. In 2002, the Bush administration announced its opposition and its decision not to seek ratification of the Rome Statute. Although the Obama administration has rejected the “hostility” of the previous administration in favor of a policy of “principled engagement,” it also has not sought ratification of the Rome Statute. Still, the administration insists that the ICC is part of the solution for dealing with human rights abuses.

The readings below address the recent controversy over whether the ICC should deal with those who might be guilty of violating human rights in the Syrian conflict. Balkees Jarrah argues that the ICC should and can try those who might be responsible for attacks on civilians, while Mark Kersten is more skeptical. Although Jarrah and Kersten seem to agree that violations of human rights have taken place, why do they reach such different conclusions regarding the feasibility and desirability of a role for the ICC in dealing with those responsible? How does this specific debate about the ICC’s role in the Syrian conflict reflect some of the larger issues in the debate about the promise and limitations of international law?

PERSPECTIVE 1**The United States Should Support ICC Involvement in Syria****Balkees Jarrah¹**

Recently, US Secretary of State John Kerry reported that President Barack Obama had asked his top aides for new policy options to address the situation in Syria. Though Kerry did not elaborate what exactly was under consideration, one option the White House has not pursued—and should—is to support referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Obama administration has repeatedly said that those responsible for serious crimes in Syria must be held accountable. Until now, the US government's approach to justice has been focused on supporting documentation and investigative initiatives. These efforts are important and will no doubt be vital to future domestic and international accountability processes. Nevertheless, with the Syrian crisis entering a fourth year, it is long overdue for the United States to raise the stakes and support a concrete accountability measure that could begin work immediately and potentially help deter further abuses.

The horror that the Syrian people have endured over the last three years is well-known. Human Rights Watch has extensively documented abuses by government and pro-government forces and concluded that they have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes. The government continues to carry out indiscriminate air and artillery strikes on residential areas and to arbitrarily detain, torture, and extrajudicially execute civilians and combatants. Human Rights Watch has also documented war crimes and crimes against humanity by some opposition groups, including the indiscriminate use of car bombs and mortars, kidnapping, torture, and extrajudicial executions.

These abuses take place in a pervasive climate of impunity. Syrian authorities have shown no interest whatsoever in ensuring credible justice for past and ongoing grave human rights crimes. Predictably, the failure to hold those responsible for these crimes to account has only fueled further atrocities by all sides. Indeed, the latest report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria stated plainly that “[t]he warring parties do not fear being held accountable for their acts.”

As a permanent international court with a mandate to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity when national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so, the ICC was created to address exactly the type of situation that exists in Syria today. However, because Syria is not a member of the treaty that established the court, the UN Council would have to give it jurisdiction through what's known as an “ICC referral.”

While a significant cross-section of UN members have expressed support for the court's involvement, including nine out of fifteen current Security Council members, Russia and China are likely to oppose an ICC referral. For its part, the

¹ Source: Human Rights Watch. The United States Should Support ICC Involvement in Syria. Reprinted by permission of the author.

US, one of the most powerful potential proponents of ICC involvement, has not backed a role for the court.

Instead, US officials are exploring options to establish an ad hoc tribunal for Syria despite the practical, political, and financial difficulties involved in starting from scratch to create a complex institution that could deliver credible prosecutions. Moreover, the delay involved in setting up such an entity from the ground up would remove any potential deterrent effect that could be achieved by examining crimes in Syria now, as abuses persist. US officials themselves recognize that such an endeavor takes a long time—something the Syrian people don't have.

By contrast, ICC involvement in the course of the ongoing conflict in Syria would send a clear message to all parties that grave crimes will lead to serious consequences. It would put those in senior positions, no matter their political allegiance, on notice that they could be held responsible for crimes they order or commit, or for crimes they fail to prevent or punish. Regardless of the outcome of the conflict, they would face the threat of prosecution indefinitely.

US officials may see supporting an ICC referral as a vain effort given that Russia would be likely to veto such a move in the Security Council. Russia has described the effort to seek an ICC referral as “ill-timed and counterproductive” though a referral would answer head-on Russia's concerns over rebel atrocities since the court would have a mandate to examine crimes by all sides.

However, Russian opposition should not be accepted as a permanent state of affairs nor a justification for policy decisions. As the situation on the ground shifts in Syria, we have seen changes in Russia's position on chemical weapons and humanitarian access to people in need. Moreover, there hasn't been enough pressure on Russia to change its stance on the court. It would be a mistake to preclude circumstances in which Russia would allow a referral by the Security Council.

No doubt Washington's vocal support for ICC involvement would encourage close allies on the Security Council and raise pressure on Moscow to change its obstructive posture. That could contribute to the momentum needed for action, but more fundamentally, a US decision to get behind an ICC referral would signal that the administration is serious about its commitment to end impunity in Syria and would send a message that accountability must be squarely on the agenda. It would also underscore Washington's commitment to impartial justice.

The Obama administration has afforded Russia much more space by failing, both in Washington and at the UN, to come out in favor of ICC involvement. An early draft of the Security Council resolution on the use of chemical weapons in Syria included an ICC referral, but it was removed apparently at US insistence before even being presented to the Russians during the negotiations on the text. Regrettably, this meant Russia was spared having to justify its opposition to a referral.

US officials may be further disinclined to back a role for the court due to concerns it may complicate the (currently stalled) Geneva talks and that the court would be an obstacle to any peace deal. However, the record from other conflicts indicates that criminal indictments of senior political, military and rebel leaders can actually strengthen peace efforts by delegitimizing and marginalizing those who stand in the way of resolving the conflict. For example, the indictments of

Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serbs' wartime political leader, and Ratko Mladic, their military commander, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia are credited with keeping them sidelined during the Dayton peace talks, which led to the end of the Bosnian war. This was also the lesson from the experience with the former Liberian president Charles Taylor. The unsealing of the arrest warrant against him at the opening of talks to end the Liberian civil war was ultimately viewed as helpful in moving negotiations forward.

To be clear, US support for an ICC referral will not necessarily make it happen, nor is the ICC a comprehensive solution to impunity in Syria, but it is a start. The stakes are extremely high—both for the victims of atrocities there and for global efforts to curtail impunity for grave crimes. At such a moment, substantive action is vital. By coming out in support of an ICC referral as so many countries around the world have already done, the Obama administration would send an important message on how the Security Council should be reacting to the deteriorating situation in Syria. Otherwise, the White House's declarations on justice risk becoming empty rhetoric.

Balkees Jarrah is an international justice counsel at Human Rights Watch, where she focuses on the Middle East and North Africa region.

PERSPECTIVE 2

Peace versus Justice in Syria

Mark Kersten²



As talks between the Syrian government and Syrian opposition stumble in the opening phases of the so-called Geneva II negotiations, a hot topic is whether those parties responsible for atrocity crimes in Syria can and should be prosecuted.

Of course, this debate has been ongoing since the beginning of the Syria's civil war. Early on, Western governments funded a team of investigators to collect evidence of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, a process that has apparently continued to this day. At the same time, there have been numerous calls by organizations and states for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Because Syria is not a member-state of the ICC, doing so would require a resolution from the United Nations Security Council. Last September, the possibility of referring Syria to the Court was shot down by the Council. According to Carsten Stahn, the potential referral "was sacrificed for the purpose of facilitating a diplomatic compromise over the enforcement regime."

For a host of reasons (and not just the tired argument that Russia will block any referral), an investigation of crimes in Syria by the ICC isn't going to happen any time soon. Not even the use of chemical weapons against civilians was enough to alter the stalemate over justice and accountability. Making things particularly tricky is that there is evidence that *both* sides of the conflict have committed crimes within

² Mark Kersten, Peace versus Justice in Syria, *Justice in Conflict*, January 23, 2014. Reprinted by permission of the author.

the jurisdiction of the ICC. Yet (and perhaps as a result), amongst those political actors with leverage, there appears to be little to no appetite for accountability in Syria. This is evidenced by the lack of interest in middle-ground options such as a conditional referral, a referral-deferral, or the creation of an ad hoc tribunal.

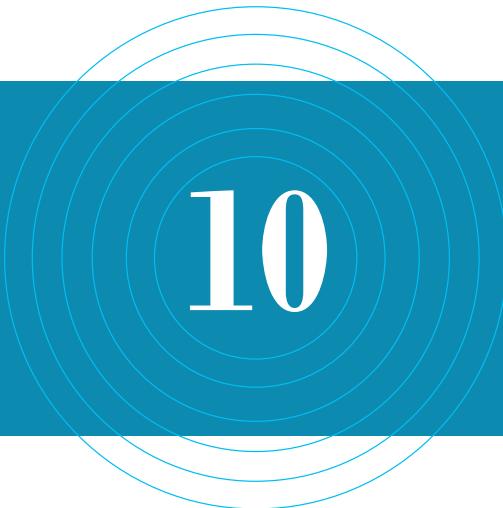
Of course, any suggestion that international criminal justice should be pursued in the context of ongoing hostilities in Syria leads us to the familiar “peace versus justice” debate. Within this debate, there are broadly two camps: one which views international criminal justice as a necessary and useful tool which can deter crimes, marginalize perpetrators, and even be conducive to peace negotiations; and a second camp which sees judicial interventions as deleterious to peace talks and claims that it creates disincentives for warring parties to negotiate and leads to increased levels of violence.

To date, those who have engaged in the debate have largely recycled the claims and arguments from one camp or the other and applied them to new and emerging contexts. Thus, any potential prosecution of Bashar al-Assad is either necessary to any sustainable peace in Syria or constitutes a naive and dangerous proposition which could prolong violence in the country.

If the Geneva peace talks ultimately fail, it obviously won’t be because of the ICC but a host of other factors. But if the ICC does intervene and the peace talks also fail, critics will point their accusatory fingers at the Court, ascribe responsibility for the failure of negotiations to the Prosecutor, and neglect the very factors that would have led to the talks failing irrespective of an ICC intervention. The moving parts would be brushed aside because, within the dominant lenses of the “peace versus justice” debate, the ICC can *only* help or [be a hindrance] to peace. It remains too rarely conceded that the Court’s effects are mixed and, even more rarely, that they might be negligible. This points to the ongoing need to reimagine how we study and assess the effects of the ICC on ongoing and active conflicts. There is little doubt that the Court can have negative *and* positive effects on the ability of warring parties and interested actors to transform conflicts and establish peace. But this shouldn’t lead to a belief that the ICC *must* have these effects across cases. In some instances, the Court may actually have minimal or even inconsequential effects. As importantly, in many if not most cases, the ICC won’t be the be-all and end-all of peace processes. Even when the Court has palpable effects, peace processes aren’t likely to flourish or perish on the hill of international criminal justice.

What is rarely considered in analyses of the effects of international criminal justice on peace processes are the “non-cases”—those conflicts in which international criminal justice is feasible but isn’t pursued. Syria is one of those situations. How the Geneva II peace negotiations between the government and opposition unfold is, at this juncture, anyone’s guess. What seems certain is that the ICC won’t be intervening in Syria any time soon. Those of us interested in the effects of the Court on peace processes would be wise to consider what happens when the ICC doesn’t intervene and *doesn’t* have effects, as well as when it does.

Mark Kersten is a Ph.D student in international relations at the London School of Economics. His work focuses on the nexus of international criminal justice and conflict resolution. Specifically, he is examining the effects of the ICC on peace processes and negotiations in northern Uganda and Libya.



10

The United Nations and Humanitarian Intervention

Key Controversy: Are Humanitarian Interventions Justified?

This chapter explores the complex moral and political issues raised by the debate over humanitarian intervention. Advocates of humanitarian intervention come mainly from a liberal perspective, arguing that states forfeit their sovereignty rights when they violate or fail to protect the basic rights of their citizens. Although willing to make rare exceptions, they strongly prefer that interventions take place under the auspices of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) because this framework increases legitimacy and reduces opportunities for abuse. Opponents of humanitarian intervention, often reflecting a realist perspective, believe that sovereignty should remain a principle of international order. The primary obligation of states is to the interests and well-being of their own citizens, not that of the citizens of other states. Furthermore, no matter how noble the ideal of humanitarian intervention is in theory, in practice it will become another tool for the powerful to impose their will and values. Because the United Nations is merely another arena, rather than an alternative, for power politics, its participation will not solve the problem of abuse. ■

By now the scenario is all too common. Every few years, there are reports of atrocities being committed against civilians somewhere in the world, often by the very governments that are supposed to defend and protect them. Whether it is Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, Libya, or, most recently, Syria, the same familiar pattern appears. As the initial reports of abuses turn into a steady stream of harrowing tales of brutality, calls for the international community to “do something” to protect the innocents emerge from a variety of quarters, both internationally and domestically. The world, we are told, simply cannot permit another Cambodia, another Rwanda, another Bosnia, or another Darfur. Yet there always appears to be another, somewhere.

It is not only the rights abuses that are familiar: so are the debates they spark. Advocates of intervention invoke a moral obligation to defend the defenseless, a “responsibility to protect” those in danger. These pleas for action are met with

assertions of sovereignty and demands to know what “national interests” are at stake to warrant the costs and risks of involvement. Although the specifics vary from crisis to crisis, the underlying issues they raise remain the same: When, if at all, is it acceptable to interfere in the domestic affairs of another state? What role should moral considerations, as opposed to calculations of national interest, play in international affairs? Who should be permitted to intervene in defense of basic human rights? And is there a moral or legal *obligation* to intervene, not just a right? These are some of the most enduring questions in international relations. In the debate over humanitarian intervention, they are often intertwined with another set of contentious issues relating to the role and value of international organizations, particularly the United Nations. The two issues come together largely because most advocates of humanitarian intervention favor a critical role for the body in authorizing and conducting such interventions. So the debate over humanitarian intervention is important because it throws into sharp relief a number of controversies central to contemporary international relations—the importance of state sovereignty, the place of morality, and the effectiveness of international organizations.

When the United Nations was founded in the immediate aftermath of World War II, memories of the failed League of Nations and two devastating wars, with their horrific human toll both on and off the battlefield, were still fresh. An effective international organization was considered essential to avoiding another global war. Unfortunately, the United Nations fell victim to the superpower Cold War rivalry. Nowhere was the impact of the Cold War more evident than on the UN Security Council, whose five permanent members—the United States, the Soviet Union, China, France, and Britain—each possessed a veto that could block any action. The ten nonpermanent members of the Council, elected for two-year terms by the UN General Assembly, had one vote each, but no veto. During the Cold War, geopolitics combined with veto power produced paralysis. With the end of the Cold War, many hoped that the United Nations, freed from its geopolitical shackles, would finally fulfill its promise. As Michael Barnett notes, “the atmosphere at the UN during the early 1990s was positively triumphant.”¹

Perhaps no event did more to shatter this optimism than the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Like many African states, Rwanda is characterized by a division between ethnic groups—the majority Hutus and minority Tutsis. The animosity and suspicion between them is largely a legacy of colonialism. The Germans and Belgians imposed this ethnic classification, encouraging the notion that Tutsis were somehow superior to Hutus. Dividing the native population this way facilitated external domination. After independence, the Hutu-controlled government treated Tutsis as second-class citizens. This simmering conflict eventually erupted into a civil war lasting from 1990 until the signing of a cease-fire in February 1993. At this point, the United Nations became involved, sending a small force of 2,500 peacekeepers. Things began to unravel on April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying the Hutu president was shot down as it approached Kigali airport. Hutu extremists exploited the attack to incite violence against the minority Tutsis. Within days, it was clear to UN officials in Rwanda that a systematic campaign, not merely spasmodic violence, was under way. The head of UN peacekeeping forces “understood that Hutu extremists were carrying out ethnic cleansing … [and] emphasized to headquarters the magnitude and scale of the

crimes.”² Over the course of the next few weeks, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Tutsis were slaughtered in a horrific orgy of violence.

The tale of how officials in New York, Washington, and elsewhere failed to recognize or admit what was going on in Rwanda is both complicated and depressing. Suffice it to say that no significant action was taken to halt the genocide. The post–Cold War optimism concerning the ability and willingness of the United Nations to act was replaced by doubt and soul-searching. If humanitarian action was not forthcoming in one of the most egregious violations of human rights since the Holocaust, it was hard to hold out much hope for an effective response to the next such catastrophe. But before we debate the wisdom and prospects for humanitarian intervention, it is useful to understand the origins of the notion that nations should intervene to protect the rights of people in other nations. Not so long ago, this would have been considered a very odd notion indeed.



The Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders marked a critical turning point in weakening the principle of sovereignty when governments commit egregious violations of human rights.

Source: Vintage/Photos 12/Alamy

Sovereignty and Human Rights

The idea of national sovereignty was codified in the Peace of Westphalia (1648) as the only feasible solution to the religious conflict that gave rise to the bloody Thirty Years War (1618–1648). By making each ruler the sole authority on questions of religion over the territory they controlled, the monarchs of Europe devised a formula that they could live with. But sovereignty did not entail religious tolerance. Monarchs frequently repressed those of their subjects who did not share their faith, and this was deemed to be nobody else's business. Because rulers did not recognize the rights of their own subjects, they could hardly be expected to care about the rights of another monarch's subjects. Sovereignty was intended to restore international order, not protect individual rights. All of this began to change with the Enlightenment and the emergence of liberalism, which introduced notions of individual rights into political discourse. Liberalism established the principle that governments needed to respect the rights of their own subjects or citizens. The result was the gradual erosion of absolutist monarchism. But even though individuals increasingly gained rights in the domestic realm, they still lacked rights under international law. If a government refused to respect the rights of its people, this was still no justification for violating its sovereignty.

It took the horrors of the Holocaust and World War II to finally shake the bedrock principle of national sovereignty. As advancing Allied armies liberated the concentration camps, they uncovered Nazi atrocities beyond anyone's wildest imagination. When those responsible were prosecuted at the [Nuremberg war crimes trials](#), their defenses were predictable. Some claimed the charges were all lies, whereas others said they were just following orders. Those at the top who issued the orders needed a different defense. Confronted with the evidence, one of Hitler's deputies, Hermann Goering, shouted, "But that was our right! We were a sovereign state and that was strictly our business."³ There were two problems with this defense. First, many of these crimes took place on non-German territory acquired through aggression. Second, even claims of sovereignty proved inadequate in the face of such barbarism. The limits of sovereignty had finally been exceeded. The Nuremberg trials (and similar trials in Tokyo for Japanese leaders) represented the first time that "a legal proceeding attempted to make government leaders internationally responsible as individuals for crimes against humanity covering so much time, so many nations, or so many people, *including their own citizens* [emphasis added]."⁴ Goering was convicted of crimes against humanity but cheated the executioner by taking his own life.

After Nuremberg, sovereignty was no longer absolute. Some actions were now beyond legitimate claims of sovereignty. The exact limits of sovereignty, however, were less clear. Since World War II, the tension between individual rights and national sovereignty has remained unresolved. This can be seen in the [United Nations Charter \(UN Charter\)](#) (1945), which obliges "all members [to] refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." The organization as a whole faces the same restriction as member states: "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall

Nuremberg war crimes trials

Post-World War II trials in which top officials of Nazi Germany were tried for violations of international law, including massive violations of human rights.

United Nations Charter

[\(UN Charter\)](#) The founding document of the United Nations, written in 1945, which appears to enshrine the principle of state sovereignty by prohibiting forceful external intervention unless the Security Council finds a threat to international peace sufficient to authorize intervention.

authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”⁵ Prohibitions against intervention are even more explicit in the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS): “No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, *for any reason whatever*, in the internal or external affairs of any other state [emphasis added].”⁶ The only instance in which the United Nations, acting through the Security Council, can authorize forceful intervention in a state’s domestic affairs is when “international peace and security” are threatened. The real dilemma is whether intervention is justified to prevent large-scale human rights abuses in the absence of any wider threat to peace and security.

While seeming to strengthen norms of national sovereignty, the UN Charter also “reaffirm[s] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women.” In addition to the UN Charter, the “nonbinding” **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) specifies an almost comically long and detailed list of rights, including the right to “rest and leisure.” Thus, we do have some documents that reaffirm the principle of state sovereignty and others that enshrine individual rights. But this raises the obvious question: What good are treaties guaranteeing human rights if outside forces are prohibited from intervening to protect those rights? This would seem tantamount to laws protecting children from abuse but forbidding anyone from entering homes where the abuse is taking place in order to stop it. The two absolutes cannot coexist; some balance needs to be struck. At the international level, that balance has gradually shifted against sovereignty and toward rights, though it is still unclear which takes precedence.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights A nonbinding UN declaration created in 1948 that recognizes a long list of basic human rights. Combined with the United Nations Charter, it revealed an emerging tension between the principles of state sovereignty and human rights.

The Growth of Human Rights Activism

Treaties and past human rights abuses alone cannot account for the increased recognition of human rights and acceptance of humanitarian intervention. For ideas to have consequences, there must usually be a political movement working on their behalf. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights may date to 1948, but as Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink note, “as recently as 1970, the idea that the human rights of citizens of any country are legitimately the concern of people and governments everywhere was considered radical.”⁷ How did such a radical notion become mainstream? Its acceptance was encouraged by international activists and organizations dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. The growth of these human rights organizations is part of a much larger explosion of **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)**, private and voluntary advocacy groups and networks that seek to influence the policies of states, international organizations, and even nonstate actors such as multinational corporations across a whole range of economic, political, environmental, cultural, and humanitarian issues. Although NGOs have been around for some time (the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1863), the last few decades have seen a sharp rise in their numbers. As of the year 2000, there were almost 40,000 such organizations, and they continue to proliferate at a rapid pace.⁸ By one count, there are well over 300 NGOs focused on the issue of human rights alone.⁹

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) Voluntary and private advocacy organizations that try to influence the behavior and policies of states, intergovernmental organizations, and nonstate actors.

Amnesty International An influential human rights NGO founded in 1961; has been very effective in highlighting human rights abuses around the world and raising the profile of human rights in international politics.

The most well-known international human rights NGO is probably **Amnesty International**. Founded in 1961 as a neutral, impartial organization defending the rights of all as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Amnesty has been involved in numerous high-profile campaigns on behalf of prisoners of conscience of all political persuasions in countries throughout the world. Although these campaigns may be its most visible activities, Amnesty has employed a wide array of tactics on a host of human rights issues, including abolition of the death penalty and torture, the humane treatment of prisoners of war, the end of extrajudicial executions and disappearances, and the provision of fair and prompt trials. Widely praised for most of its actions, Amnesty was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. Nonetheless, Amnesty has not been without its critics. Governments that routinely find themselves the object of criticism, such as China, bristle at what they see as interference in their domestic affairs. Even in the United States, some are unhappy with Amnesty's blanket opposition to the death penalty and criticism of post-September 11 policies (e.g., the treatment of prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp).

NGOs have difficulty advancing their agendas in the international arena because they frequently lack the resources available to states and intergovernmental organizations. Nonetheless, NGOs such as Amnesty have often been quite successful in advancing their objectives through a combination of lobbying, persuasion, and direct action. Amnesty and other groups have been particularly effective in raising public awareness of human rights abuses. As Ann Marie Clark explains, "marshaling public opinion is correctly seen as a major role of NGOs, and Amnesty International has been uniquely able to do so over time."¹⁰ Amnesty's well-organized letter-writing campaigns on behalf of prominent political prisoners, for example, were aimed at bringing the pressure of international opinion to bear on target states. Even states that routinely violated human rights often exercised restraint when they became the object of international scrutiny. But it is important to realize that these direct actions to influence governments in particular cases were part of a larger, long-term strategy of altering public discourse about human rights issues. This may be the most important legacy of human rights NGOs. In publicizing human rights violations and holding governments to account, Amnesty contributed to the emergence and acceptance of norms of behavior that simply did not exist a few decades ago.

The Case for Humanitarian Intervention

To its supporters, the case for humanitarian intervention is clear. When Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge kill 2 million of their fellow Cambodians and 800,000 Rwandans are slaughtered in a span of few weeks, what possible logic can excuse or condone the inaction of those who had the power to prevent or end these tragedies, yet sat on the sidelines? By some estimates, as few as 5,000 troops deployed to Rwanda in 1994 could have saved a few hundred thousand lives.¹¹ In retrospect, what cold calculus could possibly justify nonintervention?

Humanitarian intervention is defined as the uninvited interference by a state, states, or international organization in the domestic affairs of another state to prevent or

Humanitarian intervention

An uninvited act of interference by external actors into the domestic affairs of a state with the primary motive of ending or preventing violations of human rights.

end human rights abuses. The *humanitarian* part of the equation speaks to the motivation, and *intervention* implies the absence of the target state's consent. This is not to be confused with peacekeeping operations, which generally occur with the consent of the relevant parties in order to preserve a peace that has already been achieved. It is also different from interventions that happen to produce collateral humanitarian benefits. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, for example, may have "liberated the Afghan people from the Taliban and impending starvation, but that was just frosting on the cake. They were never what this war was about."¹²

Four questions are central to the debate over humanitarian intervention. First, should states forfeit their right to sovereignty if they engage in, or fail to protect their citizens from, massive human rights violations? Second, if intervention is justified, who has the right to intervene? Can states act on their own (**unilateral intervention**), or must intervention be sanctioned by an international organization, namely the United Nations (**multilateral intervention**)? Third, if such interventions need to be endorsed by the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, is the organization equipped to carry out this mission effectively? Finally, is there a *responsibility* or *obligation* to intervene, not merely a *right*?

The Limits of Sovereignty

Like most controversial issues, humanitarian intervention requires a choice between competing principles: protecting the rights of individuals and respecting the sovereignty of states. Advocates of humanitarian intervention realize the existence of a trade-off. Former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan implicitly recognizes as much in asking, "If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty ... how should we respond to a Rwanda ... to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?"¹³ Note Annan's formulation: He concedes that humanitarian intervention *is* an "assault on sovereignty"; the question is whether and when it is an *acceptable* assault on sovereignty.

Advocates of humanitarian intervention see no reason why sovereignty should be absolute. In the first place, the idea that states have consistently respected each other's sovereignty since the Peace of Westphalia is a fantasy. Over the past four hundred years, states have routinely meddled in each other's domestic affairs. Some of these interventions were even "humanitarian" in nature, such as those to protect Christian minorities from mistreatment in the Ottoman Empire during the 1800s.¹⁴ Most interventions were motivated by less admirable concerns, however, such as undermining strategic rivals, exacerbating ethnic conflicts, or crushing revolutionary governments.¹⁵ Given this huge gap between rhetoric and practice, the newfound reverence for the principle of sovereignty when it comes to saving people from outrageous assaults on their basic human rights seems like little more than a convenient and hypocritical evasion of moral responsibility.

But even if the principle of sovereignty had been scrupulously adhered to, the mere fact that we have done something for four hundred years is a fairly lame reason to continue to do so. Sovereignty is not a law of physics; it is a social custom or

unilateral intervention An uninvited act of interference by a state or small group of states into the affairs of another state without the approval or sanction of some larger international organization such as the United Nations.

multilateral intervention An uninvited act of interference in the domestic affairs of another state carried out by many nations with the approval or sanction of a legitimate international organization such as the United Nations.

practice that can (and perhaps should) be changed if it is inconsistent with contemporary mores and norms. As David Forsythe explains, “State sovereignty is not some immutable principle decreed in fixed form once and for all time.... It is an idea devised by social beings. It can change along with changing circumstances.”¹⁶

In fact, sovereignty has long ceased being the same as it was after the Peace of Westphalia. The first major transformation was associated with the doctrine of **popular sovereignty**, the principle that governments must derive their legitimacy from their citizens, not some divine authority. This was a critical move because if the people are the source of a government’s legitimacy, then they can take it away. It would seem to follow that if a state violates the rights of its own citizens, then they are unlikely to view it as legitimate. And if a state becomes illegitimate in the eyes of its own citizens, why should other states view it as legitimate or respect its sovereignty? As David Rieff argues, “a state that engages in criminal behavior toward its own people had forfeited not just its moral but also its legal right to sovereignty.”¹⁷ So, for advocates of humanitarian intervention, there is no reason that people whose rights are being abused should be left to their fate in order to respect an archaic legal principle from the era of kings and queens. The world has changed since 1648.

A Right or Obligation to Intervene?

Does one state’s forfeiture of its sovereign right necessarily give others a right to intervene? Not directly. The right of intervention derives not from the target state’s loss of sovereignty, but from those whose rights are being violated. Few would quarrel with Lea Brilmayer when she notes that, in the face of violations of human rights, “the victims themselves have a right of resistance to crimes perpetrated against them ... [and] other groups in the same society have a good claim (if not in fact an obligation) to come to the aid of the victims.” But if we accept the proposition that “victims within states, and locals who would assist them, have a right of resistance, then it is hard to imagine why they should not be able to summon outside help.”¹⁸ And if the victims have a right to ask for outside help, it would be downright perverse if outsiders lacked the right to come to their aid. By this logic, the right to intervene is a natural extension of a principle that virtually no one rejects—that people and groups within nations are entitled to resist and ask for help when their rights are violated, even when the perpetrator is their own government.

In the last decade or so, the advocates of humanitarian intervention have moved beyond arguing that there is a right to intervene in defense of human rights. The problem, to use Brilmayer’s terminology, is that if intervention is only a *right*, it becomes tantamount to an act of *charity*. The “right” to intervene suggests that intervention is optional: States can act to end human rights abuses if they wish, but they are under no obligation to do so. Nicholas Wheeler is among those who think that the language of rights is inadequate, arguing that there is a moral obligation to intervene: “Once it is accepted that there is nothing natural or given about sovereignty as the outer limits of our moral responsibilities, it becomes possible to argue for a change in moral horizons ... [in which case] governments are responsible not only for protecting the human rights at home but also for defending them abroad.”¹⁹

popular sovereignty The principle that governments must derive their legitimacy from the people over whom they rule. Embodied in the French and American revolutions, this assertion challenged the principle of the divine right of kings.

This sentiment is reflected in recent calls to embrace the doctrine of a **responsibility to protect**, or “a duty to react to situations in which there is a compelling need for humanitarian protection.”²⁰ The desire was to transform “the discretionary ‘right to intervene’ into a more muscular ‘responsibility to protect.’”²¹ The responsibility to protect (often abbreviated as R2P) was first articulated in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, a Canadian panel established to explore the moral and legal issues of rights abuses and intervention. Although the basic idea that states had a moral duty to prevent genocide and other massive rights violations was by no means new, the commission’s report was something of turning point, as human rights activists and organizations quickly embraced R2P. This doctrine was endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, whose final document declared that “the international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use the appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian, and other peaceful means … to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.” Similar language was adopted by the Security Council in 2006.²² John Western and Joshua Goldstein saw the UN endorsement of R2P as a watershed moment, after which “the previously sacrosanct concept of state sovereignty has been made conditional on a state’s responsible behavior.”²³

responsibility to protect (R2P) The emerging doctrine that humanitarian intervention should be viewed as a responsibility or obligation, as opposed to merely a right.

Who Should Intervene?

If outsiders have a right or obligation to intervene in defense of human rights, *which* outsiders have this right? Can any external actor intervene whenever it thinks a state is violating its citizens’ rights, or does intervention need to be directed by the international community as a whole (or at least with its sanction)? Advocates of humanitarian intervention lean toward opposing a right of unilateral intervention. And even those who concede that in some very rare instances (which we will discuss shortly), unilateral intervention may be acceptable, it is always seen as preferable that intervention be multilateral.

The reasons for requiring multilateral intervention are not immediately obvious. If violations of rights are occurring, why should it matter whether one nation, five nations, one hundred nations, or Microsoft, for that matter, intervene to stop them? The moral imperative would seem to dictate that human rights be defended, with the issue of exactly who defends them being of little moral consequence. Why the almost reflexive preference for multilateral action? The commitment to multilateralism has more to do with practical and political, not moral, considerations. Supporters worry that individual nations will intervene in defense of human rights only when abuses occur in areas of strategic interest (e.g., in Yugoslavia but not Rwanda), that humanitarian rationales will be little more than cynical fig leaves offered by great powers for to justify interventions motivated by more narrow and selfish concerns, and that selective and opportunistic intervention will breed skepticism and erode international legitimacy.

If decisions about humanitarian intervention are left to individual states, there is likely to be tremendous variation (that is to say, inconsistency) in the standards and criteria guiding these interventions. Placing the decisions in the hands of a

single, centralized international body increases the likelihood that a consistent standard can be developed and applied. The requirement for some authorization from an international body would also act as a check on those states inclined to abuse a right of intervention. This requirement is particularly critical for reassuring weaker, more vulnerable states that a right of intervention will not become license for great power meddling. This is why Bernard Kouchner, a co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders who recently served as France's foreign minister, insists that "humanitarian intervention will never be the action of a single country or national army playing policeman to the world.... Humanitarian intervention will be carried out by an impartial, multinational force acting under the authority of international organizations and controlled by them."²⁴ Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun make it clear that the requirement for multilateral sanction is political, not moral: "As a matter of *political reality* ... it would be impossible to build a consensus around any set of proposals for military intervention that acknowledged the validity of any intervention not authorized by the Security Council or General Assembly [emphasis added]."²⁵

rule of law The principle that laws need to be applied to all in an equal fashion.

The desire is to establish an international equivalent of the domestic **rule of law**, or the principle that rules need to be applied even-handedly. Consistency is important because in the realm of moral principles, "selectivity is *prima facie* morally suspect."²⁶ Principles applied inconsistently are not really principles at all. As George Kennan notes, "a lack of consistency implies a lack of principle in the eyes of much of the world."²⁷ Thus, in order to provide consistent implementation, minimize opportunities for abuse, and sustain international legitimacy, humanitarian interventions need to be conducted by, or at least with the sanction of, the world's most inclusive organization—the United Nations.

Even its defenders realize, however, that the United Nations is not perfect, as its failure in Rwanda made clear. The United Nations is a political organization whose structure, particularly with respect to the Security Council, reflects the distribution of power at the end of World War II. There is no way to guarantee consistent UN action in defense of human rights. It would seem odd if the requirement for organizational sanction became so absolute that it trumped the defense of human rights. After all, if it is impermissible to sacrifice people because of a commitment to an abstract principle of sovereignty, it would appear equally impermissible to sacrifice them because of a commitment to multilateralism.

Faced with the choice between human rights and a requirement for multilateral action or sanction, which should prevail? Given the moral case for humanitarian intervention, the answer seems clear: Human rights win every time. Does this mean we should explicitly recognize the legitimacy of intervention without international sanction? Jim Whitman expresses typical hesitation in taking the argument that far: "It is a reasonable expectation that the international legal system should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate specific instances of law-breaking which clearly serve the interests of justice, particularly those which address serious and large-scale humanitarian emergencies."²⁸ That is, unilateral intervention would be "law-breaking" but morally justifiable behavior. Annan himself confessed that he would have been hard-pressed to object to an

unsanctioned intervention that stopped the Rwandan genocide. Interestingly, the commission that first articulated the R2P doctrine adopted a similar stance. Although it expressed a strong preference for UN approval of R2P actions, it recognized that the political realities of the Security Council might sometimes prevent a response. When this happens, people should not suffer because one member of the council casts a self-interested veto. Thus, in the event that the Security Council “fails to discharge its responsibility to protect in conscience-shocking situations,” concerned states “may not rule out other means to meet the gravity and urgency of that situation.”²⁹ This position appears to concede a moral right to unilateral humanitarian intervention, but unwillingness to codify such a legal right. Unilateral intervention should generally be discouraged and prohibited, but in rare cases, it may need to be noted with a “wink and a nod.”

Liberalism and Humanitarian Intervention

Calls for recognizing a right of humanitarian intervention resonate mostly with a liberal perspective on international politics. As with individual rights and popular sovereignty at the domestic level, “the international law of human rights is based on liberalism.”³⁰ The move for a more humane and moral international politics is in many respects a continuation of the liberal revolutions that have remade domestic political orders over the past few centuries. The primacy of individual rights and the view that governments receive their legitimacy from their citizens both strike deep chords with liberal social and political philosophy. Without liberal assumptions of individual rights and popular sovereignty, it is difficult to imagine a case for humanitarian intervention. Arguments for humanitarian intervention rest on a profoundly liberal vision of a common humanity, a world in which the moral obligations and people and states are not limited by artificial and transitory lines on a map.

The growing salience of human rights and proposals for humanitarian intervention not only give hope to liberals, but also provide constructivists with some confirmation that international politics is shaped, and can be changed, by prevailing and evolving norms. So long as citizens and leaders believed in absolute sovereignty, the possibility of humanitarian intervention was precluded. The acceptance of norms of human rights and popular sovereignty provides a foundation for changing state practices. One sees elements of this in Forsythe’s observation that sovereignty is a social construction, an idea that limits the actions that states are willing to consider. Social constructions, however, can be replaced with new constructions. We may be in the middle of a process in which some fundamental ideas or norms about international politics are being transformed, and the increasing willingness to consider humanitarian intervention may be part of this evolution. As Daniel Thomas argues, “International human rights norms affect the behavior, the interests, and the identity of states by specifying which practices are (or are not) considered appropriate by international society.”³¹ Altered norms can change how nations define themselves, their identities, and their interests, from exclusive national communities to a universal human community.

The Case Against Humanitarian Intervention

Negatives can usually be rephrased as positives; thus, the case *against* humanitarian intervention is also an argument in *favor* of the principle of sovereignty. In many respects, the case for sovereignty remains what it was in 1648. At that time, religious diversity in Europe necessitated acceptance of sovereignty and nonintervention to preserve international order. Today, with respect to humanitarian intervention versus sovereignty, the problem is diverse conceptions of human rights. But even if it were possible to reach nearly universal agreement on some minimal definition of basic rights, there are reasons to doubt whether the United Nations (or any other organization) can possibly implement a consistent and impartial doctrine of humanitarian intervention. The critique of humanitarian intervention is both moral and political.

The Problem of Moral Diversity

Although supporting a limited right of intervention, Bhikhu Parekh is honest enough to concede that “since views about [human rights] are culturally conditioned, *no definition of humanitarian intervention can be culturally neutral* [emphasis added].”³² As a result, any doctrine of humanitarian intervention will necessarily be based on a certain vision of human rights that might not be shared by those upon whom it is imposed. This harsh reality is often avoided because it smacks of an extreme moral relativism in which there is no such thing as right and wrong. Actually, it is just a realization that people and cultures do not always agree on what is right and wrong. Although there may be a natural tendency to assume that others do (or should) adhere to our moral standards, in fact “there is no universal morality … rules about morality vary from place to place.”³³ So long as this is the case, the norm of sovereignty serves the same purpose today that it did for the authors of the Peace of Westphalia: It provides a basis for order in a diverse world.

One test of the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention is whether its advocates are willing to accept restrictions on *their* nation’s sovereignty. This is a touchy point because nations have always been more protective of their own sovereignty than that of others. But if a consensus actually exists on the moral principles guiding intervention, there should be little concern about intervention in your own nation’s affairs. Frank Ching touches on this issue when he asks, “If the same doctrine [of humanitarian intervention] had been enunciated in an earlier era, would today’s proponents have been in favor? Would the U.S. agree that other countries had the right to punish it for practicing slavery? Would Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, and other European countries agree that others had the right to bomb them to protect the human rights of their colonial subjects?”³⁴

Ching’s rhetorical questions highlight several problems that inevitably arise with the practice of humanitarian intervention. One is the issue of double standards—the strongest advocates of intervention are often unwilling to concede that others have a right to intervene in *their* affairs. Second, in raising the issue of how moral norms change over time, Ching touches on the problem of cultural relativism.

If notions of morality vary from one era to another, they can also vary from one culture to another. The magnitude of this problem becomes evident once we move beyond the morally easy but fortunately rare example of outright genocide. Apart from this exception, it becomes very difficult to delineate a list of basic human rights that merit intervention. Kouchner adopts an extreme form of moral universalism: “everywhere, human rights are human rights … if a Muslim woman in Sudan opposes painful clitoral excision, or if a Chinese woman opposes the binding of her feet, her rights are being violated.” In the face of such abuses, he proposes that we “establish a forward-looking right of the world community to actively interfere in the affairs of sovereign states to prevent the explosion of human rights violations.”³⁵ This sort of universalism denies the culturally specific nature of rights, giving critics of humanitarian intervention the chills. The application of a single moral code in which “human rights are human rights everywhere,” leading to a norm of “active interference” in the domestic affairs of states, could provide a license for endless intervention and meddling.

Frank Ching’s questions also reflect a sentiment shared by many non-Western governments that “there is something not quite right when the same countries that perpetrated unspeakable offences against human rights should now set themselves up as the arbiters of human rights, in some cases condemning countries that they had previously oppressed.”³⁶ Many in the Third World detect an element of ethnocentrism, fearing that humanitarian intervention will be nothing more than imperialism with a moral patina. Notice the examples that Kouchner cites—clitoral excision in Somalia and foot binding in China. Humanitarian intervention always seems to be suggested from concerned countries in Western Europe and North America and directed against weaker powers. Are there never any violations of human rights in Paris, Connecticut, Russia, or Washington, DC, that the world needs to worry about? Many nations and societies have long been on the receiving end of outside intervention, which was often accompanied by noble rhetoric of spreading the virtues of civilization and Christianity. These nations had to fight long and hard to achieve their independence. Having finally achieved the sovereignty that they were denied for so long, they are now being told that it is an outdated concept, something enjoyed only by those who exercise it responsibly. It is easy to understand why they are hesitant to surrender their hard-won sovereignty to nations whose motives they have good reason to doubt.

To be fair, supporters of humanitarian intervention have a fairly good response to concerns about moral diversity and imperialism. Lea Brilmayer admits that “the cultural relativity argument is hard to rebut directly.... There is no denying that some moral norms vary from one culture to another.” Nonetheless, “the philosophical power of the argument is vastly overrated.” A doctrine of humanitarian intervention does not require that all societies have precisely the same conception of morality on every issue. Merely because cultures differ in their evaluations of *some* behaviors does not mean that they differ in their evaluation of *all* behaviors.

Brilmayer uses the conflict in the former Yugoslavia to illustrate her point: “If the United States [or anyone else] were to intervene, its actions could hardly be criticized on cultural relativism grounds. For it would be hard to argue that the murder of civilians, gang rape, and deliberate starvation are considered innocent

activities in the Balkans.” Those charged with crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia have not defended themselves by claiming that their culture accepts the actions they are charged with. Their defense is that they did not commit the acts attributed to them: The disagreement is about the facts, not the morality of the alleged acts. Under close scrutiny, the cultural relativism objection is revealed to be a disingenuous debate trick in which moral consensus is ignored by references to trivial and meaningless moral differences. Thus, Brilmayer is able to dispose of the problem quite easily: “For relativism to be an objection, it is not enough that morality may *in theory* differ from culture to culture; morality must *in fact* differ.... Most human rights abuses involve the perpetration of harms that are undeniably wrong in the eyes of all parties to the dispute.”³⁷

From Abstraction to Action

The dilemmas, however, become somewhat more severe when we move to implement a policy of humanitarian intervention. We may agree that it is a violation of basic rights for a government to kill its political opponents, but does this mean that ten assassinations should trigger intervention? A hundred? Just one? Exactly how great must the violation of rights be? Some draw the line at genocide, which is



In 2013-14 the conflict in Syria elicited call for external intervention to halt violations of basic human rights committed by the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Source: Nick Savage/Alamy

precisely defined in international treaties and conventions. But few are willing to restrict the right of intervention to the handful of cases that meet the strict definition of genocide. David Gibbs notes that “the issue of deciding which conflicts merit intervention has been a difficult one for advocates of intervention.” Those who deal with the problem usually call for “a form of triage, according to which intervening powers will decide...based on a number of criteria (such as the severity of the humanitarian emergency, the potential expense of such intervention, or the logistical problem of dispatching troops).”³⁸ The right of intervention is most usually restricted to such cases that involve “gross,” “egregious,” and “massive” violations of human rights or, to use Michael Walzer’s famous formulation, acts that “shock the conscience of humanity.” The devil, as usual, is in the details.

Stephen Solarz and Michael O’Hanlon provide a commendable attempt to confront this thorny issue, arguing that humanitarian intervention should be considered “only to stop extreme violence when the death rate reaches or threatens to reach at least tens of thousands a year.” They cite the usual examples of Rwanda and Cambodia, but they eliminate virtually every other case because they “were simply not bloody enough to justify outside military intervention.”³⁹ If the Rwandan and Cambodian genocides are the standard, it is difficult to see anything close to a persuasive case for intervention in Libya in March 2011. Critics pounce on such apparently crass head counting. What moral calculus requires us to protect someone being killed with 100,000 of his fellow citizens, but not someone being killed with only 5,000 others? There are answers to this uncomfortable question, but they are messy ones that dull the moral luster of humanitarian intervention. But there is no avoiding the problems of moving beyond the tidy moral plane in which words such as “gross” and “massive” need not be defined with any precision. Thus, even with agreement in principle, there is still a lot of leeway for inconsistency and selectivity in practice.

The Problem of Power

The more fundamental dilemma is a familiar one in the history of international relations, which provides many examples of noble moral projects (such as treaties outlawing war in the 1920s) that proved to be miserable failures. The general problem is “the antagonistic relationship between an ideal system of norms and the reality of power politics.”⁴⁰ The dilemmas pile up as we move beyond the purely normative analysis and “take into consideration the unequal constellation of power under which humanitarian intervention [will be] practiced.”⁴¹ The fact is that nations with the power to conduct and resist interventions will surrender much less of their sovereignty than nations lacking equivalent power. As a result, “any right of state intervention, however clearly delineated, would in fact and perception empower the already powerful.”⁴² In *theory*, accepting the principle of humanitarian intervention erodes every nation’s sovereignty. In *practice*, however, there is no danger that foreign troops will land in the United States to stop the death penalty, or in China to save the Tibetans.

On one level, advocates of humanitarian intervention are aware of the difficulties resulting from the “reality of power politics.” Taking decisions about intervention away from individual states and placing them under the authority of the

United Nations is designed to deal with this problem. Recall Bernard Kouchner's assurance that humanitarian intervention would be "impartial." The unstated assumption is that individual states are "partial" and the United Nations is "impartial," which means untainted by national interests and differences in power. Skeptics find this untenable. They view the United Nations as merely another arena for, rather than an escape from, power politics. As an organization of independent states, it cannot help but be influenced by the relative power of its members. Hans Kochler gets to the heart of the matter: "We have to admit that the step from *idealistic vision* to the *realization* of an international policy of intervention cannot be responsibly made ... An implementation of the doctrine outside the realm of power politics ... is impossible. Any act of humanitarian intervention, *whether exercised on a unilateral, regional, or multilateral level*, will be determined by the interests of the power(s) initiating it [emphasis added]."⁴³ It is with good reason that the president of Algeria asks, "Is interference valid for only weak states or for all states without distinction?"⁴⁴ Can anyone but the hopelessly naïve believe that all states will be equally liable to intervention, regardless of their power?

We need not even look very deeply to see the impact of power politics because it is built into the basic structure of the Security Council, in which any of the five permanent members can scuttle an intervention with a simple "no" vote. As Stanley Michalak explains, "The United Nations was explicitly designed so that it would be unable to act against any of the permanent members or even against their pleasure."⁴⁵ A recent example concerns a UN report released in February 2014 detailing Nazi-like abuses of human rights in North Korea, suggesting that North Korean officials, perhaps even including the nation's leader, Kim Jong-Un, be referred to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. But since any such action would have to go through the UN Security Council, it would almost certainly be vetoed by North Korea's sole ally, China. So even action far short of intervention would be blocked for political reasons.⁴⁶ The lesson is that power can be abused for political reasons not only by conducting interventions, but also by preventing them. Stanley Hoffman states the problem bluntly: "Too many states among UN members have bloody domestic records, and they can be expected to block any proposal for collective intervention."⁴⁷ Many see this as an argument for reforming the United Nations and the Security Council. The obstacle, of course, is that the United States, Russia, and China are not likely to look kindly on reforms that erode their power. The difficulty of altering rules and procedures that give some nations greater influence is itself a reflection of the lack of immunity of the United Nations from the very power politics that advocates of humanitarian intervention hope that it will transcend.

In the final analysis, the United Nations is an organization of imperfect independent states. It is not a world government; it does not have its own armed forces; and it relies on voluntary contributions from members to fund and implement its operations. Nations can refuse to provide troops for humanitarian intervention and they can withhold their financial support. The United Nations is a political organization, not a council of moral philosophers. It can act consistently and impartially only if its members, particularly those with the power to conduct interventions, are willing to act consistently and impartially.

The Limits of Moral Action

Debates about humanitarian intervention focus on two basic issues. First, do states have the right or obligation to intervene in the affairs of other states in order to defend human rights? Second, can we devise mechanisms for implementing a policy of humanitarian intervention that lives up to its moral impulses? Although realists will disagree on some specific issues, they have generally been skeptical of humanitarian intervention on both counts.

George Kennan provides a typical realist response to the suggestion that states should risk their citizens' interests, and even lives, to defend the rights of others. He draws a distinction between how we should think about individual versus state morality. If individuals chose to barge into homes to defend people being attacked, that is their right because they are placing only their own safety at risk. But if the U.S. president sends troops into Rwanda to halt a genocide, this is more problematic because he is risking the lives of people whose interests he is supposed to protect. As a result, the "commitments and moral obligations of governments are not the same as those of the individual. Government is an agent, not a principal. Its primary obligation is to the interests of the national society it represents." Kennan draws an analogy between governments and lawyers: "No more than the attorney vis-à-vis the client, nor the doctor vis-à-vis the patient, can government attempt to insert itself into the consciences of those whose interests it represents."⁴⁸ Samuel Huntington reflected this sentiment when he argued that "it is morally unjustifiable and politically indefensible that members of the [U.S.] armed forces should be killed to prevent Somalis from killing each other."⁴⁹ Damon Linker articulated the same position more recently amid calls for intervention in Syria: "Duties to expiate sins and render aid apply to people, not to states. As a private individual, Barack Obama can have a moral duty to come to the aid of a person under attack," but as "president of the United States ... his singular, overarching duty is a political one—namely, to protect and defend our nation and its citizens. Not any other nation. Not any other citizens."⁵⁰

Rather than relying on the proposition that states *should not* act for moral reasons, most realists (and many Marxists and feminists interestingly) prefer to emphasize that they *will not*. Although perhaps regrettable, states are simply unwilling to incur substantial costs to defend the rights of others when their own national interest is not involved. John Mearsheimer notes that "despite claims that American foreign policy is infused with moralism, Somalia (1992–93) is the only instance during the past one hundred years in which U.S. soldiers were killed in action on a humanitarian mission." And in this case, the public's reaction to a small number of American casualties was so great "that they immediately pulled all U.S. troops out of Somalia and then refused to intervene in Rwanda in the Spring of 1994, when ethnic Hutu went on a genocidal rampage against their Tutsi neighbors."⁵¹ Making a similar point about the former Yugoslavia, Henry Kissinger observes a "vast gap between the rhetoric and the means with which to back it up. Allies' pronouncements have ritually compared Milosevic to Hitler. But the transparent reluctance to accept casualties signaled that the Alliance would not make the commitment necessary to overthrow the accused tyrants."⁵² Realists see

in calls for humanitarian intervention something that we have witnessed before: Moral pronouncements and empty slogans readily abandoned the moment they clash with national interests or threaten to actually cost anything.

Although liberals are generally predisposed to support a right of humanitarian intervention and realists are inclined to be skeptical or opposed, other perspectives display less unity. Feminists certainly welcome an international discourse that elevates human rights to a central place, although they are quick to stress that prevailing notions of rights tend to ignore the deprivations that women are routinely subjected to around the world. Why, feminists wonder, did the plight of women under Afghanistan's Taliban regime become a justification for intervention only after September 11, 2001? And now that women in Afghanistan may have been liberated to some degree, what about the women in Saudi Arabia, a U.S. ally, whose status is only slightly better? Indeed, feminists were deeply divided on the question of whether the use of force in Afghanistan was justifiable.⁵³ Many feminists are also uncomfortable with using military intervention or force to protect human rights because militarism is seen as an integral part of domestic and international systems of oppression. This is not to say that feminists would *never* see military force as justified (except for those who combine feminism with pacifism), but there is a strong presumption against it in most feminist analysis.

A definitive Marxist position is also difficult to identify. In general, however, Marxists find it hard to imagine that a doctrine of humanitarian intervention can be applied consistently and impartially in the current international system. Such a policy is almost certainly going to be used by the dominant powers to pursue their interests vis-à-vis the poor, weak, and vulnerable of the world. David Gibbs suggests that in the contemporary world, "perhaps the doctrine of humanitarian intervention is merely a way of excusing US aggression."⁵⁴ And Walden Bello urges people to "forcefully delegitimize this dangerous doctrine of humanitarian intervention to prevent its being employed again in the future against candidates for great power intervention like Iran and Venezuela. Like its counterpart concept of 'liberal imperialism,' there is only one thing to do with the concept of humanitarian intervention: dump it."⁵⁵

Conclusion

Although we cannot turn back the clock and bring to life the victims of genocide in Rwanda and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, we are almost certainly going to be faced with similar human catastrophes in the future. Evans and Sahnoun offer a prediction and ask a question: "It is only a matter of time before reports emerge again from somewhere of massacres, mass starvation, rape, and ethnic cleansing. And the question will arise again in the Security Council: What do we do? This time the international community must have answers." Reflecting the sober soul-searching that followed the Rwandan genocide, they claim that "few things have done more harm to its shared ideal that people are all equal in worth and dignity than the inability of the community of states to prevent these horrors. In the new century, there must be no more Rwandas."⁵⁶

Unfortunately, it did not take long in this new century for another Rwanda to emerge. The world may have witnessed its next Rwanda in the Darfur region of the Sudan in Africa, where government-supported militias are widely believed to have killed tens, if not hundreds, of thousands and displaced many more. There were, of course, some differences from Rwanda. Whereas that Rwandan genocide took place in just a few weeks, the crisis in Darfur dragged on for years, leading some to describe it as slow-motion genocide. Most of the international community, including the U.S. government, classified the Darfur crisis as “genocide,” a term most governments scrupulously avoided in Rwanda. Rallies and concerts designed to highlight the crisis were commonplace. Nonetheless, “the stubborn fact is that despite this extraordinary mobilization, no effective intervention has actually been mounted to prevent the genocide in Darfur.”⁵⁷ And skeptics of the entire doctrine of humanitarian intervention, as well as supporters frustrated by its haphazard and inconsistent implementation, wonder why the much lesser humanitarian tragedy in Libya, which resulted in a few thousand deaths at most, elicited a much greater international response than Darfur, where as many as a quarter million may have perished.

Cases such as Libya, Darfur, Rwanda, and Syria test the limits of human compassion. But it is not only in our time that people have wondered whether there are limits. More than two centuries ago, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith pondered the same question that still haunts us today. He wondered how a perfectly decent and moral European would react to two hypothetical events: first, tragedy in China that resulted in the deaths of millions; and second, an accident that cut off his own finger. With regard to the death of millions on the other side of the world, Smith speculated that the average person would feel sorry and utter all the appropriate sympathies about the tragic loss of life. Nonetheless, he would soon go on with his life “as if no such accident happened.” Upon losing a finger, however, this same person would obsess endlessly about his comparatively “paltry misfortune.” This juxtaposition led Smith to ask a pointed question: “To prevent, therefore, this paltry misfortune to himself, would a man of humanity be willing to sacrifice the lives of millions of his brethren, provided he had never to see them?”⁵⁸ Merely to ask the question suggests a harsh judgment. Perhaps it is a sign of how little has changed that this same question comes to mind as we witness contemporary human tragedies that the world does nothing to stop. Bemoaning the lack of an effective U.S. response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2013, Zack Beauchamp identified the central question in the debate over humanitarian intervention: “whether you believe the United States has moral obligations to foreigners, and at what point you believe those duties can trump America’s obligations to its own citizens.”⁵⁹ The whole debate boils down to whether one believes that there are moral duties and obligations that transcend national borders.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The current debate over the wisdom of humanitarian intervention touches three of the most enduring issues in international politics: (1) the importance of state sovereignty, (2) the utility of international organizations, and (3) the relative importance of morality versus power and national interest in foreign policy.
- Although state sovereignty has been a central element of international order since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the horrors of World War II led many to argue that massive human rights violations could not be ignored or excused by assertions of sovereignty.
- Since the end of World War II, a series of international agreements has established the principle that there are limits to sovereignty, although the line between acceptable and unacceptable violations of sovereignty has remained unclear.
- Building on liberal principles of popular sovereignty and human rights, supporters of humanitarian intervention argue that states that violate or fail to protect their citizens' basic rights forfeit their right to sovereignty. In these cases, outside actors have a legitimate right to intervene in defense of basic human rights. The right of outsiders to intervene is a logical extension of the right of domestic actors to defend their own rights.
- More recently, there has been the emergence of the doctrine of a Responsibility to Protect (R2P), in which states with the ability to prevent massive violations of human rights are morally and legally obligated to do so.
- Those who favor humanitarian interventions generally prefer that they be undertaken within the framework of the United Nations. This is preferable for two reasons. First, it reduces the chances that individual nations will use or abuse a reasoned humanitarian intervention as cover for more selfish objectives. Second, it will assure the weak nations of the world that the strong will not be allowed to intervene at will.
- Drawing on realist assumptions about the inevitability of power politics, critics argue that any doctrine of humanitarian intervention will necessarily reflect the power and values of the strong. Implementing a policy of humanitarian intervention untainted by power and national interest is impossible.
- The requirement for UN action is often based on the naïve assumption that the organization is an alternative to power politics, when it is actually just another venue for power politics.
- Opponents of humanitarian intervention reject the idea that the governments of some states are required to intervene to protect the rights of citizens of other states. The primary obligation of a government is to protect the interests of its citizens, not the citizens of other states. States are not justified in risking the lives of their citizens to defend the rights of citizens of other states.
- The legal, political, and moral issues raised by the debate over humanitarian intervention have been with us for centuries. The end of the Cold War, as well as recent tragedies such as the ethnic genocide in Rwanda, have merely increased their salience.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Why is selective humanitarian intervention often considered problematic? Which would be preferable, selective humanitarian intervention or consistent nonintervention?
2. Would other nations ever be justified intervening in U.S. domestic affairs to prevent what they perceive as violations of human rights?
3. How does the doctrine of a "responsibility to protect" reflect and extend traditional arguments for humanitarian intervention?
4. Why is the doctrine of popular sovereignty so central to the case for humanitarian intervention?
5. Why does the United Nations play such a large role in debates over humanitarian intervention?

KEY TERMS

Amnesty International, 242	nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), 241	responsibility to protect, 245	United Nations Charter (UN Charter), 240
Humanitarian intervention, 242	Nuremberg war crimes trials, 240	rule of law, 246	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 241
multilateral intervention, 243	popular sovereignty, 244	unilateral intervention, 243	

FURTHER READINGS

A good place to begin considering the role of morality in international politics is Stanley Hoffman's *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981); and Lea Brilmayer's *American Hegemony: Political Morality in a One-Superpower World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994) is particularly useful for thinking about humanitarian intervention in the post–Cold War world. An excellent introduction to the topic of human rights in world politics is David P. Forsythe's *Human Rights in International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Nicholas Wheeler provides one of the best discussions of the more specific question of humanitarian intervention in *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001). Gary Bass traces the surprisingly long history of humanitarian intervention in *Freedom's Battle: The History of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Vintage, 2009). This can be

usefully read alongside Michael Barnet's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). Samantha Power (who serves in the Obama administration as UN ambassador and was a strong advocate for intervention in Libya) looks at failures to intervene, even in the face of obvious genocide, in her hugely influential *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper, 2007). A similar work focusing on the Rwandan genocide is Michael Barnet's *Eyewitness to Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). Ann Marie Clark's *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) focuses on the origins and influence of Amnesty International. An excellent history of the United Nations can be found in Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations* (New York: Random House, 2006).

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION ON THE WEB

www.hrw.org

The Web site of Human Rights Watch, which monitors and publicizes human rights abuses worldwide.

www.amnesty.org

The Web site of Amnesty International, perhaps the most famous and influential international human rights organization.

www.responsibilitytoprotect.org

A Web site with resources on the emerging doctrine of the R2P, including the history of the doctrine, and documents and information on current humanitarian crises.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil

Based on *Frontline's* documentary about the Rwandan genocide, this site discusses its historical background, as well as the international response.

www.unictr.org

Details the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which tried those responsible for the genocide.

NOTES

- ¹Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 22–23.
- ²Ibid., p. 109.
- ³Paul Lauren Gordon, *The Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 210.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 209.
- ⁵A text of the United Nations Charter can be found at www.un.org.
- ⁶Cited in Lea Brilmayer, *Justifying International Acts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 105.
- ⁷Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 79.
- ⁸Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2001* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 300.
- ⁹Margaret Karns and Karen Mingst, *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 420.
- ¹⁰Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 128.
- ¹¹Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998).
- ¹²Clifford Owen, "Humanitarian Wars Are a Past Luxury," *National Post* (February 15, 2002), p. A22.
- ¹³Cited in Olivia Ward, "In Defense of Human Rights—Debate Rages Over When, If Ever, International Intervention in a Sovereign Nation Is Justified," *Toronto Star* (February 18, 2001), p. 1.
- ¹⁴See Martha Finnemore, "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 161–165. Also see Steven Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 73–126.
- ¹⁵See Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 61–91.
- ¹⁶David P. Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 20.
- ¹⁷David Rieff, "Humanitarian Vanities," *New York Times Magazine* (June 1, 2008), p. 13.
- ¹⁸Lea Brilmayer, *American Hegemony: Political Morality in a One-Superpower World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 152.
- ¹⁹Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 294.
- ²⁰Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect," *Foreign Affairs* 81 (November/December 2002), p. 107.
- ²¹"To protect sovereignty, or to protect lives," *Economist* (May 17, 2008), p. 73.
- ²²See: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/361ea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/e529762befa456f8852571610045ebef!OpenDocument>.
- ²³John Western and Joshua Goldstein, "Humanitarian Intervention Comes of Age," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2011), p. 54.
- ²⁴Bernard Kouchner, "Humanitarian Intervention—A New Global Moral Code Must Emerge," *Toronto Star* (October 20, 1999), p. 1.
- ²⁵Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect," p. 107.
- ²⁶Brilmayer, *American Hegemony*, pp. 161–162.
- ²⁷George Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 64 (Winter 1985/86): 45.
- ²⁸Jim Whitman, "A Cautionary on Humanitarian Intervention," *GeoJournal* 34 (October 1994): 170.
- ²⁹Rosa Brooks, "So You Want to Intervene in Syria Without Breaking International Law? Good Luck with That," *Foreign Policy* (June 30, 2013). Accessed at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/20/so_you_want_to_intervene_in_syria_without_breaking_the_law.
- ³⁰Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Relations*, p. 217.
- ³¹Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 281.
- ³²Bhikhu Parekh, "Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention," *International Political Science Review* 18 (1997): 54–55.
- ³³R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 37.
- ³⁴Frank Ching, "UN: Sovereignty or Rights?" *Far Eastern Economic Review* (October 21, 1999), p. 40.
- ³⁵Kouchner, "Humanitarian Intervention," p. 1.
- ³⁶Ching, "UN: Sovereignty or Rights?" p. 40.
- ³⁷All quotes in these two paragraphs are from Brilmayer, *American Hegemony*, pp. 148–149.
- ³⁸David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009), p. 7.
- ³⁹Stephen Solarz and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Humanitarian Intervention: When Is Force Justified?" *The Washington Quarterly* 20 (Fall 1997): 8.
- ⁴⁰Hans Kochler, *Humanitarian Intervention in the Context of Modern Power Politics* (Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2001), p. 17.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 7.
- ⁴²Whitman, "Cautionary on Humanitarian Intervention," p. 171.
- ⁴³Kochler, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 17.
- ⁴⁴In Ching, "UN: Sovereignty or Rights?" p. 40.
- ⁴⁵Stanley Michalak, *A Primer in Power Politics* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), p. 29.
- ⁴⁶Tom Miles and Stephanie Nebehay, "China Rejects North Korea Crimes Report, Hits Chance of Prosecution," *Reuters News* (March 17, 2014). Access at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/17/us-korea-north-un-idUSBREA2G0E720140317>.
- ⁴⁷Stanley Hoffman, "America Goes Backward," *New York Review of Books* 50 (June 12, 2003). Accessed at www.nybooks.com/articles/16350.
- ⁴⁸Ibid.
- ⁴⁹Michael J. Smith, "Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of Ethical Issues," *Ethics and International Affairs* 12(1998): 63.
- ⁵⁰Damon Linker, "The Danger of Injecting Morality into Foreign Policy," *The Week* (January 27, 2014). Accessed at: <http://theweek.com/article/index/255558/the-danger-of-injecting-moralism-into-foreign-policy>.
- ⁵¹John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 47.
- ⁵²Henry Kissinger, "A New World Disorder," *Newsweek* (May 31, 1999), p. 41.
- ⁵³See Sharon Lerner, "Feminists Agonize over War in Afghanistan," *Village Voice* (October 31–November 6, 2001). Accessed at www.villagevoice.com/issues/1044/lerner.php.
- ⁵⁴Gibbs, *First Do No Harm*, p. 8.
- ⁵⁵Walden Bello, "Humanitarian Intervention: Evolution of a Dangerous Doctrine," *Focus on the Global South* (January 19, 2006). Accessed at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/humanint/2006/0119humintbello.htm>.
- ⁵⁶Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect," p. 99.
- ⁵⁷David Rieff, "Humanitarian Vanities," p. 16.
- ⁵⁸Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Full text containing this passage can be accessed at: www.adamsmith.org.smith/tms/p3-c3a.htm.
- ⁵⁹Zack Beauchamp, "The Toxic Cult of America's National Interest," *The Week* (January 23, 2014). Accessed at: <http://theweek.com/article/index/255436/the-toxic-cult-of-americas-national-interest>.

Humanitarian Intervention in Libya?

In 2011, uprisings in parts of the Arab world, particularly Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Tunisia, and Libya, presented a series of crises that appeared to merit humanitarian intervention, especially in those cases where desperate authoritarian rulers resorted to brutal suppression (including the use of chemical weapons) to put down protests that threatened their regimes. Although each case involved its own unique combination of humanitarian, strategic, and practical considerations, the questions that shape any discussion of humanitarian intervention inevitably came into play: How great must the violation of rights be to warrant intervention? Who has the right to intervene? What organizations need to sanction intervention? Why intervene in one country but not another? Are moral motivations really paramount, or are there other agendas at work in decisions for intervention?

It was the crisis in Libya that brought the loudest and most sustained calls for intervention. This was in part because of Colonel Moammar Qaddafi, who was seen as somewhat unstable and disconnected from reality in addition to being brutal. Qaddafi's incoherent ramblings in televised speeches early in the crisis led many to wonder about his grip on reality. His determination to hold on to power led him to turn the Libyan military on protestors, something that fortunately did not happen in neighboring Egypt. Given his history and apparent instability, Qaddafi's promise to show "no mercy," widely interpreted as a threat, led many to see a humanitarian catastrophe in the making. This was the last straw, a chance to take action *before* the situation took a turn for the worse, a sort of humanitarian preemption. In the address that follows, President Obama lays out the rationale for his decision to involve the United States in Libya as part of a multilateral effort, articulating many of the themes associated with humanitarian intervention and the doctrine of a responsibility to protect. He takes pains, however, to limit the scope of intervention, placing almost as much emphasis on what the intervention will *not* entail as what it will. Alan Kuperman, on the other hand, rejects Obama's rationale for intervention in Libya, arguing that it did not in fact prevent the catastrophe that supporters of intervention claimed would happen. But this raises interesting questions about humanitarian interventions intended to *prevent* massive human rights violations. How does this throw yet another wrench into the calculus of intervention? And in the case of Libya, if Kuperman rejects the official explanation for intervention, why does he think the United States and its allies got involved? If it was not a humanitarian intervention, what kind of intervention was it?

PERSPECTIVE 1**U.S. Policy in Libya (2011)****President Barack Obama¹**

Good afternoon, everybody. I want to take this opportunity to update the American people about the situation in Libya. Over the last several weeks, the world has watched events unfold in Libya with hope and alarm. Last month, protesters took to the streets across the country to demand their universal rights, and a government that is accountable to them and responsive to their aspirations. But they were met with an iron fist.

Within days, whole parts of the country declared their independence from a brutal regime, and members of the government serving in Libya and abroad chose to align themselves with the forces of change. Moammar Qaddafi clearly lost the confidence of his own people and the legitimacy to lead.

Instead of respecting the rights of his own people, Qaddafi chose the path of brutal suppression. Innocent civilians were beaten, imprisoned, and in some cases killed. Peaceful protests were forcefully put down. Hospitals were attacked and patients disappeared. A campaign of intimidation and repression began.

In the face of this injustice, the United States and the international community moved swiftly. Sanctions were put in place by the United States and our allies and partners. The UN Security Council imposed further sanctions, an arms embargo, and the specter of international accountability for Qaddafi and those around him. Humanitarian assistance was positioned on Libya's borders, and those displaced by the violence received our help. Ample warning was given that Qaddafi needed to stop his campaign of repression, or be held accountable. The Arab League and the European Union joined us in calling for an end to violence.

Once again, Qaddafi chose to ignore the will of his people and the international community. Instead, he launched a military campaign against his own people. And there should be no doubt about his intentions, because he himself has made them clear.

For decades, he has demonstrated a willingness to use brute force through his sponsorship of terrorism against the American people as well as others, and through the killings that he has carried out within his own borders. And just yesterday, speaking of the city of Benghazi—a city of roughly 700,000 people—he threatened, and I quote: “We will have no mercy and no pity”—no mercy on his own citizens.

Now, here is why this matters to us. Left unchecked, we have every reason to believe that Qaddafi would commit atrocities against his people. Many thousands could die. A humanitarian crisis would ensue. The entire region could be destabilized, endangering many of our allies and partners. The calls of the Libyan people for help would go unanswered. The democratic values that we stand for would

¹ Source: President Barack Obama, “U.S. Policy in Libya (2011),” www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/03/18/president-libya-our-goal-focused-our-cause-just-and-our-coalition-strong.

be overrun. Moreover, the words of the international community would be rendered hollow.

And that's why the United States has worked with our allies and partners to shape a strong international response at the United Nations. Our focus has been clear: protecting innocent civilians within Libya, and holding the Qaddafi regime accountable.

Yesterday, in response to a call for action by the Libyan people and the Arab League, the UN Security Council passed a strong resolution that demands an end to the violence against citizens. It authorizes the use of force with an explicit commitment to pursue all necessary measures to stop the killing, to include the enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya. It also strengthens our sanctions and the enforcement of an arms embargo against the Qaddafi regime.

Now, once more, Moammar Qaddafi has a choice. The resolution that passed lays out very clear conditions that must be met. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Arab states agree that a cease-fire must be implemented immediately. That means all attacks against civilians must stop. Qaddafi must stop his troops from advancing on Benghazi, pull them back from Ajdabiya, Misrata, and Zawiya, and establish water, electricity, and gas supplies to all areas. Humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach the people of Libya.

Let me be clear, these terms are not negotiable. These terms are not subject to negotiation. If Qaddafi does not comply with the resolution, the international community will impose consequences, and the resolution will be enforced through military action.

In this effort, the United States is prepared to act as part of an international coalition. American leadership is essential, but that does not mean acting alone—it means shaping the conditions for the international community to act together.

That's why I have directed Secretary Gates and our military to coordinate their planning, and tomorrow Secretary Clinton will travel to Paris for a meeting with our European allies and Arab partners about the enforcement of Resolution 1973. We will provide the unique capabilities that we can bring to bear to stop the violence against civilians, including enabling our European allies and Arab partners to effectively enforce a no fly zone. I have no doubt that the men and women of our military are capable of carrying out this mission. Once more, they have the thanks of a grateful nation and the admiration of the world.

I also want to be clear about what we will not be doing. The United States is not going to deploy ground troops into Libya. And we are not going to use force to go beyond a well-defined goal—specifically, the protection of civilians in Libya. In the coming weeks, we will continue to help the Libyan people with humanitarian and economic assistance so that they can fulfill their aspirations peacefully.

Now, the United States did not seek this outcome. Our decisions have been driven by Qaddafi's refusal to respect the rights of his people, and the potential for mass murder of innocent civilians. It is not an action that we will pursue alone. Indeed, our British and French allies, and members of the Arab League, have already committed to take a leadership role in the enforcement of this resolution, just as they were instrumental in pursuing it. We are coordinating closely with them. And this is precisely how the international community should

work, as more nations bear both the responsibility and the cost of enforcing international law.

This is just one more chapter in the change that is unfolding across the Middle East and North Africa. From the beginning of these protests, we have made it clear that we are opposed to violence. We have made clear our support for a set of universal values, and our support for the political and economic change that the people of the region deserve. But I want to be clear: the change in the region will not and cannot be imposed by the United States or any foreign power; ultimately, it will be driven by the people of the Arab World. It is their right and their responsibility to determine their own destiny.

Let me close by saying that there is no decision I face as your commander in chief that I consider as carefully as the decision to ask our men and women to use military force. Particularly at a time when our military is fighting in Afghanistan and winding down our activities in Iraq, that decision is only made more difficult. But the United States of America will not stand idly by in the face of actions that undermine global peace and security. So I have taken this decision with the confidence that action is necessary, and that we will not be acting alone. Our goal is focused, our cause is just, and our coalition is strong. Thank you very much.

PERSPECTIVE 2

False Pretence for War in Libya?

Alan J. Kuperman²



Evidence is now in that President Barack Obama grossly exaggerated the humanitarian threat to justify military action in Libya. The president claimed that intervention was necessary to prevent a “bloodbath” in Benghazi, Libya’s second-largest city and last rebel stronghold.

But Human Rights Watch has released data on Misurata, the next-biggest city in Libya and scene of protracted fighting, revealing that Moammar Khadafy is not deliberately massacring civilians but rather narrowly targeting the armed rebels who fight against his government.

Misurata’s population is roughly 400,000. In nearly two months of war, only 257 people—including combatants—have died there. Of the 949 wounded, only 22—less than 3 percent—are women. If Khadafy were indiscriminately targeting civilians, women would comprise about half the casualties.

Obama insisted that prospects were grim without intervention. “If we waited one more day, Benghazi ... could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.” Thus, the president concluded, “preventing genocide” justified US military action.

²Source: False pretense for war in Libya? Boston Globe, April 14, 2011. Reprinted by permission of the author.

But intervention did not prevent genocide, because no such bloodbath was in the offing. To the contrary, by emboldening rebellion, US interference has prolonged Libya's civil war and the resultant suffering of innocents.

The best evidence that Khadafy did not plan genocide in Benghazi is that he did not perpetrate it in the other cities he had recaptured either fully or partially—including Zawiya, Misurata, and Ajdabiya, which together have a population greater than Benghazi.

Libyan forces did kill hundreds as they regained control of cities. Collateral damage is inevitable in counter-insurgency. And strict laws of war may have been exceeded.

But Khadafy's acts were a far cry from Rwanda, Darfur, Congo, Bosnia, and other killing fields. Libya's air force, prior to imposition of a UN-authorized no-fly zone, targeted rebel positions, not civilian concentrations. Despite ubiquitous cellphones equipped with cameras and video, there is no graphic evidence of deliberate massacre. Images abound of victims killed or wounded in crossfire—each one a tragedy—but that is urban warfare, not genocide.

Nor did Khadafy ever threaten civilian massacre in Benghazi, as Obama alleged. The “no mercy” warning, of March 17, targeted rebels only, as reported by *The New York Times*, which noted that Libya's leader promised amnesty for those “who throw their weapons away.” Khadafy even offered the rebels an escape route and open border to Egypt, to avoid a fight “to the bitter end.”

If bloodbath was unlikely, how did this notion propel US intervention? The actual prospect in Benghazi was the final defeat of the rebels. To avoid this fate, they desperately concocted an impending genocide to rally international support for “humanitarian” intervention that would save their rebellion.

On March 15, Reuters quoted a Libyan opposition leader in Geneva claiming that if Khadafy attacked Benghazi, there would be “a real bloodbath, a massacre like we saw in Rwanda.” Four days later, US military aircraft started bombing. By the time Obama claimed that intervention had prevented a bloodbath, *The New York Times* already had reported that “the rebels feel no loyalty to the truth in shaping their propaganda” against Khadafy and were “making vastly inflated claims of his barbaric behavior.”

It is hard to know whether the White House was duped by the rebels or conspired with them to pursue regime-change on bogus humanitarian grounds. In either case, intervention quickly exceeded the UN mandate of civilian protection by bombing Libyan forces in retreat or based in bastions of Khadafy support, such as Sirte, where they threatened no civilians.

The net result is uncertain. Intervention stopped Khadafy's forces from capturing Benghazi, saving some lives. But it intensified his crackdown in western Libya to consolidate territory quickly. It also emboldened the rebels to resume their attacks, briefly recapturing cities along the eastern and central coast, such as Ajdabiya, Brega, and Ras Lanuf, until they outran supply lines and retreated.

Each time those cities change hands, they are shelled by both sides—killing, wounding, and displacing innocents. On March 31, NATO formally warned the rebels to stop attacking civilians. It is poignant to recall that if not for intervention, the war almost surely would have ended last month.

In his speech explaining the military action in Libya, Obama embraced the noble principle of the responsibility to protect—which some quickly dubbed the Obama Doctrine—calling for intervention when possible to prevent genocide. Libya reveals how this approach, implemented reflexively, may backfire by encouraging rebels to provoke and exaggerate atrocities, to entice intervention that ultimately perpetuates civil war and humanitarian suffering.

Alan J. Kuperman, a professor of public affairs at the University of Texas, is author of The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention' and co-editor of Gambling on Humanitarian Intervention.

11

Nuclear Proliferation

Key Controversy: How Dangerous is Nuclear Proliferation?

This chapter focuses on the debate over the consequences and the desirability of nuclear proliferation. In its simplest form, the essential issue is whether nuclear weapons have been, and will be, a force for peace and stability. Those who favor (or at least do not fear) nuclear proliferation claim that because nuclear weapons substantially increase the potential costs of war, they also tend to reduce the likelihood of war. Realists in particular are attracted to this logic of peace through nuclear deterrence. But there is disagreement on how much proliferation is desirable. Advocates of limited proliferation argue that nuclear deterrence contributes to stability only under certain conditions. More extreme proliferation proponents see nuclear weapons as stabilizing in almost any setting. These two versions of the pro-proliferation position remain minority stances. More common is opposition to any further spread of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons cannot eliminate the chances for war (purposeful or accidental), even if they do reduce them. Because the consequences of nuclear war would be so devastating, it is not a gamble worth taking. But even in the face of these disagreements, there is one point of consensus: The spread of nuclear weapons to non-state actors would be a disaster because deterrence ceases to be an option in facing an enemy lacking any identifiable territory or assets that can be targeted or destroyed. ■

For more than a decade, Iran has remained the focus of attention for those worried about nuclear proliferation. Economic sanctions have been imposed both to deny Iran the technology needed to develop nuclear weapons and to create hardship that might persuade it to halt its pursuit of them. There is constant speculation that Israel, with or without the United States, might launch an attack on Iranian facilities associated with its suspected nuclear weapons program. Short of a direct attack, there was extensive evidence of clandestine assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists and elaborate computer viruses designed to attack and disable critical components of Iran's nuclear infrastructure.¹ All of this reflects a concern on the part of many

Israelis and others that Iran's leaders are, in the words of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "a messianic apocalyptic cult" that cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons.² The fear is that the normal dynamics of nuclear deterrence that have prevented every other nuclear power since 1945 from using their weapons might not restrain the fanatical Iranian regime bent on destroying the Jewish state. Even if Iran did not attack Israel, a nuclear Iran might embolden the Islamic regime and its proxies in the region to make life difficult for the Jewish state, forcing its citizens to live with the permanent threat of annihilation by a regime whose leadership has expressed a desire to see it wiped off the face of the map.

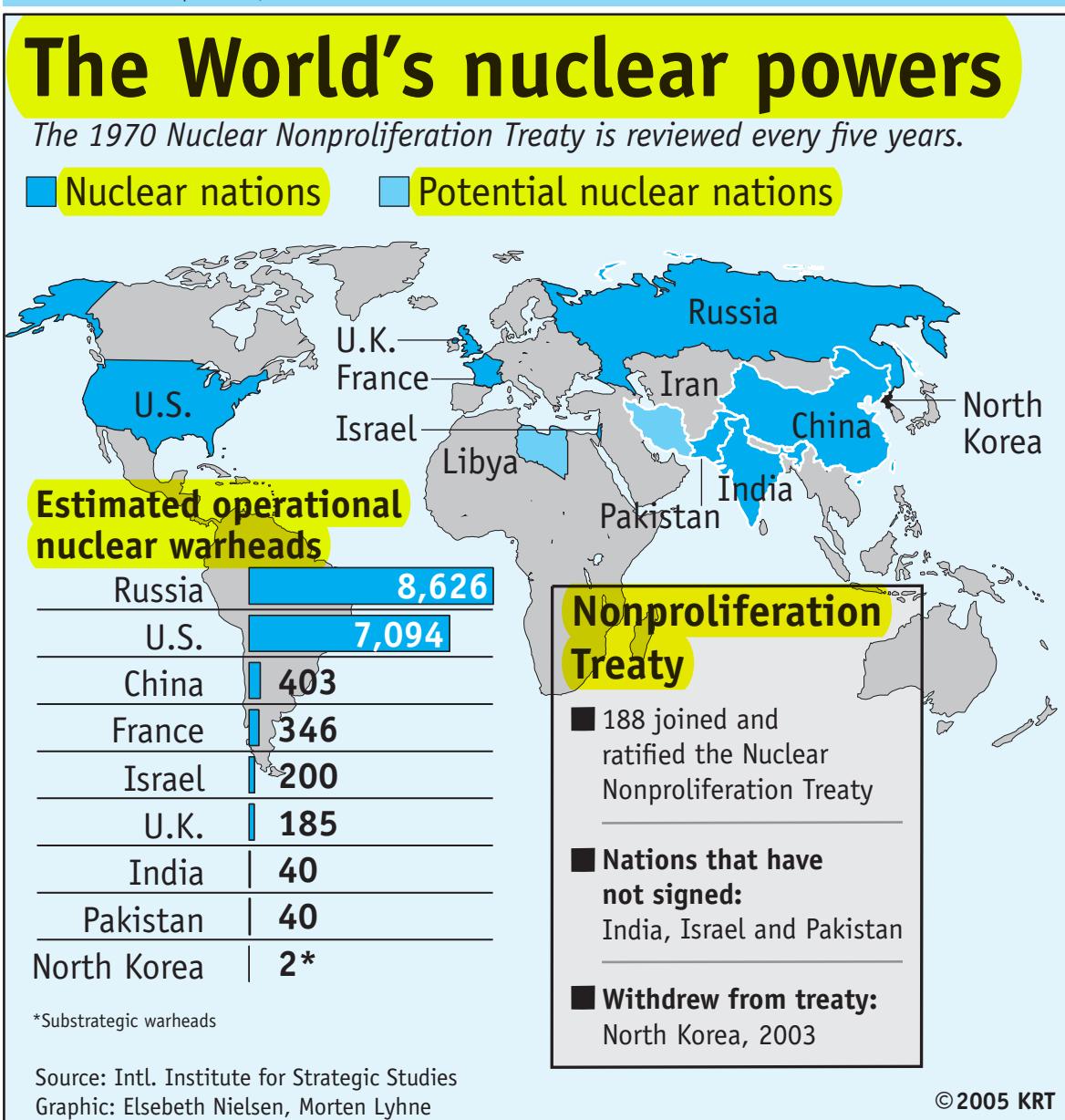
These concerns, however, are only the most recent manifestation of fears that have marked the nuclear age. Fortunately, the world has so far managed to avoid the catastrophe of nuclear war. But is past success a harbinger of things to come, or is there a real possibility that our nuclear luck is about to run out, whether the culprit be a state or a terrorist organization? Contemporary fears of nuclear proliferation have become great enough to produce a fundamental shift in U.S. strategic doctrine. In the months leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the George W. Bush administration claimed that the consequences of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of undeterrible rogue nations were so dire that the United States reserved the right to use military force to prevent that possibility. The idea of taking military action to prevent nations from acquiring nuclear weapons has been controversial. When Israel destroyed an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, for example, on the grounds that Iraqi nuclear weapons posed an immediate threat to its security, the United States and most other nations condemned the attack. The new U.S. doctrine, driven largely by concerns about nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, represents one of the more stunning strategic turnarounds in recent memory.³

The Reality of Proliferation and Nonproliferation

Despite worries about nuclear proliferation, it is important to remind ourselves that the problem could be much worse than it is. As of 2008, only eight countries definitely possess nuclear weapons: the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, Pakistan, and India (see Map 11.1). North Korea has most likely tested a nuclear weapon, but its current nuclear status remains somewhat uncertain. South Africa, which had a small nuclear arsenal in the 1980s, is the only nation to develop nuclear weapons and abandon them later, although a few former Soviet republics inherited nuclear weapons upon the Soviet Union's breakup and later returned them to Russia. In many respects, it is remarkable that only nine or ten nations have acquired nuclear weapons. As James Carroll notes, "We could just as easily be living in a world with nuclear weapons as common, say, as high-tech fighter aircraft—with countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Australia, and numerous others armed with nukes."⁴ Why we do not live in such a world with several dozen nuclear powers is itself an interesting question.

"Nuclear proliferation," explains Mitchell Riess, "is a function of two variables: technological capability *and* political motivation ... capability without motivation

MAP 11.1 Nuclear weapon status, 2005



Source: © Cengage Learning



Former Iranian President Ahmadinejad tours one of his country's nuclear facilities. The effort to prevent Iranian nuclearization is the most prominent flashpoint in efforts to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Source: AP Images/Iranian President's Office

is innocuous ... [and] motivation without capability is futile [emphasis added].”⁵ Early predictions of two or three dozen nuclear powers were based on the assumption that any nation capable of building nuclear weapons would do so—that is, all states had the motivation to acquire nuclear weapons but lacked the capability. It was difficult to imagine nations able to build nuclear weapons exercising voluntary restraint. As one observer asks, “When in history ... [have] so many nations had the capability to produce a powerful weapon, and chosen not to exercise it?”⁶

Fortunately, these predictions have not come to pass. The list of **nuclear abstainers**—that is, nations that have the ability to build nuclear weapons but have chosen not to—is a long one. A 2002 Carnegie Foundation report pointed to forty such abstainers.⁷ What accounts for this restraint? For many abstainers, especially in Europe and Asia, the U.S. **nuclear umbrella** might provide an explanation. For countries such as South Korea and Germany, it is understood that as allies of the United States, the United States would treat any attack on them as an attack on itself, requiring the appropriate response. But this cannot account for all the abstainers, because others (e.g., Sweden and Switzerland) do not enjoy the benefits of U.S. protection.

nuclear abstainers Nations with the economic and technological ability to build and maintain nuclear weapons but have chosen not to acquire them.

nuclear umbrella When one nation promises to employ its nuclear arsenal in order to defend another nation from attack.



Many have embraced the goal of “global zero,” or the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Source: Alex Wong/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Perhaps part of the explanation can be found in the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**.⁸ Signed in 1968 by forty-eight nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, the NPT was designed to prevent what many feared most—a world with dozens of nuclear powers. Since 1968, the list of signatories of the NPT has grown to 189 nations. Parties to the treaty have the right to develop nuclear energy but agree not to provide technological or material assistance that would allow other nations to build nuclear weapons. Nations not already possessing nuclear weapons agree to forgo them. Nations possessing nuclear weapons promise to work toward reducing their levels, with the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons entirely. However, in its specific provisions, the NPT essentially tried to preserve the nuclear status quo as it existed in 1968.

How successful has the NPT been? The answer depends on how we measure success. On one level, it can be seen as a great success: only a handful of nations have joined the nuclear club since 1968. And if we judge international treaties by the number of nations that sign on, the NPT would have to be considered a smashing success. Only three nations have refused to sign—Israel, India, and Pakistan

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) An agreement designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Existing nuclear powers promised not to aid others in acquiring nuclear weapons, and those without nuclear weapons agreed not to build them. Only three nations have not signed the NPT—Israel, India, and Pakistan.

(note that Iran is a party to the NPT). What is less clear is whether the treaty prevented any nation from getting nuclear weapons. Although “Egypt, Sweden, Italy, and Switzerland gave up serious nuclear weapons programs upon signing,”⁹ the most comprehensive study of nuclear nonproliferation concludes that all potential nuclear powers “had chosen to give up their nuclear options prior to joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.”¹⁰ It is possible that the treaty merely formalized decisions that had already been made for other reasons.

Evaluating the success of the NPT also raises the question of enforcement—what are the consequences of violation? Monitoring compliance with the NPT is the responsibility of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**. It was the IAEA that conducted inspections for evidence of an Iraqi nuclear weapons program during the winter of 2002–2003 (the inspections for chemical and biological weapons were carried out by a separate team assembled by the United Nations). The IAEA has also been active in assessing Iran’s compliance with the NPT. The IAEA, however, has no powers to enforce the treaty and must approach the UN Security Council to impose sanctions if it finds violations. This difficulty of enforcement is compounded by a provision allowing any signatory to withdraw from the treaty “if it decides that extraordinary events ... have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country.” Who decides what constitutes an extraordinary event or supreme interest? Each state decides for itself. In January 2003, for example, North Korea exercised its right to withdraw from the NPT, citing this provision. Subsequently, in October 2006, North Korea claimed to have tested its first nuclear weapon. In response, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions, citing the threat posed to international peace and security. In 2007, North Korea agreed to suspend its nuclear program in exchange for financial aid and the removal of sanctions. In the summer of 2008, North Korea even destroyed one of its nuclear reactors before a Western audience (video of which can be found on youtube.com), yet suspicions about North Korean intentions and capabilities linger. Few believe that North Korea has abandoned its quest for nuclear weapons, and its somewhat provocative tests of missiles that could carry nuclear weapons have done little to ease the suspicions.

In the final analysis, however, the problem of nuclear proliferation is *which* nations possess nuclear weapons, not *how many*. Headlines announcing a Norwegian nuclear weapon would not exactly leave many in a state of fear. The spread of nuclear weapons into the hands of certain nations provokes more anxiety than others. But before we get into details of why some nations might provide cause for greater concern, there is an even more basic question: Do we need to be worried about nuclear proliferation at all? Some might think the answer is so obvious that the question need not even be asked. After all, are there people who actually view nuclear proliferation as desirable? Many would be surprised that there are serious analysts who are not very worried about nuclear proliferation, and there are even others who consider nuclear weapons a force for peace and stability. For these **proliferation optimists**, more nuclear powers may indeed be beneficial, although there is disagreement about how much proliferation is desirable. This perspective contrasts with the more common argument of **proliferation pessimists**, who say that the consequences of using nuclear weapons are potentially so disastrous that any proliferation should be prevented. This is the basic debate addressed

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) The organization charged with monitoring compliance with the NPT.

proliferation optimists Those who believe that the spread of nuclear weapons can contribute to international peace and stability.

proliferation pessimists Those who believe that any spread of nuclear weapons is undesirable and should be prevented.

in this chapter: Whether, and under what circumstances, nuclear weapons might be a force for peace and stability. Three basic positions are presented: the case for limited proliferation, the argument for nearly unlimited proliferation, and the case against any further proliferation.

The Case for Limited Proliferation

Debates about the consequences of nuclear proliferation going forward are derived in part from disagreements about the impact of nuclear weapons in the past. John Mearsheimer has been particularly influential in setting the terms of the debate. In 1990, just as the Cold War was coming to an end, he claimed that the United States would soon miss the good old days.¹¹ As the United States basked in the glory of victory, this Cold War nostalgia seemed odd. But Mearsheimer's position was quite simple. In retrospect, the Cold War was a period of almost unprecedented great power peace, particularly in Europe, where two total wars had been waged in the three decades preceding 1945. Tens of millions of battlefield and civilian deaths were a testament to the instability of the pre-Cold War world. Despite the intensity of the Cold War superpower rivalry, there was never any direct military engagement between the United States and the Soviet Union. What accounted for this enduring peace in the face of intense rivalry? Mearsheimer thought that nuclear weapons had a lot to do with it.

How did nuclear weapons help keep the peace? Mearsheimer assumes that nations start wars because they expect to win, meaning that the expected benefits exceed the costs. Historically, however, nations frequently miscalculated, losing wars that they initiated and expected to win. Before the nuclear era, decision makers confronted two major problems that contributed to the “fog” of war (mis)calculations. First, it was easy to misjudge the likely effects of using conventional weapons. Second, it was also easy to imagine using conventional weapons in ways that would allow a nation to “win.” This is where the benefits of nuclear weapons come into play. With weapons of such incredibly destructive potential, there is no doubt that their use would result in such tremendous devastation that it would be impossible to conclude that war would bring greater benefits than costs. Nuclear weapons impose a clarity on strategic calculations that conventional weapons do not. By so obviously raising the potential costs of war relative to any conceivable benefits, nuclear weapons dramatically reduced the chances that either the United States or the Soviet Union would risk their use. As Charles Krauthammer concludes, “Deterrence has a track record. For the entire postwar period it has maintained the peace between the two superpowers, preventing not only nuclear but conventional war as well.”¹²

Mearsheimer worried that the post–Cold War world would resemble Europe on the eve of World War I. No longer would there be only two major powers—a new, multipolar order would emerge. There was no assurance that a balance of power would be achieved among the major powers. Perhaps worst of all, many of these powers would not have nuclear weapons. That is, the post–Cold War world was

reverting to a world like the one that produced World War I and World War II. Although he did not predict another world war, Mearsheimer saw trouble coming.

In order to deal with this situation, Mearsheimer advocated a “managed proliferation” of nuclear weapons, especially to Germany. When he was writing in 1990, the Soviet Union still existed as a unified nation. It seemed clear that Germany and the Soviet Union would emerge as the dominant powers in Europe. Like all great powers, they would eventually find themselves in conflict. Because Germany could not seek shelter forever under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, it probably would decide that it should acquire its own nuclear arsenal. And if it was going to happen, it should preferably occur in a “managed” and orderly fashion during a period of relative international calm.

The Soviet Union’s demise in 1991 did not alter Mearsheimer’s opinion about the wisdom of German nuclearization, but it did create a new dilemma. The Soviet Union’s collapse left a sizable number of its nuclear weapons in the territory of some newly independent states, most notably Ukraine. What should be done with these weapons? Consistently applying his logic, Mearsheimer advised Ukraine to keep them. Russia, after all, would remain a nuclear power. Ukraine and Russia were bound to come into conflict at some point. If both had nuclear weapons, the chances of war would be greatly diminished.¹³ Given Mearsheimer’s argument, one has to wonder whether the crisis between Russia and Ukraine in the spring of 2014 would have evolved differently had his advice been taken. Would the fear of Ukrainian nuclear weapons have caused Russia to act more cautiously? Walter Russell Mead thinks so: “If Ukraine still had its nukes, it would probably still have Crimea,” he argues. “It gave up its nukes, got worthless paper guarantees, and also got an invasion from a more powerful and nuclear neighbour.”¹⁴ Others, however, are grateful, fearing the crisis could easily have turned into a much more serious “nuclear nightmare.”¹⁵

But how far can Mearsheimer’s logic extend? As Jonathan Schell (an opponent of proliferation) asks, “If, as many analysts say, [nuclear] deterrence was a successful solution to the dangers of the Cold War, then why should it not be accepted by all nations prone to conflict?”¹⁶ Mearsheimer was unwilling to carry his argument to this logical extreme. While advocating a Ukrainian nuclear deterrent, he warned that “nuclear proliferation does not axiomatically promote peace and can in some cases even cause war.” He worried that “smaller European powers might lack the resources to make their nuclear force survivable, and vulnerable nuclear forces would invite a first strike in the event of a crisis.”¹⁷ If there are reasons to fear that some smaller European powers may be ill-prepared to build and maintain the necessary nuclear forces, one might conclude that few countries outside of Europe possess the requisite resources.

The Case for Widespread Proliferation

Mearsheimer was not the first to see virtues in nuclear proliferation. Long before the end of the Cold War, Kenneth Waltz had made a very similar argument, but he did not see the benefits of nuclear proliferation as limited to a handful of states. In arguing that more nuclear weapons may be better even in the most dangerous of places, Waltz provides an extreme case in favor of nuclear proliferation.¹⁸

Waltz, like Mearsheimer, views nuclear weapons as good because they increase the potential costs of war: “War becomes less likely as the costs of war rise in relation to the possible gains.”¹⁹ So long as each side knows that any use of nuclear weapons would result in its own destruction, they will not be used, and situations that might entail their use will be mostly avoided. This is the situation that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union, which became known as **mutual assured destruction (MAD)**. MAD requires that both powers be able to absorb an attack by the other side with enough weapons left over to inflict unacceptable destruction in retaliation. This necessitates an **invulnerable second-strike** capability—that is, nuclear weapons that the other side cannot eliminate in the first strike. The United States and the Soviet Union accomplished this by putting a lot of nuclear weapons in places where the other side could not attack them (e.g., underground in missile silos and underwater in submarines). Mearsheimer was concerned that lesser powers may not be able to build and maintain invulnerable second-strike/retaliatory forces.

Waltz agrees that invulnerable nuclear forces are the key to stable nuclear deterrence. But he thinks that it is relatively easy to build and maintain an invulnerable second-strike capability. Pakistan and India, for example, do not need thousands of weapons and submarines. A handful of weapons suffice because “once a country has a small number of deliverable warheads of uncertain location, it has a second strike force.”²⁰ Pakistan needs only ten or twenty nuclear weapons to inflict incredible damage and casualties on India. Nuclear weapons landing in Delhi and Calcutta alone could kill tens of millions. This would certainly raise the potential costs of war to an unacceptable level. A nuclear deterrent requires only a few nuclear weapons that the other side cannot locate and target. This is where Mearsheimer and Waltz part company. They agree that nuclear deterrence is a good thing but disagree about its requirements. For Waltz, any nation that can build one nuclear weapon can also maintain an adequate deterrent force; Mearsheimer is not so sure.

Fears that countries like Iran or North Korea might get nuclear weapons, however, do not necessarily focus on their ability to build stable deterrents. Even with the necessary weapons, some measure of rationality is essential for deterrence. Decision makers must understand that they will be annihilated and must prefer not to be. This is where the specter of irrational rogue states enters the equation. Andrew Sullivan expresses the fear of many: “The problem with deterrence and Iran’s current regime, I think, lies in its religious orientation.... We are dealing with a religious movement in which suicide bombing is a virtue. How do we deter suicide bombers? We cannot.”²¹ This echoes Israeli fears that Iran’s regime is an irrational cult bent on destroying the Jewish state.

Waltz, however, dismisses such concerns. In fact, one of the best things about nuclear deterrence is that it does not require an incredible level of rationality to understand the harsh realities. Jonathan Tepperman reminds us that these fears are nothing new: “Khrushchev...threatened to ‘bury’ the United States, and in 1957, Mao blithely declared that a nuclear war with America wouldn’t be so bad because even ‘if half of mankind died ... the whole world would become socialist.’”²² It is useful to recall in particular the reaction to China going nuclear in 1964. At the time,

mutual assured destruction (MAD) A strategic reality and doctrine in which any use of nuclear weapons would inevitably entail one's own destruction; achieved when each party possesses an invulnerable second-strike (retaliatory) capability.

invulnerable second-strike Nuclear weapons that cannot be destroyed in a preemptive attack, providing the ability to respond to any attack with a second (retaliatory) strike.

Mao Zedong was viewed as a rogue leader: bellicose, unpredictable, brutal, ideological, and fanatical. Certainly, this was not someone to trust with nuclear weapons. There was even consideration of a preemptive attack on China's small arsenal. We tend to forget this today because Mao and his successors eventually proved perfectly responsive to the realities of deterrence.

Waltz maintains his nuclear optimism even in the case of Iran. Although "most U.S., European, and Israeli commentators and policymakers warn that a nuclear-armed Iran would be the worst possible outcome of the current standoff," Waltz argues that "it would probably be the best possible result: the one most likely to restore stability to the Middle East." He rejects fears that Iran's rulers are suicidal ideologues: "Despite a widespread belief to the contrary, Iranian policy is made not by 'mad mullahs' but by perfectly sane ayatollahs who want to survive just like any other leaders. Although Iran's leaders indulge in inflammatory and hateful rhetoric, they show no propensity for self-destruction."²³ In response to Sullivan's worries about suicide bombers, Waltz would observe that there is a world of difference between sending a few poor hapless souls off to their deaths and courting national annihilation. Nothing promotes sober reflection like a few hundred or thousand nuclear weapons staring you in the face. Although many analysts believe concerns about Iran are exaggerated and think that a nuclear Iran can be dealt with through the proven dynamics of deterrence, Waltz is among a small handful arguing that a nuclear Iran would actually be a good thing, helping to stabilize the Middle East.

Exactly What Are We Worried About?

There is sometimes a lack of clarity about what opponents of proliferation are worried about, really. Is the danger that new nuclear powers will use their weapons against the United States, or against each other? These are two distinct problems. Waltz is least worried about an attack on the United States due to the overwhelming power of its nuclear deterrent. Any nation attacking the United States would be on the receiving end of a devastating response. Whatever one thinks about some of the world's more unsavory leaders, it is probably safe to assume that even North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has no desire to rule over a radioactive parking lot (if he even survived, that is). This, presumably, is why the United States keeps several thousand nuclear weapons: to deter those who need to be deterred.

But even if nuclear weapons are not used against the United States, might new nuclear powers use them against each other? Waltz thinks this is unlikely as well. There is some evidence supporting this position. Examining the India–Pakistan crisis of 1990, Devin Hagerty concludes that "New Delhi and Islamabad were deterred from war by their recognition of each other's nuclear capabilities ... [which] lends further support to the already impressive evidence that the chief impact of nuclear weapons is to deter war between their possessors."²⁴ Nonetheless, even Waltz concedes that "no one can say that nuclear weapons will never be used." Although he is confident that new powers are extremely unlikely to attack major nuclear powers, Waltz grants a somewhat greater possibility that they might use them against each other. What then? In what some might consider a

callous or cavalier response, Waltz answers that “if such states use nuclear weapons, the world will not end. The use of nuclear weapons by lesser powers would hardly trigger them elsewhere.”²⁵ For opponents of proliferation, the mere fact that the “world will not end” offers little comfort.

The Case Against Nuclear Proliferation

Much of the case in favor of nuclear proliferation relies on the argument that nuclear weapons stabilized U.S.–Soviet relations during the Cold War. Not everyone accepts this analysis. The problem is a familiar one: We cannot assume that because we had nuclear weapons and peace at the same time that we had peace *because* of nuclear weapons. To use the familiar cliché, correlation does not prove causation.

Alternative interpretations of the Cold War peace relegate nuclear weapons to a much less important, and perhaps completely irrelevant, role. Historian John Lewis Gaddis, who first characterized the Cold War as the “long peace,” lists nuclear weapons as only one of many factors that helped the superpowers avoid war. He accords much greater weight to the simplicity of bipolarity, the conservative nature of political leadership in both societies, the emergence of norms of peaceful competition, and geographical distance.²⁶ Others go one step further, arguing that nuclear weapons were completely irrelevant. For John Mueller, the two world wars were enough to convince U.S. and Soviet leaders that even a conventional war would have imposed costs exceeding any potential gains. Using a colorful metaphor to illustrate the comparative destructiveness of conventional and nuclear war, Mueller observes that “a jump from the fiftieth floor [nuclear war] is probably quite a bit more horrible to think about than a jump from the fifth floor [conventional war], but anyone who finds life even minimally satisfying is extremely unlikely to do either.”²⁷

Of course, as Robert Malcolmson explains, it is impossible to offer any final, definitive answer to the question of whether nuclear weapons kept the Cold War peace: “perhaps the nuclear threat played a major role in deterring war, perhaps it did not: the fact is, we do not know and never will.” Although Malcolmson believes it likely that “the fear of nuclear catastrophe probably did impose some restraint on the actions of the superpowers,” he wonders whether “it is possible to establish the relative importance of this restraining fear.” Because we cannot provide firm answers to these questions, the supposedly pacifying impact of nuclear weapons is a rather shaky basis for increasing the number of nations with their fingers on the nuclear trigger. No matter how compelling the argument might seem, “the proposition that nuclear deterrence kept the peace is not a matter of knowledge, it is a matter of belief and often rather dogmatic belief.”²⁸

The Gamble of Proliferation

Proliferation optimists rest much of their case on the commonsensical notion that because nuclear weapons increase the potential costs of war, they reduce the chances for war. Even if this fundamental point is granted, opponents of

proliferation see a weakness in that nuclear weapons cannot *eliminate* the chances for war. At best, nuclear weapons only reduce the chances for war. But by how much? 10 percent? 50 percent? 99 percent? No one knows. This uncertainty indicates that advocates of proliferation are willing to make a trade-off. They admit that an Indian–Pakistani war with nuclear weapons would be much more destructive than one without them—indeed, this is the very crux of their argument about nuclear weapons dramatically increasing the costs of war—but in their view, the reduced chances of war are worth taking the risk of a much more destructive war. Proliferation proponents, to put it crudely, are willing to “play the odds” without knowing exactly what these odds are. But, critics wonder, do nuclear weapons reduce the chances for war enough, given the potentially horrific consequences of their use? As Steven Miller concludes, “Even a small risk of war despite nuclear weapons makes nuclear proliferation too dangerous to contemplate.... When one considers the stakes and risks involved, the gamble is too great.”²⁹

Why Worry About Iran, But Not Germany?

nuclear apartheid A term used by critics of attempts to create two classes of nations—those allowed to possess nuclear weapons and those who cannot be trusted with them. The term *apartheid* has unavoidable racial connotations because of its association with the white supremacist regime that used to exist in South Africa.

Why would proliferation of nuclear weapons to some states elicit greater anxiety than proliferation to others? Many within the Third World see a mildly racist double standard: So long as nuclear weapons remain in the hands of Northern nations, there is no problem; it is only when all those different-looking people in Asia and the Middle East get them that Westerners start to worry. Ahmed Hashim suggests that such fears are based on “hoary clichés about the irrationality and callousness of leaders and peoples in the Middle East.”³⁰ From this perspective, the insistence on preventing any further proliferation reinforces a **nuclear apartheid** giving current nuclear powers an enduring strategic advantage. Most opponents of proliferation, of course, would reject such charges, insisting that there are good reasons to be concerned.

From the perspective of the United States at least, Germany or Israel with nuclear weapons is less troubling than Iran or North Korea because the nuclear weapons of friends are less worrisome than those of adversaries. But concerns about proliferation go beyond considerations of political allegiances. The fact that all nations currently pursuing nuclear weapons are relatively poor causes the most concern. This is because their relative poverty will influence how many nuclear weapons they are likely to build, as well as what kind. The fear is that poor nations will be able to afford only a small number of the most basic and worst types of nuclear weapons. This will bring all the drawbacks and risks of nuclear weapons without the benefits.

So what if two opponents are able to build only a few nuclear weapons? Wouldn’t a few nuclear explosions create enough damage to increase the costs of war beyond any possible gains? On an objective level, the answer is probably yes. But what matters is whether those making the key decisions believe it. Deterrence is ultimately a psychological process involving decision makers’ beliefs and expectations about the likely consequences. One nation’s fifty or a hundred nuclear weapons will deter only if potential aggressors are convinced that those weapons will be used against them and the damage inflicted will be unacceptable. When a

nation has a few thousand nuclear weapons, it is almost impossible to reach any other conclusion. Things may be very different with only a few dozen weapons. Proliferation opponents worry that with only a handful of weapons, nuclear powers might come to believe, however incorrectly, that a limited nuclear war might be winnable.

History is replete with examples of leaders who were unable to recognize what in hindsight appears obvious. The leaders of Europe on the eve of World War I failed to grasp the potential horrors of the war that they were unleashing, even though they were aware of each other's huge armies with massive quantities of weapons. In 1914, deterrence failed miserably. During the crisis between India and Pakistan in the spring and summer of 2002, some observers were disturbed by what they saw as "nuclear denial." Among the general population, there was little awareness of what nuclear weapons could actually do. Even among some in the military, there was a disturbingly cavalier attitude toward the possible consequences of nuclear war. One Pakistani general, when asked about fears of nuclear war, responded, "I don't know what you're worried about. You can die crossing the street, hit by a car, or you could die in a nuclear war. You've got to die someday anyway."³¹ Although we should not exaggerate the significance of a single general's off-the-cuff remark, such comments certainly do not reveal an appreciation of the devastation that nuclear weapons could bring. Kenneth Waltz may be correct about the futility of using even a few weapons, but unfortunately, he will not be making the decisions. We need not assume rampant irrationality and suicidal tendencies in order to worry that miscalculations, misperceptions, and wishful thinking might lead to the failure of deterrence. It has happened before.

A Very Delicate Balance of Terror³²

Even for basically rational decision makers, nuclear arsenals consisting of a few vulnerable weapons create problems. In addition to the possibility that a nuclear war with only a few weapons might be viewed as winnable, there are serious dilemmas relating to what strategists call **crisis stability**, or the likelihood that a crisis will escalate to war. One fear is that nations with relatively small nuclear arsenals may be tempted to launch a **preemptive strike** in a crisis—that is, an initial attack to eliminate the nuclear forces of the other side before it has a chance to use them. If two enemies have thousands of weapons in many different places, such an attack would be futile. There would be no possibility of eliminating all the other side's weapons, and whatever weapons remained would surely be launched in retaliation. If a nation has only a small number of weapons in a few vulnerable places, a preemptive attack becomes a feasible—maybe even attractive—option.

To make matters even worse, there will also be strong pressures to adopt a policy of **launch on warning**—that is, to launch weapons the moment that one suspects an attack is under way. The danger is that if one side waits for an attack to be completed before responding, they may find themselves with few or no weapons for retaliation. They could be placed in a "use them or lose them" situation. And because there may be only four or five minutes warning time for nations close to each other (e.g., Israel and Iran), the time pressures on decision makers will be intense.

crisis stability The presence or absence of incentives to initiate military action in the event of a state of emergency.

preemptive strike An attack intended to disarm a nation before it has the chance to use (or maybe even develop) its nuclear weapons.

launch on warning When a nation launches its own nuclear weapons on indications that it is under attack (as opposed to waiting for the attack to be completed).

And when the warning time is so short that decisions need to be almost instantaneous, the danger of inadvertent nuclear war increases dramatically. During the Cold War, the superpowers would have had thirty to forty minutes to determine if an attack was real. Even though thirty minutes might not seem like a lot of time to make a decision on which the future of humanity rests, it was sufficient to allow mistaken indications that an attack was under way (and there were several such incidents during the Cold War) to be detected before rash decisions regarding retaliation.³³

As a result of these crucial differences, critics of nuclear proliferation believe that we cannot extrapolate the U.S.–Soviet experience into the most likely scenarios for future nuclear proliferation. Even if nuclear weapons produced, or at least contributed to, the superpower peace, it was only because the United States and the Soviet Union had the money and technology to build a lot of the right kinds of weapons. They also had the technology and time that allowed them to avoid rash, impulsive decisions that might have led to war by mistake. It was a balance of terror, to be sure, but it was a stable balance of terror. Nuclear proliferation will produce more balances of terror in the world, but these may be delicate, fragile, and unstable.

Terrorists, Black Markets, and Nuclear Handoffs

In 2007, Graham Allison warned that the chances of a terrorist attack on the United States with a nuclear weapon “in the next decade are greater than 50 percent.”³⁴ Although many questioned his estimate, there was nearly universal agreement on his underlying concern: the acquisition of nuclear weapons by non-state actors (a euphemism for *terrorist groups* in this context) would be disastrous. Even those who do not worry much about so-called rogue states concede that this would be a problem of a different order. It is not hard to understand why. With states, even those with seemingly unstable leaders, there is always the possibility of deterrence. With nonstate actors, the problem, as Carl Builder explains, is that “an opponent cannot be deterred by the threat of nuclear weapons if that opponent has no definable society to threaten.”³⁵ Presumably, these groups would not go to the trouble of getting nuclear weapons unless they are willing to use them, and because the option of deterrence would not exist, it is difficult to imagine what would prevent them from doing so.

Opponents of proliferation argue that we cannot treat proliferation to states and nonstate actors as if they were separate, unrelated problems. The proliferation of nuclear weapons to new states increases the likelihood of proliferation to nonstate actors. How so? We need to remember that building nuclear weapons is no easy feat. States with a lot of resources at their disposal often require decades before they are finally successful. The problem is not the knowledge of how to build a bomb—a few hours on the Internet will yield the necessary plans. The big obstacle is getting one’s hands on the *fissile material*—that is, the fuel that feeds the explosion, plutonium or highly enriched uranium (HEU). These are not naturally occurring substances; they are very difficult and expensive to produce. It is extremely unlikely that a nonstate actor could manufacture either on its own. There is no plausible scenario in which a terrorist builds a nuclear weapon from scratch.

If a terrorist group does get nuclear weapons, it would be by one of two likely routes—acquiring either the fissile material or a completed weapon from a state. This could occur either voluntarily, as a so-called hand-off from a sympathetic regime or some faction within it, or through a black market. Thus, there is a potential link between nuclear proliferation to states and the likelihood that terrorist organizations might get them. It only stands to reason that more nuclear powers, more nuclear weapons, and more nuclear fuel in the world will only increase the chances that weapons will wind up in the wrong hands, and the more opportunities there are for something to happen, the more likely it will. And because the dangers of nuclear weapons in the hands of nondeterrable actors are so immense, the argument goes, we need to prevent anything that increases this risk, including proliferation to other states.

Those Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Concern about nuclear weapons proliferation is often expressed in the context of **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)**, a category that also includes chemical and biological weapons as well as radiological weapons or “dirty bombs.” Chemical weapons include such things as nerve gas or other substances that disable or kill people exposed to them. Biological weapons involve the release of bacteria or viruses that cause disease. Radiological weapons are conventional bombs that would spread radioactive material. In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, for example, the Bush administration emphasized the possible presence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. Although Iraq was also suspected of having a nuclear weapons program, most thought that it would be some time before it could have them.

On one level, there are reasons to be more worried about these other WMDs. One good thing about nuclear weapons is that they are so difficult and expensive to build. But because chemical and biological weapons are easier and cheaper, other states and organizations are more likely to acquire them. This is why biological weapons are often referred to as the “poor man’s nuke.” This is not to say that it is easy to make usable biological weapons—there are still many obstacles to growing and weaponizing biological agents. Chemical weapons, the easiest to manufacture, were used almost a century ago, when soldiers in World War I confronted a variety of gasses on the battlefield. Although certainly frightening, it would be difficult for chemical weapons to achieve nuclearlike destructiveness. For this reason, it might be a mistake to classify them as genuine WMD. On the other hand, a successful biological attack with a highly infectious and lethal agent could produce casualties of nuclear proportions.

Unlike nuclear weapons, however, there is no real debate about the merits of chemical and biological weapons proliferation. No one seriously argues that the world would be a better place with more biological weapons. One reason is that although a nuclear bomb would produce great damage, its effects can be contained and calculated. But once an infectious biological agent is released into the human population, its eventual course cannot be controlled. It is almost impossible to know where the agent will travel, whom it will kill, or how many. Because these weapons are so inherently unpredictable, it is difficult to imagine how they would fit into any rational policy of deterrence.

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) A general category of unconventional weapons that includes nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons.

Conclusion

The debate over whether the spread of nuclear weapons contributes to peace and stability is largely an in-house discussion among realists. Kenneth Waltz, who advocates widespread proliferation, and John Mearsheimer, who favors more limited proliferation, are both self-described realists. Other realists oppose any further proliferation. This divergence among realists illustrates something we have seen already: Debates exist not only between and among different perspectives, but also within them. Despite shared assumptions, people can arrive at different conclusions.

Both Mearsheimer and Waltz agree that nuclear deterrence can be a powerful force for peace. They also agree that it works because it increases the costs of war, making it less likely. The connections between this argument for nuclear deterrence and the realist worldview are easy to discern. Realists have always emphasized the inevitability of conflict among nations. International conflict, like social conflict in general, can never be entirely eliminated. Politics is about the management of conflict, not its elimination. In the absence of a central government to deal with disputes among nations, the distribution of power becomes a critical factor influencing whether conflicts lead to war. Realists have generally seen a balance of power between antagonists as the most stable situation. When a balance of power exists, neither side can be confident of prevailing in a war, which decreases the likelihood that war would be initiated. States are deterred from going to war because of the fear that they might lose. The argument that nuclear weapons are a stabilizing force is an understandable extension of this basic logic. Conflicts are prevented from escalating to war not by eliminating their underlying causes, but by convincing both sides that they have much more to lose than to gain. Thus, nuclear weapons deter war in much the same way as the balance of power. The logic is quintessentially realist.

Acceptance of the general argument, however, does not always lead to agreement on specific issues. This is because additional questions need to be answered before general principles can be translated into policy: What constitutes an adequate deterrent? Which nations have the capacity to build a sufficient deterrent? The basic assumptions of realism do not provide answers to these questions. Because realists make different judgments on these issues, they do not agree on whether nuclear weapons decrease or increase the danger of war between Ukraine and Russia or between India and Pakistan. An essentially realist argument can be made either way. The basic principles of realism (or any other perspective) provide a general framework, not a detailed road map, for thinking about international problems.

Even though realists have dominated discussions about the consequences of nuclear proliferation, they have not monopolized it. Liberals have also weighed in on the question, generally opposing proliferation in favor of strengthening the NPT and other international efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons. But liberal opposition to proliferation usually does not focus on the ability or inability of a nation to build an adequate deterrent. Liberal opposition to proliferation derives from a deeper unease with nuclear deterrence itself. Stripped to its bare essentials, the case for nuclear deterrence is an argument for peace based on fear.

Peace prevails because nuclear weapons make war too horrible to contemplate. For realists, who view some measure of international conflict as inevitable, the logic of peace through deterrence or fear makes sense. But liberals have always been uncomfortable with the notion that peace is preserved by making war ever more horrific. Liberals would rather bring about peace by finding a way to resolve the issue(s) that create hostility. A peace based on the mutual threat of total destruction is not a long-term solution to anything. For liberals, the debate over proliferation raises issues that go well beyond worries about crisis stability. As Jonathan Schell explains, “The principal strategic question is whether the doctrine of deterrence, having been framed during the Cold War, will now be discredited as logically absurd and morally bankrupt or, on the contrary, recommended to nations all over the world.”³⁶ For Schell, the narrow focus on the consequences of proliferation obscures the more important question. The most pressing issue is not whether *more* nations should get nuclear weapons, but whether *any* nation should have them in the first place.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Despite current fears about nuclear proliferation, the past few decades are remarkable for the number of nations that have refrained from developing nuclear weapons, even when they have the financial and technological ability to do so. There are many reasons for this restraint—the U.S. “nuclear umbrella,” the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the absence of any compelling strategic rationale are important factors.
- The fact that relatively few nations have pursued nuclear weapons is of little comfort if the nations that have are the ones we need to worry most about. The debate over the consequences of nuclear proliferation raises the question of whether we really need to be that fearful. Some even argue that a world with more nuclear weapons might be more peaceful and stable.
- There are essentially three major positions in the debate over nuclear proliferation: the case for the limited spread of nuclear weapons, a more extreme argument for virtually unlimited proliferation, and the more common opposition to any further proliferation.
- Those who favor proliferation claim that nuclear weapons were a force for stability during the Cold War and can be in other settings. By increasing the potential costs of war, nuclear weapons have the effect of reducing the chances for war. In this sense, nuclear deterrence “works.”
- Those who favor only limited proliferation argue that although nuclear deterrence works, it is difficult and expensive. Very few nations have the ability to build and maintain an adequate nuclear deterrent. The case for more widespread proliferation rests on the assumption that only a few nuclear weapons would be sufficient, making nuclear deterrence relatively easy and cheap.
- The debate about how much proliferation is desirable usually pits realists against other realists. Although attracted to the logic of deterrence, realists disagree among themselves about exactly what is needed for deterrence to work.
- Opponents of proliferation point out that even if nuclear weapons reduce the chances for war, they do not eliminate them. And because war with nuclear weapons would be so horrible, this is not a risk worth taking. Proliferation pessimists also worry more about the “rationality” of the leaders of rogue states and the danger of accidental launches from countries with primitive command and control systems.
- Whatever the disagreements concerning the spread of nuclear weapons to other states, there is consensus that it would be a disaster if nonstate actors acquired nuclear weapons. When an actor lacks any territory or assets that can be easily targeted and destroyed, deterrence is not an option.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the requirements for nuclear deterrence?
2. Why might a crisis between two nations with a lot of nuclear weapons be less likely to escalate to war than if each one had only a few?
3. Why do states and nonstate actors pose fundamentally different problems in terms of nuclear proliferation?
4. Why might so many nations with the ability to acquire nuclear weapons refrain from doing so?
5. Why is it difficult to know if deterrence “works”?

KEY TERMS

crisis stability, 277	invulnerable second-strike, 273	nuclear abstainers, 268	preemptive strike, 277
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 270	launch on warning, 277	nuclear apartheid, 276	proliferation optimists, 270
	mutual assured destruction (MAD), 273	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 269	proliferation pessimists, 270
		nuclear umbrella, 268	weapons of mass destruction (WMD), 279

FURTHER READINGS

Because much of the debate about nuclear proliferation relies on assessments about the impact of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, it is useful to begin by looking at the U.S.–Soviet experience. Two excellent surveys are Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma, 1945–1991* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), and Ronald Powaski, *Return to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1981–1999* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000). In terms of the debate over proliferation, Kenneth Waltz's essay, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better," *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 17 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981), is the best place to begin because this seminal article set the terms for the entire debate. Differing views of the impact of nuclear weapons on the "peace" of the Cold War are presented by John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Political Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5–56, and

John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* 13 (Fall 1988): 55–79. The best overall presentation of the debate is Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003). On the dynamics of nuclear proliferation the most recent and study is Matthew Kroenig's *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010). The Global Zero movement has rejuvenated debates about eliminating nuclear weapons. A good entry into these debates in Michael O'Hanlon's *A Skeptic's Case for Nuclear Disarmament* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013). Finally, a very recent and somewhat provocative take on many of the issues discussed in this chapter is Ward Wilson's *Five Myths About Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Mariner Books, 2013).

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION ON THE WEB

www.armscontrol.org

The Web site of the Arms Control Association provides information and news on all aspects of nuclear weapons, including nuclear proliferation.

www.nuclearfiles.org

Provides the text of the NPT, as well as other information about nuclear weapons, including the history of the nuclear arms race.

www.globalzero.org

The Web site of Global Zero, the most prominent contemporary movement to create "a world without nuclear weapons."

www.nci.org

The Web site of the Nuclear Control Institute, perhaps the best source for up-to-date information on nuclear proliferation.

www.iaea.org

The Web site of the IAEA; provides updates regarding its inspections and activities in Iran, among other information.

NOTES

¹"The Sabotaging of Iran," *Financial Times* (February 13, 2011): 1 and 21.
²See Jeffrey Goldberg, "Point of No Return," *The Atlantic*, vol. 306, no. 2 (September 2010): 56–69.

³See Louis Rene Beres and Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto, "Reconsidering Israel's Destruction of Iraq's Osiraq Nuclear Reactor," *Temple International and Comparative Law Journal* 9, no. 2(1995): 437–440; and by the same authors, "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word," *Jerusalem Post* (June 5, 2003), p. 37A.

⁴James Carroll, "The President's Nuclear Threat," *Boston Globe* (October 1, 2002), p. A15.

⁵Mitchell Reiss, *Without the Bomb: The Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 247.
⁶Quoted in Jim Walsh, "Understanding the Nuclear Puzzle," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2001): 177.

⁷Drake Bennett, "Critical Mess: How the Neocons Are Promoting Nuclear Proliferation," *American Prospect* (July/August 2003): 50.

- ⁸The full text of the treaty can be found at www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/npt1.html. A list of signatories is available at the same site.
- ⁹Bennett, "Critical Mess," p. 50.
- ¹⁰T. V. Paul, *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), p. 151.
- ¹¹John Mearsheimer, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," *The Atlantic* (August 1990): 35–50. A more detailed and scholarly version of the argument is presented in John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Political Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 5–56.
- ¹²Charles Krauthammer, "On Nuclear Morality," in *Nuclear Arms: Ethics, Strategy, Politics*, ed. R. James Woolsey (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1984), p. 15.
- ¹³Mearsheimer's advice was not followed, and Ukraine did return its inherited weapons to Russia.
- ¹⁴Anthony Zurcher, "Ukraine's Nuclear Regret," *BBC News* (March 20, 2014). Accessed at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-26676051>.
- ¹⁵Amy Davidson, "How Ukraine's Crisis Could Have Been a Nuclear Nightmare," *The New Yorker* (February 25, 2014). Accessed at: <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/closeread/2014/02/how-ukraines-crisis-could-have-been-a-nuclear-nightmare.html>.
- ¹⁶Jonathan Schell, "The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons," *The Nation* (February 9, 1998): 21.
- ¹⁷John Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 51.
- ¹⁸Kenneth Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better," *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 17 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981). The argument contained here was later refined and incorporated into Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).
- ¹⁹Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, p. 3.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 109.
- ²¹"Iran and Deterrence," accessed at: http://time.blogs.com/daily_dish/2006/05/iran_and_deterr.html (July 31, 2006).

- ²²Jonathan Tepperman, "How Nuclear Weapons Can Keep You Safe," *Time* (August 8, 2008). Accessed at: www.newsweek.com/how-nuclear-weapons-can-keep-you-safe-78907.
- ²³Kenneth Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2012), 2–5.
- ²⁴Devin T. Hagerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1995/1996): 82, 114.
- ²⁵Sagan and Waltz, *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 16–17.
- ²⁶John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 215–245.
- ²⁷John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major Power War* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 116.
- ²⁸Robert W. Malcolmon, *Beyond Nuclear Thinking* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990), p. 89.
- ²⁹Steven Miller, "The Case Against a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 80.
- ³⁰Ahmed Hashim, "The State, Society, and the Evolution of Warfare in the Middle East: The Rise of Strategic Deterrence?" *Washington Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 69.
- ³¹Cecilia Dugger, "Eyeball to Eyeball, and Blinking in Denial," *New York Times* (June 2, 2002), Section 4, p. 1.
- ³²This section subtitle is, of course, taken from Albert Wohlstetter's seminal article, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 37 (1959): 211–234.
- ³³Scott Sagan discusses some of the scarier near-misses in *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- ³⁴"How Likely Is a Nuclear Attack on the United States?" *Council on Foreign Relations Online Debate* (April 20, 2007). Accessed at: http://www.cfr.org/weapons-of-mass-destruction/likely-nuclear-terrorist-attack-united-states/p13097?cid=rss-onlinedebates-how_likely_is_a_nuclear_terror-041607.
- ³⁵Quoted in Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War* (New York: Warner Books, 1995), p. 198.
- ³⁶Schell, "Gift of Time," p. 22.

Should We Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?

Ever since the dawn of the nuclear age, there have been popular movements to eliminate nuclear weapons. In the 1950s and 1960s, this was evident in protests urging world leaders to “ban the bomb.” Needless to say, such efforts have been unsuccessful to date. Although the United States and Russia have many fewer nuclear weapons than they did during much of the Cold War, they are not yet close to abandoning their arsenals. Arms control efforts may have reduced the number of nuclear weapons, but they have not managed to ban the bomb. The promise that existing nuclear powers made in the NPT to work toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons embodied the goal of a nuclear-free world, but so far, it has come to naught, much to the chagrin of those who charge nuclear states with failing to live up to their (admittedly vague) treaty obligations.

The vision of a world without nuclear weapons has never gone away, however. Most recently, it has been revived in the Global Zero movement, which, as the name suggests, wants to see a world with zero nuclear weapons, the contemporary equivalent of banning the bomb. The call for a world without such weapons has been embraced by none other than President Barack Obama, though little substantive progress has been made in this direction during his presidency.

Although many wonder whether eliminating all the world’s weapons is a realistic goal, an even more basic question is whether it is desirable. The debate over whether it is even a good idea to abolish nuclear weapons throws into very sharp relief contrasting views about the impact and consequences of nuclear weapons since the end of World War II. The issue is whether nuclear weapons have been a force for peace and stability or a disaster waiting to happen when our luck finally runs out. In the essays below, Lawrence Wittner and Zachary Keck tackle the question of whether the world would be better off if everyone scrapped their nuclear weapons. What is the basis for their very different perspectives on calls for “global zero”? To what extent do their arguments deal with the concerns about both feasibility and desirability? And how do their arguments reflect disagreements about the role of nuclear weapons during the Cold War and to what extent nations should move beyond them?

PERSPECTIVE 1**Kicking the Nuclear Habit: Why We Need a World Free of Nuclear Weapons****Lawrence S. Wittner¹**

With President Barack Obama and other world leaders now talking about building a nuclear-free world, it is time to consider whether that would be a good idea.

Six reasons for supporting nuclear abolition are particularly cogent.

The first is that nuclear weapons are morally abhorrent. After all, they are instruments of widespread, indiscriminate slaughter. They destroy entire cities and entire regions, massacring civilian and soldier, friend and foe, the innocent and the guilty, including large numbers of children. The only crime committed by the vast majority of victims of a nuclear attack is that they happened to live on the wrong side of a national boundary.

The second reason is that nuclear war is suicidal. A nuclear exchange between nations will kill millions of people on both sides of the conflict and leave the survivors living in a nuclear wasteland, in which—as has been suggested—the living might well envy the dead. Even if only one side in a conflict employed nuclear weapons, nuclear fallout would spread around the world, as would a lengthy nuclear winter, which would lower temperatures, destroy agriculture and the food supply, and wreck what little was left of civilization. As numerous observers have remarked, there will be no winners in a nuclear war.

The third reason is that nuclear weapons do not guarantee a nation's security. Despite their nuclear weapons, the great powers over the decades became entangled in bloody conventional wars. Millions died in Korea, in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and numerous other lands—including large numbers of people from the nuclear nations. As the leaders of the nuclear powers learned, their nuclear arsenals did not help them a bit in these conflicts, for other peoples were simply not cowed by their nuclear might. Nuclear weapons simply weren't useful.

Nor has the vast nuclear arsenal of the United States protected it from terrorist assault. On September 11, 2001, nineteen men—armed only with box cutters—staged the largest terrorist raid on the United States in its history, in which some 3,000 people died. Of what value were U.S. nuclear weapons in deterring this attack? Of what value are they now in “the war on terror”? Given the fact that terrorists do not occupy territory, it is difficult to imagine how nuclear weapons can be used against them, either as a deterrent or in military conflict.

The fourth reason is that nuclear weapons undermine national security. Of course, this contention defies the conventional wisdom that the Bomb is a “deterrent.” And yet, consider the case of the United States. It was the first nation to develop atomic bombs and, for some years, had a monopoly of them. But in

¹ Dr. Wittner is professor of history at the State University of New York at Albany. His latest book is *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press). Reprinted by permission of author.

response to the U.S. nuclear monopoly, the Soviet government built atomic bombs. And so the U.S. government built hydrogen bombs. Whereupon the Soviet government built hydrogen bombs. Then the two nations competed in building guided missiles, and missiles with multiple warheads, and on and on. Meanwhile, other nations built and deployed their nuclear weapons. And, each year, all these nations felt less and less secure. And they were less secure, because the more they threatened others, the more they were threatened in return!

Moreover, as long as nuclear weapons exist there remains the possibility of accidental nuclear war. Over the course of the Cold War and in the years since then, there have been numerous false alarms about an enemy attack that have nearly led to the launching of a nuclear response with devastating potential consequences. Furthermore, nuclear weapons can end up being exploded in one's own nation. For example, in the summer of 2008 the top officials of the U.S. Air Force were dismissed from their posts because, thoughtlessly, they had allowed U.S. flights with live nuclear weapons to take place over U.S. territory.

The fifth reason is that, while nuclear weapons exist, there will be a temptation to use them in wars. Waging war has been an ingrained habit for thousands of years and, therefore, it is unlikely that this practice will soon be ended. And as long as wars exist, governments will be tempted to draw upon their stockpiles of nuclear weapons to win them.

Admittedly, nuclear armed nations have not used nuclear weapons for war since 1945. But this reflects the development of massive popular resistance to nuclear conflict, which stigmatized the use of nuclear weapons and pushed reluctant government officials toward arms control and disarmament agreements. But we cannot assume that, in the context of bitter wars and threats to national survival, nuclear restraint will continue forever. Indeed, it seems likely that, the longer nuclear weapons exist, the greater the possibility that they will be used in a war.

The sixth reason is that, while nuclear weapons remain in national arsenals, the dangers posed by terrorism are vastly enhanced. Terrorists cannot build nuclear weapons by themselves, as the creation of such weapons requires vast resources, substantial territory, and a good deal of scientific knowledge. The only way terrorists will attain a nuclear capability is by obtaining the weapons or the materials for them from the arsenals of the nuclear powers—either by donation, by purchase, or by theft. Therefore, as long as governments possess nuclear weapons, the potential exists for terrorists to secure access to them.

What, then, is holding us back from nuclear abolition? Certainly it is not the public, which poll after poll shows in favor of building a nuclear-free world. Even many government leaders now agree that getting rid of nuclear weapons is desirable. The real obstacle is the long-term habit of drawing upon the most powerful weapons available to resolve conflicts among hostile nations. This habit, though, has proved a deeply counterproductive, irrational one—worse than smoking, worse than drugs, worse than almost anything imaginable, for it places civilization on the brink of destruction. It is time to kick it—and create a nuclear-free world.

PERSPECTIVE 2**A Global Zero World Would Be MAD****Zachary Keck²**

This week, world leaders are gathering in the Netherlands for the 3rd Nuclear Security Summit. Although the purpose of the Nuclear Security Summits is to secure nuclear materials around the world, it is also part of President Barack Obama's larger goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

This goal was announced in President Obama's infamous Prague speech in 2009 during which he committed the U.S. to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Since that speech, leaders from around the world have joined President Obama in endorsing global nuclear disarmament, including the UN Security Council, whose permanent members are the same five states the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) recognizes as nuclear weapon states.

There are many reasons to support the global nuclear disarmament movement, but all are ultimately geared towards creating a more peaceful world free from the menace of nuclear war. As President Obama explained in his famous Prague speech in 2009, eliminating nuclear weapons would "leave this world more prosperous and more peaceful than we found it."

In fact, global nuclear disarmament, if achieved, is likely to lead to a less peaceful world and one where the threat of nuclear war is, paradoxically, much greater.

One of the biggest dangers of nuclear disarmament is not that a rogue nation would cheat, but that there would be no nuclear deterrence to prevent conventional conflicts between great powers. Nearly seven decades removed from the end of the last great power conflict, it's easy to underestimate just how destructive these wars can be. For that reason, it's imperative that we periodically revisit history.

The number of deaths in the last great power conflict, WWII, is generally calculated to be anywhere from 50 to 70 million people, which includes civilian and military deaths. However, the global population was only about 2.25 billion at the start of WWII, or less than a third of the current global population of 7.152 billion. Thus, assuming the same level of lethality, a great power conflict today would result in between 150 and 210 million deaths, many times greater than an accidental nuclear launch or nuclear terrorist attack, however devastating both would be.

There's little reason to believe that a global war today—even if fought conventionally—would not be many times more lethal than WWII, however. Although strategic bombings were certainly a factor in WWII, for much of the war technology and rival air forces limited their effectiveness.

Offensive operations against civilian populations in a modern conflict would be much more effective. To begin with, most nations would turn to launching ballistic and cruise missiles in unprecedented quantities. Like Korea and Vietnam, but

² Zachary Keck is an associate editor at *The Diplomat* magazine, a researcher for the online consulting firm Wikistrat, and an M.A. candidate in the Department of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

unlike most of WWII, there would essentially be no methods for defending civilian population centers against these missiles.

Moreover, because of urbanization, populations are far more concentrated than they were in WWII. According to the UN, the number of people living in urban areas more than quadrupled between 1950 and 2005, increasing from 732 million (29 percent of total population) to 3.2 billion (49 percent of population). In 2010 more than half the world population was living in cities and this number is expected to rise to 60 percent by 2030. By mid-century, a full 70 percent of the world's population, or 6.4 billion people, will be urban dwellers.

Thus, the combination of missile attacks for which there are few defenses, combined with much greater population density, would alone make WWIII much more lethal than either of its predecessors.

But as deadly as a modern conventional war would be in a nuclear free world, the real danger is that it wouldn't remain conventional. Along with making great power conflict far more likely, global nuclear disarmament offers no conceivable mechanism to ensure that such a war would remain non-nuclear. In fact, common sense would suggest that immediately following the outbreak of hostilities—if not in the run-up to the war itself—every previous nuclear power would make a rapid dash to reconstruct their nuclear forces in the shortest amount of time.

The result would not merely be a return to the nuclear world we currently inhabit. Rather, some countries would reconstruct their nuclear weapons more quickly than others, and no power could be sure of the progress their rivals had made. The “winners” in this nuclear arms race would then have every incentive to immediately use their new nuclear capabilities against their adversaries in an effort to quickly end the conflict, eliminate others’ nuclear weapons-making capabilities, or merely out of fear that others will launch a debilitating strike on its small and vulnerable nuclear arsenal. There would be no mutually assured destruction in such an environment; a “use-it-or-lose-it” mentality would prevail.

President Obama is right to call for further reductions in existing arsenals and greater safety standards for nuclear explosives and fissile material. As countless studies have shown, however, the world is currently more peaceful than it’s ever been. Eliminating nuclear weapons would irresponsibly put that all at risk.



12

International Terrorism

Key Controversy: How Should We Respond to International Terrorism?

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks, terrorism has become one of the critical problems of international relations in the eyes of most Americans. Even though the magnitude of the attacks was unprecedented, terrorism has been around for a long time. So, too, have debates about almost every aspect of terrorism—its meaning, definition, causes, consequences, and morality. This chapter focuses primarily on policy responses to terrorism. It identifies two different strategies of response that emerged in the post–September 11 debate. A cosmopolitan approach treats terrorist attacks as criminal acts against humanity as a whole, requiring a legal and international response accompanied by a long-term strategy addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as global poverty and discontent. The cosmopolitan strategy resonates with important strands of liberal, Marxist/radical, and feminist thought. A statist approach treats terrorist attacks as acts of war that might require a forceful response not only against terrorist organizations, but also against states that actively support or passively tolerate them. Advocates of a statist response are more inclined to see terrorism as rooted in a fundamental conflict of values, not social and economic conditions that can be eliminated by reform. This approach obviously has much in common with a realist worldview. ■

Coming just a few months shy of the tenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks that made Osama bin Laden one of the world's most wanted men, the killing of the al-Qaeda terrorist leader in April 2011 served as a dramatic bookend for a decade in which Americans worried about international terrorism for the first time. Although his death may have been a blow to the organization that he headed and inspired, we can safely say that it did not mark the end of terrorism: bin Laden did not invent terrorism, and his passing will not bring its demise. The need to understand terrorism and devise appropriate responses is no less pressing now

than when he was alive. And the critical questions are the same as they were before anyone ever heard of Osama bin Laden: What is terrorism? What motivates individuals and groups to engage in terrorism? Can terrorism ever be morally justified? Does terrorism work? What policies and strategies should nations pursue to deal with terrorism? These questions reflect the enduring conceptual, empirical, theoretical, moral, and political issues that come to mind as we try to understand and respond to terrorism. And, as is usually the case, the problems become more complex as we realize how these questions are interrelated—for example, assumptions about terrorist motivations are tied to policy recommendations, and definitions of terrorism influence moral evaluations.

Although the term *terrorism* originated during the French Revolution, the phenomenon is probably as old as political violence itself. It is possible to find acts in the ancient world that would meet contemporary definitions of terrorism. In this sense, the attacks of September 11, 2001, were merely the latest in the very long history of terrorism. It is important to place contemporary events in their larger, historical context, but it would be a mistake to view the September 11 attacks as “only” the most recent manifestation of an age-old phenomenon. For the United States, of course, September 11 had a special significance because it was the target. The larger significance of the attacks derives from their magnitude. As Martha Crenshaw notes, “the September 11 assaults … [were] unprecedented in the history of terrorism.”¹ The attacks represented more than a minor escalation in the scale of violence; this was violence of another order entirely. So far, at least, we are fortunate that there has been no repeat on a similar scale.

Terrorism: The Definitional Angst

terrorism The indiscriminate use or threat of violence to advance social, political, economic, or religious objectives by creating a climate of fear.

What is **terrorism**? Although this seems like an easy enough question, things are rarely as simple as they first appear. Like so many critical concepts in international relations, terrorism has no universally accepted definition. Paul Pillar sees a “collective definitional angst” among policymakers and scholars dealing with terrorism.² It is no surprise that definitional issues are so contentious. It is difficult to think of a more emotionally laden term in the current political environment. Of all the different kinds of violence that individuals and groups might engage in, few carry the same level of almost immediate moral disapproval and revulsion. Nations and groups are understandably eager to define terrorism so as to exclude their own actions but include those of their opponents. If you can make the *terrorist* label stick to your enemies, this alone is a political victory. One harsh critic charges that in the case of U.S. antiterrorist policy, “the condemnatory label [is] being deployed to the enemies of U.S. interests while being withheld from U.S. friends and clients, no matter how opprobrious their conduct might otherwise be.”³ Even those more detached from contemporary political conflicts have difficulty settling on a definition. One study required more than a hundred pages to survey and compare the various definitions.⁴ Walter Laqueur, exasperated by the proliferation of definitions, concludes that “any definition of political terrorism

venturing beyond noting the systematic use of murder, injury, and destruction or threats of such acts toward achieving political ends is bound to lead to endless controversy.” As a result, “it can be predicted with confidence that the disputes about a comprehensive, detailed definition of terrorism will continue for a long time, that they will not result in a consensus, and that they will make no notable contribution toward the understanding of terrorism.”⁵

In some respects, Laqueur exaggerates the difficulty of defining terrorism. Although some acts may fall within certain definitions of terrorism but not others, most fall unambiguously into virtually all definitions. Minor definitional differences should not obscure the consensus on the basic components of terrorism. What are those components? First, terrorism involves the threat or use of violence. Although people sometimes talk about *cyberterrorism*, in which a society is targeted by having its communications and information systems disrupted, most still see physical violence as a defining feature of terrorism. Second, this violence must be in pursuit of some broader political or social objective. This is why even horrific acts of violence may not be considered terrorism. As Karolina Lula explains, “Mass shootings—like the one in Tucson by Jared Loughner, the one in the Aurora movie theater by James Holmes, the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting by Adam Lanza, or the New Orleans Mother’s Day shootings—would be treated as something else....[because] rampage shooters are not politically motivated.”⁶ Third, the targets are usually random, in the sense that it does not matter specifically *who* is harmed by terrorist violence because “terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victims or objects of the terrorist attack.”⁷ A suicide bomber who blows up a bus and kills dozens is not trying to kill those people specifically. It is the randomness that creates fear, leading people to worry about whether they might be the next target. Cindy Combs reflects the consensus, defining terrorism as “involv[ing] an act of violence, an audience, the creation of a mood of fear, innocent victims, and political goals or motives.”⁸

Moving beyond these essential elements, the controversy heats up. Bruce Hoffman, for example, defines terrorism as something conducted by “a subnational group or nonstate entity.”⁹ If this definitional amendment is accepted, the government of Syria, for example, cannot be accused of terrorism for attacking its own citizens. Its actions might be reprehensible and illegal for other reasons, but they are not terrorism. This essentially makes states immune from charges of terrorism. One could argue that states have an interest in advancing this definition of terrorism, as it makes them immune from charges of engaging in it. Given that the term *terrorism* was first used after the French Revolution to describe the revolutionary government’s “reign of terror,” it would seem odd to argue that states, by definition, cannot commit acts of terrorism. But Louis Rene Beres agrees with Hoffman: “Definitions that do not refer specifically and exclusively to insurgent organizations [nonstate actors] broaden the meaning of terrorism to unmanageable and useless levels.”¹⁰ This is the definitional issue on which there is the greatest divergence of opinion.

Terrorism or Terrorisms?

After reaching some measure of agreement on a general definition of terrorism, we need to ask whether it is useful to view terrorism as an undifferentiated

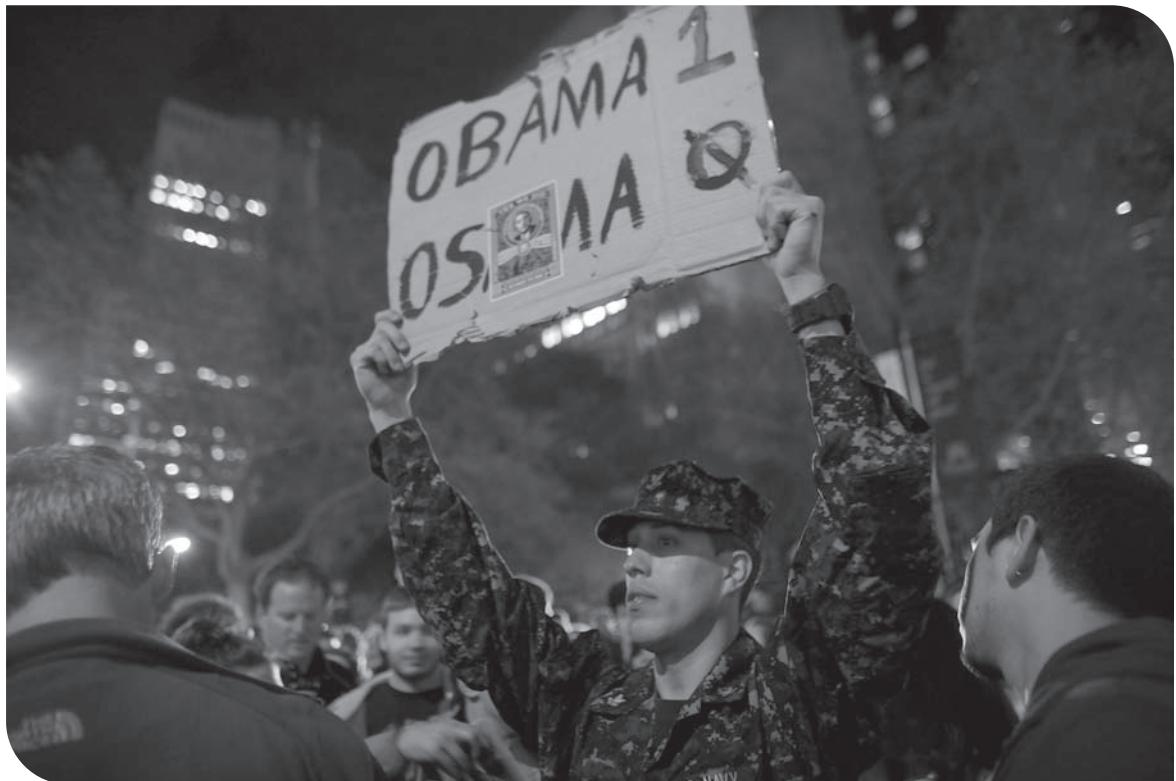
phenomenon. The problem is familiar. Sometimes it makes sense to group together similar things, whereas other times, it is better to draw some distinctions. For some purposes, we might want to lump all felons together; and for other purposes, it is useful to differentiate burglars from mass murderers. These distinctions and classifications are neither right nor wrong; they are simply more or less useful. Similarly, for some purposes, it might be helpful to think about terrorism in general, whereas for others, differences among terrorist groups might be critical.

In the sense that they have all engaged in acts that meet commonly accepted definitions of terrorism, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), al-Qaeda, and Aum Shinrikyo can be considered terrorist organizations. But do these disparate groups really represent the same phenomenon? Not really. They are different in terms of motives, goals, and objectives, as well as the type of terrorist attacks committed. The IRA was a fairly traditional terrorist group with relatively modest political objectives, fighting against what it sees as outside domination. Its tactics were also very traditional, involving small-scale bombings that caused several dozen casualties at most. Nationalist or separatist groups like the IRA “have tended to calibrate their use of violence, using enough to rivet world attention but not so much as to alienate supporters abroad or members of their base community.”¹¹ When people talked about terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s, this is the type of organization they usually had in mind.

On the other hand, al-Qaeda (which means “the base” in Arabic) has more expansive political and social goals motivated by a particular form of religious fundamentalism. Not only are its objectives broader and more ambitious than that of the IRA, but its tactics and the scale of its attacks are on a very different level. The IRA had no desire to destroy Great Britain; it merely wanted to get the British out of Northern Ireland. The IRA would never have contemplated crashing airliners into buildings or using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. This is what made the attacks of September 11, 2001, so significant—their scale and unconventional nature. Thus, even though the phenomenon of terrorism may be as old as human history, September 11 suggests something very different from what we are used to. This is particularly significant because religiously motivated terrorist activities have been increasing since the 1990s. According to Hoffman, “only two of the sixty-four [terrorist] groups active in 1980 could be classified as predominantly religious in character.” The majority were ethnic or nationalist in nature. By 1995, however, religious groups “account[ed] for nearly half (twenty-six, or 46 percent) of the fifty-six known, active international terrorist groups.”¹² The mix of international terrorist groups shifted in favor of those inclined to use greater levels of violence and more unconventional modes of attack. In this context, the lessons learned from dealing with terrorism in the 1970s might be of little use today. As Jonathan Fine explains, “analyzing the differences between secular agenda terrorists and their religious counterparts is crucial to understanding the *special nature of contemporary terror*. Unlike the activities of secular guerrillas and terrorists between 1945 and 1979, the war against the enemies of Islam is not limited by time, territory, or a specific socioeconomic agenda, and it is being waged against an entire culture and civilization [emphasis added].”¹³ The notion that contemporary terrorism is “special” speaks to the idea that “terrorism” as a category might just be too broad to be useful.

This is all complicated further by groups such as Aum Shinrikyo (whose name means “Supreme Truth”), the bizarre Japanese doomsday cult responsible for a sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995 that killed 12 and hospitalized almost 5,000. Prior to this attack, Aum Shinrikyo also released botulinum toxin and anthrax from rooftops and trucks in Japanese cities. Fortunately, these attacks failed. The intent was to spark what the cult’s leader predicted would be an apocalypse and nuclear war that would usher in heaven on Earth. The cult’s members believed that they would somehow escape destruction.¹⁴ These organizations may prove particularly dangerous because they possess few, if any, internal constraints on their use of violence. Most terrorist organizations use violence in pursuit of an identifiable objective, and as a result, there is usually some level of violence that would be counterproductive. For doomsday cults, there might never be such a thing as too much violence.

This diversity of terrorist groups simultaneously complicates and simplifies the problem. It complicates things because it means that generalizations about terrorism are difficult. As Walter Laqueur tells us, “what can be said without fear of contradiction about a terrorist group in one country is by no means true for other



Americans celebrate the killing of Osama bin Laden, which was announced just a few months shy of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

Source: Spencer Platt/Getty Images News/Getty Images

groups at other times in other countries.”¹⁵ There is unlikely to be a single explanation that accounts for the IRA, al-Qaeda, and Aum Shinrikyo. Although this makes grandiose theories about terrorism problematic, it might be good news in terms of policy responses because it allows us to cut the problem up into more manageable pieces. The so-called war on terrorism can then be transformed into a war on *terrorisms*, particularly those that pose the greatest threat. The goal of eliminating all terrorism might be morally laudable, but also so expansive as to be practically daunting, if not impossible; dealing with just a part of the problem is likely to be difficult enough.

Frameworks for Understanding

transnational actor Nonstate actors engaged in activities across national boundaries.

statist A point of view that sees terrorist attacks as acts of war and assumes that the most effective strategy for combating terrorism requires putting pressure on those states that actively support or passively tolerate terrorist organizations.

cosmopolitan A point of view that conceptualizes terrorist attacks as criminal acts requiring an international, multilateral response within the context of international law and organizations. As a long-term strategy, it involves addressing the root causes of terrorism, which are usually identified as poverty, inequality, and discontent.

What do different perspectives on international politics contribute to our understanding of terrorism? The prevailing wisdom is, not very much. John Mearsheimer, when asked what realism contributes to our understanding of terrorism, answers, “Not a whole heck of a lot. Realism … is really about relations among states, especially among the great powers. … Al-Qaeda is not a state, it’s a non-state actor, which is sometimes called a **transnational actor**.... Realism does not have much to say about the *causes* of terrorism.” But merely because terrorist organizations are nonstate actors, there is no reason to assume that theories of international relations have nothing to offer. Terrorist organizations must still operate within states, their targets are often states, their objectives usually involve changing the behavior of states, and their activities take place within the same international system in which states operate. Although international relations focuses on the behavior of states, everyone has always been aware that nonstate actors can affect international politics. It was, for example, the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian archduke in July 1914 by a member of a radical Serbian nationalist (terrorist) group that set in motion the events leading to World War I. Thus, while he concedes the limited relevance of realism for explaining the *causes* of terrorism, Mearsheimer points out that “terrorism is a phenomenon that will play itself out in the context of the international system. So it will be played out in the state arena, and, therefore, all of the realist logic about state behavior will have a significant effect on how the war on terrorism is fought.”¹⁶

We also need to remember that most theories of international relations are built upon a deeper vision of the nature and causes of social conflict. International conflict is simply a specific manifestation of social conflict. Because terrorism is also a form of social conflict, each theory’s basic understanding of social conflict influences its analysis of terrorism. Although they may lack well-developed theories of terrorism, when realists, liberals, Marxists, and feminists approach the issue of terrorism, their underlying beliefs and assumptions provide the intellectual foundation for analysis. And just as Mearsheimer expected “realist logic [to] have a significant impact on how the war on terrorism is fought,” we can expect other perspectives to yield different strategies.

In thinking about responses to terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Daniele Archibugi and Iris Young drew a useful distinction between **statist** and **cosmopolitan** responses and “frames of interpretation,” as they call them: “The

attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001 can appear within two different frames of interpretation. The first [statist] sees them as attacks on the United States as a state and its people. The second [cosmopolitan] views them as crimes against humanity. The difference in interpretation is not merely technical, but political, and each implies different strategies of reaction.¹⁷ The observation that different interpretive frameworks lead to different policy responses is merely another way of noting that peoples' underlying beliefs and assumptions are inevitably reflected in their preferred policy responses. But in terms of international terrorism, what exactly are the different strategies of reaction, and how do they reflect alternative frames of interpretation?

The Cosmopolitan Response

One of the first questions in the wake of September 11 was how the attacks should be viewed. The initial response, quickly embraced by the George W. Bush administration, was to characterize them as acts of war. The language of war was immediately evident. Even those willing to accept the terminology of war, however, concede that it is somewhat problematic. As Nicholas Lehman explains, "Traditional wars are fought by military means and have definite endings ... [but] terror ... will never sit at a desk and sign an unconditional surrender."¹⁸ If this was a war, it was not like World War II because "war" usually describes armed conflict involving states. But what does it matter whether terrorism is framed in terms of warfare? Steven Metz explains that "casting it as such was a major decision" because "portraying the conflict as a war militarized it. While the American public is accustomed to metaphorical uses of the word 'war'—the 'war on poverty' and the 'war on drugs'—the 'war on terror' was not portrayed this way. It was presented as a *real* war ... [and] real wars are resolved by military force."¹⁹ Words matter.

Regardless of the merits, the rhetoric of war stuck. But there are those who remain critical and prefer an alternative framing. The criticism does not arise from the failure of this war to meet the definition found in dictionaries, but rather from a concern that the terminology of war brings with it policies that might not be appropriate. As Metz notes, "although September 11 required bold action ... it did not have to be a war on terrorism of global reach."²⁰ But if the attacks of September 11 were not acts of war, how should they be seen? What is the alternative? Archibugi and Young propose that "the events [of September 11] be conceptualized as crimes, not as acts of war."²¹ They suggest that we adopt a law enforcement model in response, not a military model. A parallel is drawn to the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The U.S. government did not declare itself at war with Timothy McVeigh or the organizations that he associated with. Although widely described as an act of terrorism, it was viewed as a criminal act, not an act of war, and McVeigh was prosecuted, convicted, and executed for that crime. Conceptualizing the September 11 attacks as crimes against humanity, not merely against the United States, provides a framework for interpretation that leads to a *cosmopolitan* policy response, which has two essential elements.

The first task relates to the culprits and organizations responsible for the attacks. Consistent with a criminal/law enforcement model, the United States and the international community should have sought “the establishment of an international tribunal with the authority to seek out, extradite, or arrest and try those responsible for the September 11 attack and those who commit or are conspiring to commit future attacks.”²² The proposed tribunal would be similar to the one dealing with those accused of human rights violations during the war in the former Yugoslavia. From this perspective, al-Qaeda and similar groups would be classified as international criminal organizations with the full range of international law enforcement bodies mobilized to pursue them. Although most favoring this strategy admit that international legal and law enforcement institutions are not as strong and well developed as domestic ones, they are seen as strong enough to be effective, and the threat of international terrorism might also help strengthen these institutions further. International legal responses directed at people and organizations involved in specific terrorist acts, however, are something of a bandage approach, dealing with terrorism only after harm has already been done.

Advocates of a cosmopolitan response also urge that we address the deeper causes of terrorism, the so-called *root causes*. According to Andrew Johnston, “You can write off the terrorist attacks of Sept[ember] 11 as the crazed act of a fanatical gang hell-bent on causing mayhem at any cost. Or you can try to understand the attack’s root causes by taking a closer look at the world whose fragile ecology of power they upset.”²³ The implication, of course, is that the root causes need to be identified in the hope that they can be eliminated or ameliorated. We need a bandage to stop the bleeding, but more is needed to heal the underlying wound.

The general proposition that we should eliminate the root causes of terrorism appears so commonsensical that it is hard to imagine any disagreement. The difficulty is identifying the root causes. This brings us back to the diversity of terrorism: There are many terrorist groups around the world with many different agendas. Different manifestations of terrorism may have very different root causes. As a result, it should come as no surprise that the list of potential root causes is quite long, some applying to terrorism in general and others specifically to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. With regard to the latter, many cite a long history of Western (especially U.S.) support for repressive and authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, often placing this pattern in the context of a long history of Western and Christian hostility to Islam reaching back to the Crusades. Israeli treatment of the Palestinians, U.S. support for Israel, and the stationing of U.S. troops in Arab countries (particularly holy lands in Saudi Arabia) are presented as the most recent manifestations of this historical pattern. This combination of historical and contemporary grievances helps explain a widespread sense of hostility throughout much of the Islamic world fueling terrorism focused on the United States and its allies.

At a more general level, terrorism is commonly seen as a response to poverty and economic inequality. This is why Jared Diamond argues that “we must feed the hands that could bite us” to reduce terrorism. “When people cannot solve their own problems,” Diamond argues, “they strike out irrationally, seeking foreign scapegoats, or collapsing into civil war over limited resources. By bettering conditions overseas, we can reduce chronic future threats to ourselves.” To cope with

these underlying causes, he proposes that the United States “single out three strategies—providing basic health care, supporting family planning, and addressing such widespread environmental problems as deforestation.”²⁴ No less a figure than James Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank, essentially equates the war on terrorism with a war on global poverty, arguing that “the war [on terrorism] will not be won until we have come to grips with the problem of poverty and sources of discontent.”²⁵ Archibugi and Young agree. After outlining the steps necessary to strengthen international legal institutions, they settle on just one recommendation as the core of their long-term cosmopolitan strategy: “narrow global inequalities.” Despite noting that “there are many poor places that appear not to nurture people who join international terrorist organizations,” they believe “there is no doubt that such indifference amid affluence fosters resentment in many corners of the world and endangers peace and prosperity for many outside the shanty towns.”²⁶ In the final analysis, the failure to address the problem of global poverty will come back to haunt the wealthy and powerful: “No justice, no peace.”²⁷

Others agree with the need to address the root causes of terrorism but identify different root causes. Even Archibugi and Young admit that there is more to it than poverty: “ultimately … the creation of a more peaceful and just world order implies changes in *political, economic and social institutions* [emphasis added].”²⁸ In a world where political and economic forces are inevitably intertwined, the economic causes of terrorism are not easily divorced from politics. Some emphasize the economic roots, others the political roots. In this view, it is not merely poverty that fuels terrorism, but a more profound sense of exclusion and domination at the domestic and international levels. Domestically, the absence of democracy and lack of human rights contribute to a sense of resentment while precluding nonviolent means of dissent. Tony Karon argues that “in the long term, eliminating the root cause of terror will involve, if not complete democracy, at least allowing the citizens of Middle Eastern countries some voice [in] their governance.”²⁹ Internationally, the dominance of a handful of nations possessing tremendous economic, political, and military power only exacerbates the problem because “the willingness of the United States to wield [its power] asymmetrically and with only the thinnest veneer of multilateralism elicits hostile reactions from all over the world.”³⁰ Again, the only long-term strategy to deal with the root causes of terrorism is a wholesale reform of those international and domestic institutions, political and economic, perpetuating the inequities and injustices that sustain terrorist organizations by providing fertile breeding grounds of anger and discontent. Attempts to combat terrorism with the sort of forceful response entailed by a war/military model will only exacerbate that problem.

The Intellectual Roots of a Cosmopolitan Strategy

What are the intellectual underpinnings of a cosmopolitan strategy? A statist strategy (about which we will have more to say shortly) is obviously informed by realism. Consequently, a cosmopolitan strategy is rooted in the alternatives to realism. The suggestion that a law enforcement model should form the basis of a response to the attacks of September 11 provides one indication of the strategy’s

underlying assumptions. Those skeptical of the effectiveness of international law, after all, are unlikely to place it at the center of their response to terrorism. Liberals (and constructivists) have historically been more inclined to see international law and organizations as effective embodiments of shared values and interests. Thus, it makes sense to view this component of a cosmopolitan strategy as being derived from an essentially liberal logic of international politics.

The proposal that we deal with terrorism by addressing its root causes is a little ambiguous in terms of its intellectual foundations, potentially reflecting elements of liberalism, Marxism, and feminism. There are several aspects of this approach that resonate with a liberal view. The basic assumption that we can identify and reform the social, economic, and political institutions and conditions that give rise to terrorism is consistent with the liberal approach to social conflict, which contains an element of optimism and faith in the ability of rational people to solve social problems. The guiding vision is that greater material prosperity, respect for human rights, and democratic government (all liberal values) will provide the antidote to terrorism. If the denial of justice leads to violence, the provision of justice will lead to its elimination. The corollary of Archibugi and Young's "No justice, no peace" must be "If justice, then peace."

The cosmopolitan approach resonates with other perspectives as well. Finding the roots of terrorism in poverty and economic inequality is consistent with a Marxist view of social conflict as being rooted in economic inequality and exploitation. Even when conflicts do not appear to be economic on the surface, Marxists assume that there is usually a critical economic foundation. Focusing on the Marxist analysis of civil violence more generally, James Rule explains that we should "expect, for every mobilization on behalf of religious or other nonmaterial ends, to find some antecedent frustration to the material interests of groups among whom the mobilization occurs."³¹

Feminists have also expressed sympathy for a cosmopolitan approach and deep reservations about a statist response stressing military force. Not surprisingly, however, feminists are eager to expand the "poverty as the root cause of terrorism" thesis to include all institutions and patterns of domination, including the oppression of woman. It is, they point out, no coincidence that regimes with some of the worst records when it comes to the rights of women (e.g., the Taliban in Afghanistan) are associated with support for terrorism. Amy Caiazza draws the connection: "[T]here are centuries of evidence that physical, political, and economic violence against women is a harbinger of other forms of violence." Thus, "we should pay particularly close attention to those who are effective opponents of violence against women. By doing so, we would be more likely to address the root causes of terrorism and violence at home and around the world."³² J. Ann Tickner (taking the connection between poverty and terrorism for granted) draws our attention to "the poor treatment of women as one of the major reasons for the region's [the Middle East] lack of development."³³ And because poverty and lack of development are the root causes of terrorism, it follows that the poor treatment of women is one of the major reasons for terrorism. Although feminists disagreed about the use of military force against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it is fair to say that feminists generally favor a cosmopolitan strategy over the statist approach.³⁴

The Statist Response

A cosmopolitan approach frames terrorist attacks as criminal acts, fearing that portraying them as acts of war will lead to counterproductive military action that leaves the root causes of terrorism undisturbed or even exacerbated. There is no question that terrorist acts usually violate domestic and international law, making them criminal acts by definition. “The fundamental problem,” according to Steven Pomerantz, “is that international terrorism is not *only* a crime. It is also, for all intents and purposes, an act of war, and the United States needs to treat it as such.”³⁵ Although admitting that “my view may [be] in the minority” among his fellow law professors, Anthony D’Amato’s assessment is similar to Pomerantz’s: “Sept[ember] 11th occasioned an attack on the United States itself by people who seem to be engaged in an outright war against us.... It may be a new concept of ‘war,’ but it is one that builds upon, and extends, the classic concept.”³⁶ There is agreement that terrorist attacks were not acts of war in the sense that we normally think of war (i.e., hostilities between the armed forces of states), but they were also not crimes in the way we normally think of crime. Neither label is without its problems. Those who prefer to view terrorist attacks as acts of war do not shy away from the implications of doing so. Pomerantz recognizes that this “means, for starters, a significantly more aggressive diplomatic posture.”³⁷ In words that are sure to make Archibugi and Young cringe, Charles Krauthammer argues that “half-measures are for wars of choice, wars like Vietnam. In wars of choice, losing is an option. You lose and you still survive as a nation.” The war on terrorism, however, is different: “Losing is not an option. Losing is fatal. This is no time for restraint and other niceties. This is a time for righteous might.”³⁸

Although it is important to note the critical differences between cosmopolitan and statist strategies, they should not be presented as caricatured alternatives sharing no common ground. Advocates of a statist approach would certainly not object to seeing terrorists before some kind of tribunal, and those favoring a cosmopolitan strategy might admit that in certain instances, states may have to use military force. The difference is one of emphasis and general predispositions: Should attacks such as those of September 11 be viewed *primarily* as crimes against humanity or as acts of war? Should international legal and organizational avenues be pursued as *primary* or merely *supplementary* components of an antiterrorism strategy?

A statist strategy would deemphasize, not completely eliminate, the legal and international organizational elements of an antiterrorism policy. It is on this point that the realist basis of a statist strategy starts to reveal itself: Statist criticisms of a law enforcement model echo familiar realist arguments about the limits of international law and organizations. Archibugi and Young correctly note that states often treat terrorist acts as criminal acts, but all of their examples (e.g., the attack in Oklahoma City) are domestic in nature. Pomerantz is in full agreement that “when it comes to terrorism at home, law enforcement and the criminal justice system—our only available options—have been effective.” But the suggestion that a similar approach be applied globally ignores the fundamental differences between international and domestic society. At the national level, law enforcement agencies

and legal institutions are sufficiently developed and powerful to deal with such problems. At the international level, there are good reasons to doubt the effectiveness of international organizations, where debate often takes precedence over action. In the wake of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) massacre of Israeli athletes at the summer Olympic Games in 1972 in Munich, Germany, the United Nations (UN) attempted to develop policies dealing with terrorism. The resulting debate and failure to draft or implement anti-terror policies demonstrated why the international community accomplished so little before September 11. After protracted discussion, the United Nations could not even get past the point of defining terrorism. Particularly problematic were the actions of national liberation movements. Activities that the United States considered terrorism were viewed by many in the developing world as legitimate responses to oppression and domination. "The resultant definitional paralysis," Hoffman explains, "throttled UN efforts to make substantive progress on international cooperation against terrorism."³⁹

Despite these problems, there was modest progress on a few fronts. During the 1960s and early 1970s, several treaties dealt with hijacking and the safety of commercial aviation. The PLO's taking of Israeli hostages at the 1972 Olympics eventually led to the adoption of the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages (1979), yet even this small achievement was only ratified by ninety-seven nations. And, as with most international agreements, states are free to withdraw (with one year's notice in this case).⁴⁰ International police agencies such as Interpol try to keep track of known terrorists, but much intelligence remains in the hands of national law enforcement and intelligence organizations that may or may not share it with others. The general problem here should be familiar by now: it is difficult to craft an effective international response in a world of sovereign states. After a plot to blow up several airliners was thwarted in August 2006, historian Niall Ferguson asked, "Who seriously expects the United Nations to prevent Al Qaeda (or its latest imitator) from trying to blow up passenger planes in the air? Those who dreamed up the 'Lockerbie-meets-9/11' bomb plot clearly did intend 'mass murder on an unimaginable scale.' All the U.N. has to offer in response is yada, yada, yada on an unimaginable scale."⁴¹

"It's the Clash, Not the Cash"⁴²

Statists tend to view the cosmopolitan desire to combat terrorism by eliminating its "root causes" as a deceptively attractive solution. In reality, they often argue, we have no idea what the root causes are. The common hypothesis that poverty and inequality lead to terrorism is usually asserted as a matter of faith, without compelling evidence. Even Archibugi and Young concede that the link is not straightforward. Most poor societies are not sources of terrorism, and affluent societies are not immune. If we look at terrorists themselves, we find little support for the poverty-causes-terrorism thesis. Economists Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, in one of the few systematic studies of this issue, examined the backgrounds of 126 members of the militant wing of Hezbollah, a terrorist organization headquartered in Lebanon. They found that "compared to the general population from the same age group and region, the Hezbollah militants were actually slightly less likely

to come from impoverished households, and were more likely to have attended secondary school.”⁴³ The lack of connection between poverty and terrorism is striking with regard to the attacks of September 11. “Poverty did not breed the terrorists of September 11,” Helle Dale tells us, “the politics of radical Islam did.” This is evidenced by the fact that “the 19 hijackers were not poor or uneducated; they were motivated by religious fanaticism and apparently some bizarre expectations of their rewards in heaven.” And the people who planned the attack did not lack for privilege: “Is Osama Bin Laden a poor man? Certainly not. He’s the son of a Saudi family wealthier than most Americans will ever dream of becoming.”⁴⁴ If those who hijacked the planes and crashed them into their targets are at all representative, Sean Wilentz notes wryly, we would be more justified concluding that “money, education, and privilege” are the root causes of terrorism.⁴⁵ There may, of course, still be lots of good reasons to work for the reduction of global poverty, but its causal role in creating and sustaining terrorism is, at best, much more complicated than often suggested.

But even if poverty and inequality were the root causes of terrorism, we would face a further problem. Like virtually every other potential root cause, global poverty is not something likely to be eradicated in the next ten or twenty years. The threat of terrorism is in the present, whereas the elimination of global poverty is, being optimistic, sometime in the distant future. As Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva note, “counterterrorist strategies that attempt to address the root causes … are strategies for the long run. In the meantime, religious terrorism is on the rise, and the rate of suicide terrorist attacks has increased significantly.”⁴⁶ What should we do about terrorism between now and the day when justice and equality are finally realized? Too often, statists fear, the demand that we attack the root causes of terrorism is a self-righteous excuse or cover allowing people to avoid meaningful actions and hard choices in the here and now.

From the perspective of most statists, the focus on poverty and inequality as the root cause of terrorism is either wrong, too simplistic, or not terribly useful for shaping meaningful policy responses. This is not to say that statists ignore the issue of root causes. It is hard for anyone to witness nineteen young men sacrificing their own lives to crash airplanes into buildings without wondering about their motivations. But because terrorism is such a varied phenomenon, different manifestations of it will likely have different root causes. In the current context, statists prefer to focus on the root causes of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism because this is the major threat of the moment. What motivates the Basque separatists in Spain might be an interesting intellectual question, but it is not the most pressing. While statists are by no means unanimous in their assessment, they are more inclined to see this terrorism as a manifestation of a fundamental conflict of values and cultures. Indeed, the attacks of September 11 appeared to confirm the warnings made by several prominent scholars in the early 1990s that the post–Cold War era would be one increasingly characterized by a “clash of civilizations.” The first to use the phrase and issue a warning about an impending “clash of civilizations” was the widely respected Princeton historian Bernard Lewis, an authority on Middle Eastern and Islamic history. In his influential essay, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” published more than a decade before September 11, 2001, Lewis expressed his growing concern about several trends foreshadowing greater conflict between the West and the

Muslim world. Part of the problem was the tendency of many in the West to assume that all other cultures shared Western notions about the appropriate relationship between religion and politics and the separation of church and state. This was simply not the case: “There are other religious traditions in which [relations between] religion and politics are differently perceived.”⁴⁷ In the wake of the Cold War, some observers predicted a more peaceful world based on the spread of Western values of liberal democracy and capitalism. Lewis was not so optimistic.

But it is not the mere existence of certain religious and cultural differences that worried Lewis. After all, there was nothing new about most of these differences. What really troubled him was the emergence in parts of the Muslim world of an extreme form of fundamentalist Islam, expressed not merely as a particular interpretation of the faith’s tenets but also a deep hostility, indeed “hatred,” of the West. On one level, this hostility could be traced to specific policies of the United States and other Western nations—support for Israel, propping up oppressive dictatorships throughout the Middle East that enriched themselves and foreign oil interests at the expense of their people, and the stationing of Western forces on the holy lands of Saudi Arabia during and after the 1991 Gulf War. Lewis, however, saw something deeper at work: “At times this hatred goes beyond hostility to specific interests or actions or policies or even countries and becomes a rejection of Western civilization as such, not only what it does but what it is, and the principles and values it practices and professes. These are indeed seen as innately evil, and those who promote or accept them as the ‘enemies of God.’” Pointing to the absence of such sentiments in the history of Islam, Lewis stresses that there is nothing inherent in Islam that leads to such extremism. “But Islam, like other religions,” Lewis notes, has “known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that part, though by no means all or even most, of the Muslim world is now going through such a period, and that much, though again not all, of that hatred is directed against us.”⁴⁸

clash of civilizations A thesis, popularized by Samuel Huntington, positing that civilizational conflicts based on competing social and political values are replacing traditional national conflicts as the defining feature of contemporary international politics.

Warnings of a coming **clash of civilizations**, however, did not gain widespread public attention until Samuel Huntington, a Harvard political scientist, advanced a similar argument in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. Like Lewis, Huntington rejected post–Cold War optimism about a more harmonious world based on Western values of liberal democracy and free markets. Like Lewis, Huntington saw an emerging conflict between the West and the Islamic world rooted in competing religious, political, and cultural values. But Huntington greatly expanded the scope of Lewis’s analysis to incorporate more than two world civilizations. Although the world remains divided into sovereign states, the fault lines of conflict will be between civilizations that embrace “different views on the relations between God and man … as well as different views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.” Huntington identified several major civilizations—“Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African.”⁴⁹

Huntington’s thesis has proved to be very controversial. Some question his characterizations of the different civilizations, while others think that he exaggerates the extent to which civilizations can be treated as coherent, monolithic entities. One need look no further than the conflicts that emerged in Iraq after the

2003 U.S. invasion between Shiite and Sunni Muslims to see that conflicts within civilizations can be just as intense as conflicts among them. Nonetheless, many could not help but think that Huntington was on to something, particularly in the aftermath of September 11. "Read in the wake of September 11," Stanley Kurtz muses, "it is more clear than ever that Huntington's book is filled with ... useful generalizations.... In large measure the world is already living out the truth of Huntington's thesis."⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Michael Howard takes direct issue with the poverty thesis and leans toward cultural conflict explanations for the Islamic fundamentalist terrorism: "This is not a problem of poverty against wealth, and I am afraid that it is symptomatic of our Western materialism to suppose that it is. It is a far more profound and intractable confrontation between a theistic, land-based, and traditional culture, in places little different from the Europe of the Middle Ages, and the secular values of the Enlightenment."⁵¹ If a terrorist organization is engaged in an effort to undermine and perhaps destroy secular, liberal civilization, then no concession or change of policy will reduce the threat.

Description of the threat as "intractable" in this context is revealing. Statists are not only skeptical that we can identify the root causes of terrorism, they are also less sanguine about our ability to eliminate those root causes even if we find them. There tends to be a lot more talk of intractable conflict in a statist perspective, and



Representatives of Afghanistan's Taliban regime reject the U.S. demands to hand over Osama bin Laden and others connected to the September 11 attacks. The Taliban would become the first victim of the statist strategy of "regime change" in the war on terrorism.

Source: Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images

given its realist foundations, this should come as no surprise. When someone describes conflicts as “intractable,” there is a good chance that we are dealing with a realist. This perspective contrasts with the liberal inclination to view social conflict as a consequence of social, economic, and political conditions that can be altered in a manner that will eliminate the conflict. The notion that we should (or even can) eradicate inequality and injustice in order to end the threat of terrorism strikes statist/realist as a utopian evasion. Thus, on one level, this debate can be seen as yet another contemporary manifestation of the enduring clash between liberal optimism and realist (conservative) pessimism on questions of social conflict.

Even though the Bush administration’s policies after the September 11 attacks followed the logic of a statist response in many respects, it quickly tried to distance itself from the “clash of civilizations” logic. Former secretary of state Colin Powell portrayed the attacks as an assault on “civilization” (that is, civilization in general, not any particular civilization), but he insisted that there was “no connection or relationship to any faith.”⁵² Speaking to the UN Security Council two months after the attacks, Powell was even more explicit in rejecting a Huntington-esque approach: “This was not about a clash of civilizations or religions; it was an attack on civilization and religion themselves.”⁵³ Publicly, at least, the administration interpreted the attacks as the work of an evil person and organization perverting the values and ideas of Islam. Skeptics were quick to wonder whether these denials were designed primarily to avoid alienating moderate Arab governments whose cooperation might be needed in the short run.⁵⁴

States Still Matter

One may lament the lack of viable alternatives to states acting to defend themselves against threats to their security and citizens, but for statist, this is the unavoidable reality of the world in which we live. Responses to terrorism need to be crafted within the limitations of the existing state system. Fortunately, there is much that states can do. Certainly nonstate adversaries pose challenges that more traditional state-to-state conflicts do not, but we should not leap to the conclusion that states are powerless to act against terrorist organizations merely because they are not states. Jack Spencer reminds us that terrorist “groups could never pull off these sophisticated operations if there were no place where they could support their networks.” Terrorist groups may not be states, but terrorists, terrorist training facilities, and terrorist financial resources are all located within the borders of states. Consequently, the war on terrorism is “essentially … [a] war with states that support terrorism.”⁵⁵ Several years before the September 11 attacks, Steve Pomerantz suggested the same course of action: “If a state is the victim of private actors such as terrorists, it [can] try to eliminate these groups by depriving them of sanctuaries and punishing states that harbor them. The national interest of the attacked state will therefore require either armed interventions against governments supporting terrorism or a course of prudence and discreet pressure on other governments.”⁵⁶

As the Bush administration tried to give meaning to the “war on terrorism,” Vice President Dick Cheney provided the rationale for a statist response: “To the extent that we define our task broadly … including those who support terrorism,

then we get at states. And it's easier to find them than it is to find bin Laden.⁵⁷ This same sentiment informed President Bush's warning that the United States would "make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." From the statist perspective, the war on terrorism is, even if indirectly, still a conflict among states. And one deals with this threat according to the same logic that guides responses to traditional threats—by "exacting a price for terrorism so as to make it less likely that terrorists will want to strike again."⁵⁸ These costs need to be imposed not only on the terrorists themselves, but also on states that provide active support or passively permit them to operate. In President Bush's words, "we have to force countries to choose."⁵⁹ The option of last resort would be "regime change": "If you replace the states that do support terrorism with those that don't, you deny terrorists the kind of support that allows them to mount big operations against us."⁶⁰

This is the crux of the statist response: combating terrorist organizations by using the traditional tools of statecraft against those states within whose borders they operate. Will this allow us to eliminate terrorism? Certainly not. The eradication of terrorism is an unrealistic pipe dream. The focus has to be on weakening or eliminating those particular terrorist organizations that pose the greatest and most immediate threat. Although "we can never be immune from terrorist violence," Pomerantz concedes, "we can ... raise the price for those who attack us and the nations that sponsor and support them. In doing so, we can expect to make the cost high enough to significantly reduce the number of international terrorist incidents directed against the United States."⁶¹ This summarizes the statist strategy nicely, and it is easy to see how its underlying logic is quintessentially realist. First, there is the admission that we will never eliminate all terrorism and the hope that we can is a fantasy, reflecting a realist impatience with sweeping declarations of unattainable aspirations. Second, we need to deal with terrorist organizations as threats to the national interest that must be either defeated or deterred. Third, states continue to be the critical players on the global level, even when it comes to controlling the actions of nonstate actors such as terrorist organizations.

Conclusion

Although it helps clarify critical issues of analysis and policy to present statist and cosmopolitan approaches as alternatives, it may also be important to think about how their elements might be combined into a coherent strategy. Perhaps the choice between strategies is a false one. Might we be better off with a synthesis integrating the best elements of both? One could make a convincing argument that the Bush administration did just that in the aftermath of September 11. We have already emphasized how regime change and a willingness to use force unilaterally reflect an essentially statist response to terrorism. John Lewis Gaddis, however, sees a strong cosmopolitan streak in the strategy because it identifies a root cause of terrorism and seeks to eliminate it. But unlike most cosmopolitan analyses, it does not trace terrorism to poverty and inequality. Instead, the Bush vision sees the absence of democracy and political freedom as the root cause of the disenchantment and

frustration that breed terrorism. Gaddis claims that “the Bush strategy deals with the longer-term issue of removing the causes of terrorism and tyranny altogether.” Accepting the “emerging consensus within the scholarly community … [that] it wasn’t poverty that caused a group of middle-class and reasonably well-educated Middle Easterners to fly three airplanes into buildings,” the Bush administration offers a “solution to this problem that is breathtakingly simple: it is to spread democracy everywhere.” Although Gaddis does not use the labels *statist* and *cosmopolitan* in his analysis of Bush’s strategy, he clearly thinks it combined elements often considered at odds: “it sees no contradiction between the wielding of power and the commitment to principles.... It is optimistic about human nature, and therefore Wilsonian in its worldview.”⁶² Cronin makes the same point, arguing that “a ‘roots’ approach is precisely at the heart of current U.S. policy: the promotion of democracy may be seen as an idealistic effort to provide an alternative to populations of Muslim countries, frustrated by corrupt governance, discrimination, unemployment, and stagnation.”⁶³ Will this melding of power and ideas, statism and cosmopolitanism, prove to be an effective response to the challenges of terrorism in a post–September 11 world? More than a decade later, the jury is still out on this most important question.

But whatever the final verdict, neither terrorism nor the debate over appropriate responses is going away anytime soon. In fact, there are important elements of the debate we have not even touched on, such as whether the war on terrorism requires restrictions on domestic civil liberties. If anything, we can probably expect terrorism to worsen before it improves, because “the number of intensely aggrieved groups will almost certainly grow in the coming decades of rapid technological, and hence social, change.”⁶⁴ And it is this very technological change and the easy dissemination of knowledge that give individuals and groups the ability to cause harm and destruction on a scale previously unimaginable. Technological and social change provides both motives and means.

Policy debates will remain intense for at least two important reasons. First, they reflect competing visions of international society and, at an even more fundamental level, differences about the nature and dynamics of social conflict. Second—and this point cannot be stressed too heavily—“the menu for policy options in the war on terrorism is loaded with short-term/long-term tradeoffs.”⁶⁵ Examples of these trade-offs abound. Democracy in the Middle East may be an essential part of a long-term strategy to reduce terrorism, but in the short run, we might have to deal with some nondemocratic regimes to diffuse the most immediate threats. But if the United States is seen as supporting nondemocratic regimes, this could increase hostility and the risk of future terrorist attacks in the long run. Similarly, the use of military force may be needed to destroy or diminish the capabilities of a terrorist group or its state sponsor; but if this reinforces certain negative images of the United States, long-term threats may increase. Most people are probably attracted to elements of both the cosmopolitan and statist strategies because each embodies desirable short- and long-term objectives that may run counter to each other. Policy debates are always the hardest to resolve when they require trade-offs among equally valued and beneficial objectives. But no useful purpose is served by failing to recognize the need to make trade-offs. All good things do not always come together.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Although definitions of terrorism are often controversial and politically charged, there is a consensus that terrorism has several essential components: (1) the use or threat of violence to create a climate of fear, (2) indiscriminate targeting of civilians (because the audience is the real “target”), and (3) a larger social or political objective. There is less agreement about whether terrorism should be defined to exclude states and include only nonstate actors as possible perpetrators.
- Even though terrorist acts and groups share some things in common, it is probably more useful to classify terrorist groups according to their motivations, goals, and objectives rather than to treat terrorism as a single, undifferentiated phenomenon. Strategies that might be effective in dealing with some organizations may prove useless for others with different objectives and *modi operandi*.
- In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, debate naturally focused on possible responses to terrorism. Archibugi and Young argue that two basic alternatives shaped the public debate.
- The cosmopolitan response encompasses both short- and long-term elements. In the short term, the specific attacks need to be treated as criminal acts necessitating an international legal response to capture and prosecute those responsible, while using the full range of tools available to the international community to destroy the organization’s ability to operate.
- The longer-term goal of a cosmopolitan strategy lies in addressing the underlying root causes of terrorism, which are normally identified as the poverty, inequality, and discontent that breed resentment and drive people to commit desperate acts.
- The suggestion that terrorism be approached from an international legal perspective and the desire to deal with the root causes of terrorism makes a cosmopolitan approach attractive to liberals, as well as to many feminists and Marxists.
- The statist response views terrorist attacks as acts of war and threats to national security. Although there may be useful legal and multilateral elements of an effective response, the emphasis must be on destroying the terrorist organization’s ability to act by any means available. The focus of these efforts should be not only the terrorist organizations themselves, but also the states that support or permit them to operate.
- Although the logic of tackling the root causes of terrorism is attractive, statists are skeptical of the commonly accepted idea that poverty leads to terrorism. At a minimum, the connection between poverty and terrorism is very complicated. Statists are more inclined to see terrorism, especially of the type perpetrated by al-Qaeda, as motivated by a fundamental conflict of values and visions.
- This view of the underlying conflict and the inclination to view terrorism as a national security issue to be addressed within the framework of state relations resonate more with the realist perspective.
- Even though they are portrayed as alternative approaches, it might be useful to think about whether and how elements of these apparently opposing strategies might be melded into a single coherent strategy. The critical obstacle that must be overcome to achieve this fusion is that many of the short-term responses called for by a statist approach appear to work against many of the long-term goals of the cosmopolitan approach.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What distinguishes terrorism from other forms of criminal violence or acts of war?
2. Do you think terrorism can ever be morally justified?
3. To what extent has the Bush administration been successful in creating an anti-terrorism strategy combining elements of statism and cosmopolitanism?
4. Why do many see a general “war in terrorism,” as problematic?
5. Why might it be unhelpful to talk about or look for the “root causes” of “terrorism”?

KEY TERMS

clash of civilizations, 304
cosmopolitan, 296

statist, 296
terrorism, 292

transnational actor, 296

FURTHER READINGS

The literature on terrorism has grown considerably since the events of September 11, 2001, but it is still useful to consult some of the major works that appeared before these events. Alex Schmid's *Political Terrorism: A Reference Guide*, 2nd edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005) is still a standard reference. Walter Laqueur's *Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977) remains insightful. Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) is particularly good on the history and evolution of terrorism. For exhaustive coverage of terrorism in the Middle East, see Richard Chasdi's twin volumes, *Serenade of Suffering: A Portrait of Middle East Terrorism, 1968–1993* (New York: Lexington Books, 1999) and *Tapestry of Terror: A Portrait of Middle East Terrorism, 1994–1999* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002). On the rise and dynamics of suicide terrorism, see Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2006). The classic exploration of the dilemmas terrorism poses for democratic states is Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

It will come as no surprise that many works on terrorism have appeared since September 11, 2001. Bob Woodward's *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002) provides a good first look at the U.S. response. A reaction from the political left (which has been criticized by many normally considered on the left) is Noam Chomsky, *9/11* (Boston: Seven Stories Press, 2001). Other interesting attempts to come to terms with the broader dilemmas in responding to terrorism include Jean Bethke Elshain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), Paul Berman, *Terrorism and Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), and Thomas Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002). And a recent collection of essays dealing with a range of largely moral and ethical issues is James P. Sterba, ed., *Terrorism and International Justice* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003). A collection of feminist perspectives is Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter, eds., *September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives* (Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex, 2002).

TERRORISM ON THE WEB

www.cfr.org/issue/terrorism/ri13

A section of the Web site of the Council of Foreign Relations, dealing with international terrorism.

www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror.htm

A section of the Web site of the American Federation of Scientists, with links to a wealth of resources about terrorism.

www.start.umd.edu/

The Web site of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, maintained by the University of Maryland.

www.state.gov/s/ct/

The “Bureau of Counterterrorism” section of the U.S. State Department Web site.

www.jurist.law.pitt.edu/terrorism.htm

Updates and essays on the legal aspects of responses to terrorism after September 11, 2001.

www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays

The Social Science Research Council's Web site, containing essays and research analyzing the events of September 11, 2001, and terrorism more broadly.

NOTES

- ¹Martha Crenshaw, "Why America? The Globalization of Civil War," *Current History* 100 (December 2001): 425.
- ²Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 5.
- ³Conor Gearty, *The Future of Terrorism* (London: Phoenix Books, 1997), p. 34.
- ⁴Alex Schmid, *Terrorism: A Research Guide*, 2nd edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005).
- ⁵Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 79.
- ⁶Karolina Lula, "Why Defining Terrorism Matters," *The Monkey Cage* (May 28, 2013). Accessed at: <http://themonkeycage.org/2013/05/28/why-defining-terrorism-matters/>.
- ⁷Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 42–43.
- ⁸Cindy Combs, *Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 10.
- ⁹Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 43.
- ¹⁰Louis Rene Beres, "The Meaning of Terrorism—Jurisprudential and Definitional Clarifications," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 28 (March 1995): 90–243.
- ¹¹Council on Foreign Relations, "Terrorism: Q & A," at www.terrorismanswers.com.
- ¹²Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, pp. 90–91.
- ¹³Jonathan Fine, "Contrasting Religious and Secular Terrorism," *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2008), p. 69.
- ¹⁴For more on Aum Shinrikyo, see Jessica Stern, "Terrorist Motivations and Unconventional Weapons," in *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons*, ed. Peter Lavoy, Scott Sagan, and John Wirtz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 205–209.
- ¹⁵Laqueur, *Terrorism*, p. 134.
- ¹⁶A Conversation with John Mearsheimer, University of California at Berkeley, April 8, 2002. Transcript at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimer-con5.html> (accessed June 6, 2014).
- ¹⁷Daniela Archibugi and Iris Young, "Toward a Global Rule of Law," *Dissent* 49 (Spring 2002): 27.
- ¹⁸Nicholas Lehman, "The War on What?" *The New Yorker* (September 9, 2002): 14.
- ¹⁹Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2008), pp. 91 and 92.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 90.
- ²¹Archibugi and Young, "Toward a Global Rule of Law," p. 28.
- ²²Michael Ratner and Jules Lobel, "An Alternative to the Use of U.S. Military Force," *Jurist: The Legal Resources Network*. An online forum accessed at <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/forum/forumnew32.htm>.
- ²³Andrew Johnston, "Disparities of Wealth Are Seen as Fuel for Terrorism," *International Herald Tribune* (December 20, 2001), p. 8.
- ²⁴Jared Diamond, "Why We Must Feed the Hands That Could Bite Us," *Washington Post* (January 13, 2002), p. B01.
- ²⁵Salil Tripathi, "Debunking the Poverty-Terrorism Myth," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 23, 2005). Accessed at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB11091111984561282>.
- ²⁶Archibugi and Young, "Toward a Global Rule of Law," p. 31.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 32.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 28.
- ²⁹Tony Karon, "Can Democracy Be a Weapon Against Terrorism?" *Time* (September 28, 2001): 18.
- ³⁰Archibugi and Young, "Toward a Global Rule of Law," p. 27.
- ³¹James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 71.
- ³²Amy Caiazza, "Why Gender Matters in Understanding September 11: Women, Militarism and Violence," Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) publication no. 1908 (November 2001), p. 1.
- ³³J. Ann Tickner, "Feminist Perspectives on 9/11," *International Studies Perspective* 3 (2002): 346.
- ³⁴Another example is Mary Riddell, "Feminised Face of War," *The Guardian* (September 23, 2001), p. 24.
- ³⁵Steven L. Pomerantz, "The Best Defense," *The New Republic* (August 31, 1998): 14.
- ³⁶Anthony D'Amato, comment attached to Ratner and Lobel, "Alternative to the Use of U.S. Military Force," p. 2.
- ³⁷Pomerantz, "Best Defense," p. 15.
- ³⁸Charles Krauthammer, "Not Enough Might," *Washington Post* (October 30, 2001), p. A21.
- ³⁹Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 32.
- ⁴⁰Accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/conventions/Conv5.pdf>.
- ⁴¹Niall Ferguson, "Testing the Limits of the U.N." *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2006. Accessed at: <http://jewishworldreview.com/0806/ferguson081506.php3>.
- ⁴²This phrase is found in Daniel Pipes, "God and Mammon: Does Poverty Cause Militant Islam?" *The National Interest* no. 66 (Winter 2001/02): 21.
- ⁴³Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Economics and the Education of Suicide Bombers: Does Poverty Cause Terrorism?" *New Republic* (June 24, 2002), p. 21.
- ⁴⁴Helle Dale, "Poverty and Terrorism," *Washington Times* (March 20, 2002), p. 24.
- ⁴⁵Cited in Pipes, "God and Mammon," p. 17.
- ⁴⁶Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005/2006): 88.
- ⁴⁷Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic* 266, no. 3 (September 1990), p. 47.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 47.
- ⁴⁹Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 32.
- ⁵⁰Stanley Kurtz, "The Future of 'History,'" *Policy Review* 113 (June 2002). Accessed at www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kurtz.html.
- ⁵¹Cited in Pipes, "God and Mammon," p. 21.
- ⁵²Colin Powell, statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (October 25, 2001). Accessed at: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/5751.htm>.
- ⁵³Colin Powell, statement before the UN Security Council, November 12, 2001. Accessed at www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/6049pf.htm.
- ⁵⁴See Marc Erikson, "It Is a Clash of Civilizations," *Asia Times* (November 28, 2001). Accessed at www.atimes.com/c-asia/CK28Ag01.html.
- ⁵⁵Cited in David Masci and Kenneth Jost, "War on Terrorism," *Global Issues* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2003), p. 80.
- ⁵⁶Pomerantz, "Best Defense," p. 14.
- ⁵⁷Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 43.
- ⁵⁸Pomerantz, "Best Defense," p. 14.
- ⁵⁹Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 33.

⁶⁰The quote is from Dan Goure and is cited in Masci and Jost, “War on Terrorism,” pp. 80–81.

⁶¹Pomerantz, “Best Defense,” p. 14.

⁶²John Lewis Gaddis. *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 89–91.

⁶³Cronin, p. 42.

⁶⁴Robert Wright, “A Real War on Terrorism,” part of a nine-part series on www.slate.com (September 6, 2002), p. 2.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 3.

Did September 11 Reflect a Clash of Civilizations?

The thesis of a clash of civilizations, advanced by Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis in the early 1990s, took on renewed significance in the wake of the attacks of September 11. For some, the attacks were a wake-up call, a strikingly violent confirmation of the clash and the magnitude of the threat that it poses. Others feared that portraying a conflict with a terrorist group as a manifestation of some larger clash of civilizations was an overly broad and simplistic characterization of a complex problem that ran the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the essay here, Louis René Beres, writing just days after the attacks, focuses on the attacks themselves and the attackers. For him, the magnitude and barbarity of the attacks makes sense only if they are seen in the framework of a much deeper civilizational clash. Amitav Acharya, writing a few months after the attacks, focuses on the reaction in the Muslim world to the attacks and the initial U.S. responses. Although he makes the interesting concession that “civilizational affinities” may have played a “secondary role,” he does not see the Muslim reaction as consistent with any fundamental clash of civilizations. To what extent is the disagreement between Beres and Acharya a result of the evidence that they focus on? How might one differentiate between civilizational affinities and a clash of civilizations? How might the different positions of Beres and Acharya on the issue of a clash of civilizations lead to different responses to the sort of terrorism witnessed on September 11?

Terrorism and the Global Clash of Civilizations (2001)

Louis René Beres¹

PERSPECTIVE 1

Terrorism, to be sure, is America’s overriding problem for the immediate future. But terrorism is not really our underlying problem. It is rather the palpably barbarous tactic of a methodically planned and determinedly apocalyptic war. Directed initially against Israel and the United States, this fevered attack will soon spread—perhaps uncontrollably—to large cities in Europe and possibly even to various parts of Asia.

This war is a sustained and foreseeable catastrophic Arab/Islamic assault against the West, a civilizational struggle in which a resurgent medievalism now seeks to bring fear, paralysis and death to “unbelievers.” It goes without saying that an overwhelming number of Muslims throughout the world are uninvolved



¹ Source: Louis René Beres, “Terrorism and the Global Clash of Civilizations,” *Israel Insider*, October 1, 2001. Online at <http://web.israelinsider.com/Views/927.htm>. Reprinted by permission of the author.

in this assault, or even tacitly opposed to it (few Muslims will oppose it openly), but many millions of others in many countries are already prepared to enter Paradise by becoming “martyrs.” ... [T]he preferred terrorism tactic in this war is likely to involve chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Our truest war is not against Osama Bin Laden or even the particular Arab/Islamic states that nurture and encourage his program for mass murder. Even if Bin Laden and every other identifiably major terrorist were apprehended and prosecuted in authoritative courts of justice, millions of others in the Arab/Islamic world would not cease their impassioned destruction of “infidels.” These millions, like the monsters who destroyed the World Trade Center and attacked the Pentagon, would not intend to do evil. On the contrary, they would mete out death to innocents for the sake of a presumed divine expectation, prodding the killing of Israelis, Americans and Europeans with utter conviction and complete purity of heart.

Sanctified killers, these millions would generate an incessant search for more “Godless” victims. Though mired in blood, their search would be tranquil and self-assured, born of the knowledge that its perpetrators were neither evil nor infamous, but heroic and “sacrificial.” For those millions engaged in an Arab/Islamic war against the West, violence and the sacred are always inseparable. To understand the rationale and operation of current terrorism against the United States, including the September 11th attacks, it is first necessary to understand these conceptions of the sacred. Then, and only then, will it become clear that Arab/Islamic terror against the United States is, at its heart, a manifestation of religious worship known as “sacrifice.”

This is the truest meaning of Arab/Islamic terrorism against our country. It is a form of sacred violence oriented toward the sacrifice of both enemies and martyrs. It is through the purposeful killing of Americans, any Americans, that the Holy Warrior embarked upon Jihad can buy himself free from the penalty of dying. It is only through such cowardly killing, and not through diplomacy, that “Allah’s” will may be done.

When America has understood that terrorism is only a tactic, and that it is a tactic related to Islamic sacrifice, it will be able to confront a particularly lethal enemy, one that already has within its capabilities the capacity to kill hundreds of thousands or even millions of American men, women and children. Until now, this is an understanding that has lent itself to insubstantial theorizing. Now, immediately, Arab/Islamic terrorism should be recognized, at least in part, as a bloody and sacred act of mediation between sacrificers and their deity.

America is now routinely characterized as a “cancer” in the Arab/Islamic world. A recent article from an Egyptian newspaper speaks of “the cancer, the malignant wound, in the body of Arabism, for which there is no cure but eradication.” Such references are far more than a vile metaphor. They are profoundly theological descriptions of a despised enemy that must be excised, that is, “liquidated.” Where this “liquidation” would be accomplished by self-sacrifice, possibly even terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction, it would be life affirming for the killers. Naturally, some Arab/Islamic governments and movements would deny such end-of-the-world thinking, but it operates nonetheless.

What is to be done? The truth of the terrorist threat to the United States is vastly more grotesque than what is commonly understood. We face suicidal mass killings with unconventional weapons in the future not because there exists a small number of pathological murderers, but because we are embroiled—however unwittingly—in an authentic clash of civilizations. While we all wish it weren't so, wishing will get us nowhere. Our only hope is to acknowledge the true source of our now existential danger, and proceed to fight the real war from there.

Clash of Civilizations? No, of National Interests and Principles (2002)

PERSPECTIVE 2

Amitav Acharya²

The swift collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan under the weight of American military power marks the defeat of one of the more prominent ideas to emerge from the ashes of the Cold War. Samuel Huntington's thesis about a "clash of civilizations."

The Sept. 11 attacks on the United States were the first real test of the Huntington thesis. Amid the initial shock waves of the attacks, many saw its vindication. This view gained strength when George W. Bush used the word "crusade," with its connotations of a Christian holy war against Muslims. The attacks themselves were presented by the perpetrators as Islamic holy war against Christians and Jews.

Yet the response of governments and peoples around the world has proved that this was no clash of civilizations. What emerged was an old-fashioned struggle over the interests and principles that have traditionally governed international relations. Civilizational affinities played only a secondary role.

The world's Muslim nations condemned the terrorist attacks. Many recognized the U.S. right to retaliate against the Taliban for sheltering Qaida. Some offered material and logistical assistance.

From Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, from Iran to Indonesia, Islamic nations denounced bin Laden. In Pakistan, President Pervez Musharraf and his associates denounced the terrorists for giving Islam a bad name. Reversing its long sponsorship of the Taliban and braving the wrath of Islamic extremists at home, Pakistan offered vital logistical support to U.S. forces.

Iran, which for decades had spearheaded Islamic revolutionaries' campaign against the United States, also made no secret of its disdain for the Taliban's Islamic credentials. Iran saw an opportunity to rid itself of an unfriendly regime in its neighborhood.

Each of these nations put national interest and modern principles of international conduct above primordial sentiment and transnational religious or cultural identity.



²Source: Amitav Acharya, "Clash of Civilizations? No, of National Interests and Principles," *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, 2002. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Pakistan, for example, got badly needed American aid and de facto recognition of its military regime. Indonesia, whose support as the world's most populous Islamic nation was crucial to the legitimacy of the U.S.-led anti-terrorist campaign, received American economic and political backing for its fledgling democracy.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, the war against terrorism presented an opportunity for governments to rein in domestic Islamic extremists who had challenged their authority and created public disorder.

Most nations accepted the U.S. counterstrike as an exercise in a nation's right of self-defense. None granted the same right to the Taliban.

Asked to choose between America and the terrorists, nations of the world closed ranks to an unprecedented degree and sided against the terrorists. They did so despite reservations about America's Middle East policy, concerns about civilian casualties in the Afghanistan war and misgivings about U.S. military and economic dominance of the world.

The "clash of civilizations" thesis fares no better in the domestic arena than on the international stage. Appalled by the terrorists' methods and the loss of so many innocent lives, most religious leaders in Islamic societies condemned the attacks as un-Islamic.

Dire predictions were made that countries which acquiesced in or backed the U.S. retaliation would be torn apart by ethnic and religious strife, but such predictions did not come true.

In Pakistan, where the risk was most serious, General Musharraf was able to act more and more boldly against extremists as Islamic protests fizzled out. Hard-core Islamic elements in Indonesia failed in their attempt to rally widespread public support against the American action in Afghanistan. In Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad set aside his rhetoric against American hegemony and made it difficult for Malaysian jihadists to travel to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban.

The international response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks shows that religion and civilization do not replace pragmatism, interest and principle as the guiding motives of international relations.

In rejecting the call to jihad issued by the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and their supporters, some Islamic nations acted out of interest and others out of principle. Most were motivated by a combination of both.



13

The Global Commons

Key Controversy: Is the Global Commons in Danger?

The complex issues surrounding population growth, environmental degradation, and resource depletion, usually referred to collectively as the global commons, are both scientific and political. The scientific debates, which are crucial for understanding problems of the global commons, differ from many of the debates that we have examined in that they do not follow the familiar perspectives on international relations. There is no realist or liberal position on whether the Earth is warming or why. On the scientific aspects of the global commons debate, the main points of disagreement concern the nature and magnitude of population, resource and environmental pressures, as well as the likelihood that technology and human ingenuity will provide solutions. Some see the problems as dire and express skepticism about technological fixes, while others think the problems are often exaggerated and remain optimistic about technological solutions. On the political side of the global commons debate, the central issue should be very familiar: How do we deal with problems that are global in scope in the absence of the sort of central political authority that helps us solve similar problems at the national level? ■

In 1800, as the Industrial Revolution was just getting underway, the global population was about 1 billion. When the first edition of this book appeared in 2004, it was 6.5 billion, and now, ten years later, it is approaching 7.5 billion. To put global population growth in perspective, we can note that it took almost 6,000 years of human history to reach the milestone of 1 billion, whereas the most recent billion were added in just 11 years. Framed in these terms, the growth in global population is astonishing. Is this a sustainable trajectory? In January 2011, *National Geographic* raised this very question in an article simply titled “7 Billion,” which had the provocative subtitle, “By 2045, global population is projected to reach 9 billion. Can the planet take the strain?”¹ A *New York Times* headline from the summer of 2008 pointing to rising energy and food prices was even more dramatic, asking “Is Doomsday Upon Us, Again?”² John Feeney warns that “today’s crumbling environment, racked by climate

change, mass extinction, deforestation, collapsing fisheries and more is evidence that our total consumption has gone too far. We are destroying our life support system.” “To avert catastrophe,” he sees no alternative but “to reduce both factors in the equation: our numbers and per person consumption.”³ Some predictions are even gloomier. The famous scientist and futurologist James Lovelock is convinced that the tipping point of catastrophic climate change has already passed. He dismisses proposals to reduce carbon emissions because “it’s just too late for it ... perhaps if we’d gone along routes like that in 1967, it might have helped. But we don’t have time.” Predicting an eventual 80 percent decline in global population as a consequence of inevitable environmental collapse, his only recommendation is to “enjoy life while you can. Because if you’re lucky it’s going to be 20 years before it hits the fan.”⁴ Should we heed these warnings, or are they alarmist nonsense to be ignored? This is the underlying question in the debate over the **global commons**.

global commons The combination of natural and environmental resources to sustain human life on a global scale.

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) Predicted (in 1789) that population growth would soon outstrip increases in the food supply, leading to a host of social, economic, and political crises. Although he proved to be wrong, his arguments foreshadowed many of those made almost two hundred years later by the Club of Rome.

Such concerns are nothing new. Periodically, throughout human history, people have worried about the consequences of overpopulation. But it was not until the early years of the Industrial Revolution that some began to portray the problem as global in scale. **Thomas Malthus** (1766–1834) provided an early and influential expression of concern. In *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1789), Malthus predicted a dreary future for humankind. The basic problem was that the population was growing geometrically (1,2,4,8,16), whereas food production grew arithmetically (1,2,3,4,5). Extrapolating into the future, he predicted there would be too many people and too little food. Famine would become commonplace, leading to widespread social and political unrest. Famine and disease would eventually reduce population to sustainable levels, but the process would not be pleasant. It was a gloomy vision.

Fortunately, history was not kind to Malthus and his predictions. The key flaw was his assumption that existing trends would extend unaltered into the future. Although population growth continued at an even faster rate than Malthus anticipated, revolutions in farming techniques and technology led to an even more dramatic increase in the food supply. Rather than population outstripping the food supply, the reality was exactly the opposite. For more than a century after Malthus, the productivity of the Industrial Revolution eased concerns about the availability of food and other resources. Economic growth and greater productivity provided the answer to the requirements of population growth.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a revival of the sorts of concerns expressed by Malthus. Why did people start to worry again? The most important reason was a dramatic increase in global population beginning in the 1950s.⁵ During the latter half of the twentieth century, global population grew almost 2 percent a year (see Table 13.1), well above the historical average. The problem seemed even worse when this growth rate was disaggregated. Although 2 percent was the global growth rate, some areas of the world were approaching 5 percent, and this was largely in poor nations considered least able to sustain a rapidly growing population. President Lyndon Johnson even voiced concerns in his 1965 inaugural address, urging his audience to “seek new ways to help deal with the explosion of world population and the growing scarcity of world resources.”⁶

In addition to the global population explosion, resource shortages raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of current levels of consumption. The most

TABLE 13.1

How Many People Have Lived on the Earth at Various Times?

Year	Population
8000 BCE	5,000,000
1 CE	300,000,000
1200 CE	450,000,000
1650 CE	500,000,000
1750 CE	795,000,000
1850 CE	1,265,000,000
1900 CE	1,656,000,000
1950 CE	2,516,000,000
1995 CE	5,760,000,000

Source: Based on Population Reference Bureau estimates.

dramatic of these were oil and gas shortages in the 1970s that created long lines at gas stations, even though these shortages had more to do with politics than with any resource limits. The crisis resulted from decisions by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), not some sudden decrease in the global oil supply. But whatever the cause, the oil crisis got people thinking about the fact that some resources were not unlimited, and dwindling supplies might create real shortages someday.

The final element in the resurgence of Malthusian concerns was the emergence of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s. As J. R. McNeill explains, “Between 1960 and 1990, a remarkable and potentially earth-shattering (earth-healing?) shift took place. For millions of people swamps long suited for draining became wetlands worth conserving. Nuclear energy, once expected to fuel a cornucopian future, became politically unacceptable. Pollution no longer signified industrial wealth but became a crime against nature and society.... Environmentalism had arrived.”⁷ One manifestation of environmental activism was an explosion in the number of international environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In many respects, this was analogous to the growth of international human rights NGOs during the same period. Organizations such as Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, and the Nature Conservancy have played roles in environmental issues very similar to Amnesty International’s role in the area of human rights, especially in terms of increasing public awareness. One of the more remarkable aspects of the rise of environmental NGOs is the extent to which they have actually been incorporated into the processes and institutions that negotiate, draft, and monitor compliance with international environmental agreements. Governments and organizations rely on environmental NGOs because they often possess tremendous scientific expertise on very technical and complex issues. Through their efforts at all levels, environmental NGOs and activists helped focus public and governmental attention on global environmental and resource issues.



Printed but never used by the United States during gas shortages in the late 1970s, these gas ration coupons reflected growing concern about scarce energy resources.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Club of Rome A group of social and natural scientists created in 1968 to examine the future “predicament” of humankind. Their 1972 study, *Limits of Growth*, helped shape the debate over the interrelated issues of global population growth, resource depletion, and environmental degradation.

renewable resources

Resources whose supply can be increased within a meaningful time frame.

nonrenewable resources

Limited or finite resources that cannot be replaced once used.

TABLE 13.2

Historical World Population Growth Rates

Period	Annual Percentage Growth
1750–1800	0.4
1800–1850	0.5
1850–1900	0.5
1900–1920	0.6
1920–1930	1.0
1930–1940	1.1
1940–1950	1.0
1950–1960	1.9
1960–1970	2.0
1970–1980	1.8
1980–1981	1.7

Source: Based on Hughes, Barry B. *World Futures: A Critical Analysis of Alternatives*. pp. 54, table 4.1.

doubling time The number of years that it takes population to double at a given rate of growth.

Too Many People, Too Few Resources

In 1968, a group of concerned scientists convened in Rome for a project that would set the terms of debate about the problems of population growth and resources. The so-called **Club of Rome** wanted to bring together existing knowledge about population growth, technology development, food production, energy supplies and consumption, and the environment in order to examine “the present and future predicament of man.”⁸ The result was a study aptly and tellingly entitled *Limits to Growth*. On one level, the argument resembled that of Thomas Malthus. The most important similarity was the focus on population growth (see Table 13.2). The basic conclusion was simple: A world of limited resources cannot sustain an unlimited population. Whereas Malthus emphasized the problem of food, the Club of Rome stressed other resources. Fortunately, food is a **renewable resource**—that is, we grow new food all the time, and we can figure out ways to increase food production. **Nonrenewable resources** are more problematic. Oil provides an obvious example—there is only a certain amount of oil in the world today, and when it is gone, there will be no more, at least not for millions of years. Many elements of the environment are also nonrenewable resources, in a sense: People need clean air, clean water, and a hospitable environment in order to live. If the environment is destroyed, a resource necessary for life will be gone.

As the title of its study suggests, the Club of Rome believed there was a limit to the number of people that the world could support. In the abstract, this is a point with which few could disagree. It would be hard to imagine how the Earth could sustain a few trillion people. But what is the limit, and how close are we to it? The Club of Rome was unequivocal on this point: “If present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime in the next one hundred years.”⁹ Once these limits were surpassed, “the most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity,” as well as a declining standard of living for everyone in the world.¹⁰ One did not have to strain to see the ghost of Thomas Malthus.

The Population Explosion

Simply stated, population grows because more people are born than die. If 40 children are born for every 1,000 people and only 20 die, the net gain in population is 20 per 1000, or 2 percent. That does not sound like a very high rate of growth: 2 percent interest, inflation, or unemployment would be considered quite low. Until recently, global population rarely grew by more than 1 percent (see Table 13.2). It is only in the second half of the past century that growth rates approached 2 percent. But we get a better appreciation for the significance of 2 percent growth if we look at **doubling time**—i.e., the number of years that it takes for population to double at given rates of growth: at 0.5 percent a year, it would take 140 years to double, but at 2 percent, it takes only 35 years (see Table 13.3). Thus, if global population grows at 2 percent a year, the world would go from 6 to 12 billion (and maybe even 24 billion) within the lifetime of today’s average college student.

The finite nature of many resources and the limited resilience of our environment put a limit on the number of people that the world can sustain, which the Club of Rome referred to as its **carrying capacity**. The only long-term solution is stabilizing population at or below carrying capacity. Eventually, the world must achieve **zero population growth (ZPG)**. There is no escaping the need for an eventual end to population growth. And because population growth results from more people being born than dying, there are only two logical ways to achieve ZPG: Reduce the number of people being born or increase the number of people dying. Stated in such harsh terms, we begin to see the difficulty of the problem.

Resources and the Environment

Although the Club of Rome worried about the availability of food and arable land, it did not see this as the greatest problem. It worried most about nonrenewable resources. While the club's predictions of resource depletion have proven excessively pessimistic, the possibility of depletion remains. In no area are concerns greater than in energy. It is easy to understand why, given the critical role that fossil fuels have played over the last two hundred years in sustaining economic growth and a expanding global population. Almost everything we do depends on energy. The problem is that demand for fossil fuels is rising, largely as a result of the growth of the Indian and Chinese economies, but the supply remains limited. In recent years, fears about the depletion of fossil fuels have been reflected in the theory of **peak oil**. The theory's advocates argue that we are approaching the point at which we will have consumed about half of the world's oil reserves (see Figure 13.1). At this point, demand would continue to surge as production declined, raising the price of oil dramatically, perhaps to hundreds of dollars a barrel, which could lead to economic recessions and conflicts over resources.¹¹ The dramatic increases in the price of oil in 2007–2008 and again in 2011 were taken by many as evidence that peak oil was upon us. Existing oil fields were being depleted rapidly, and new discoveries were insufficient to meet future demand.

In the last few years, however, concerns about peak oil have eased somewhat. Technological advances have made it possible to extract oil that was previously inaccessible and the discovery of several new oil fields has increased estimates of world reserves. Production of oil in the United States has exploded, reducing its reliance on imports to levels not seen in decades.¹² Peak oil theorists argue, however, that the reprieve is only temporary. Extracting oil from these new sources is increasingly expensive and, ironically, consumes a lot of energy, meaning that the *net* increase in supply is not as great as it appears.¹³ According to one former BP geologist, “oil companies and governments are jazzed on new technologies and extraction techniques like fracking and tar sands....but none of that changes the fact that oil is running out. We’re getting better at scraping the bottom of the barrel, but you only get so much.”¹⁴ And environmentalists insist that even if there is a lot of oil yet to be found, most of it needs to remain untapped because the consequences of burning it all would be disastrous. By one United Nations (UN) estimate, “three-quarters of fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground” if we are to avert catastrophic climate change.¹⁵

carrying capacity The term employed by the Club of Rome to indicate the maximum level of population that the world's resources and environment could sustain.

zero population growth (ZPG) A situation in which a population's crude birth rates (number of births per 1,000 people) equals crude death rates (number of deaths per 1,000 people).

peak oil The theory that the world's production of oil is about to reach its peak and decline thereafter, resulting in higher prices that can have damaging effects on the world's economies. This is just one example of concerns that high levels of consumption are depleting critical finite resources.

TABLE 13.3

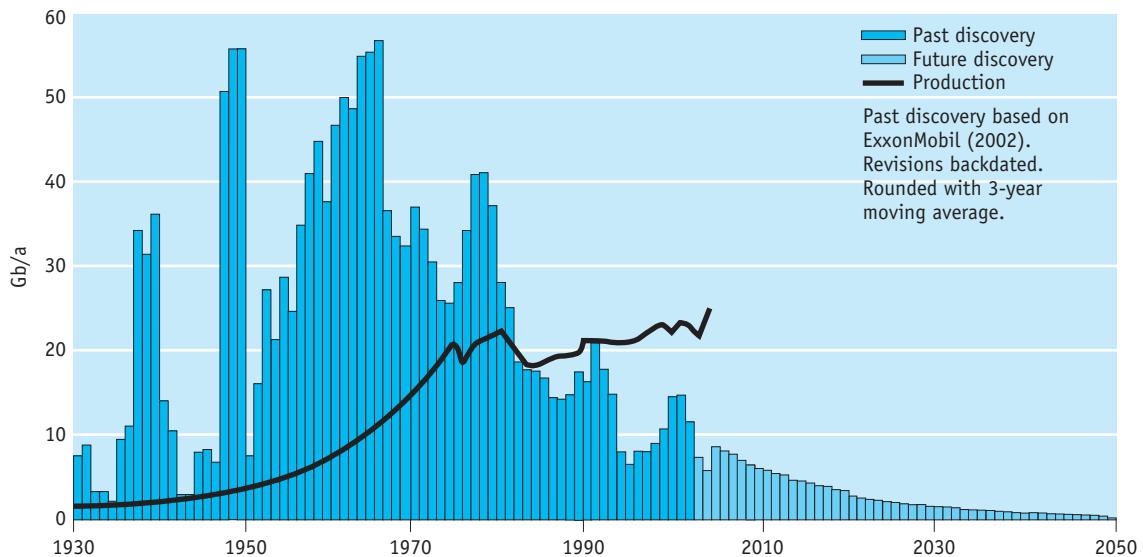
Doubling Time

Growth Rate (% per year)	Doubling Time (years)
0.1	700
0.5	140
1.0	70
2.0	35
4.0	18
5.0	14
7.0	10
10.0	7

Source: Based on Donella H. Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jorgen Randers, *Limits to Growth—The 30-Year Update*, p. 23.

FIGURE 13.1

The growing gap: Oil discovery and production



Source: Based on Figure from peakoil.ie, C.J.Campbell, Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas.

Availability of resources, however, is only half of the problem, and maybe not the most troublesome half. Even if there were enough land, food, oil, coal, and so on for 10 or 15 billion people, we need to take into account the consequences of this level of consumption. Farming land, burning oil, chopping down forests, and operating factories create by-products, some of which have major impacts on the environment. And our environment is also a “resource” in a broader sense. Clean air, clean water, and a hospitable climate are things that people need as much as they need a supply of oil, if not more so. In this sense, we also consume our environment.

Although the list of environmental concerns is long, the threat of **global warming** (now usually subsumed under the broader rubric of **climate change**) receives the most attention. The basic dynamics of climate change are by now familiar, beginning with the burning of fossil fuels releasing carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other **greenhouse gases** into the Earth’s atmosphere. Although some of these gases are absorbed by the world’s oceans and forests, the remainder accumulates in the Earth’s upper atmosphere, preventing the escape of the Sun’s infrared radiation and causing the Earth to warm. This accumulation of greenhouse gases has increased average global temperature over the last hundred years, a period coinciding with the Industrial Revolution, by about 1° Fahrenheit. Some of the consequences of this warming are clearly discernible, including longer growing seasons, earlier flowering of trees, and shifts in plant and animal habitats. Although the impact of climate change on humans has been limited thus far, if predictions “prove correct, this warming implies vast changes in evaporation and precipitation, a more vigorous hydrological cycle making for both more droughts and more floods. The consequences for agriculture,

global warming The problem of rising global temperatures brought on by the emission of greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide and methane).

climate change A concept that has largely replaced global warming to indicate the more diverse changes to global climate resulting from greenhouse gas emissions.

greenhouse gases Gases resulting from the burning of fossil fuels, especially carbon dioxide (CO_2), that build up in the upper atmosphere. It is the accumulation of these gases that leads to global warming.

while difficult to predict, would be sharp. Human health would suffer from the expanded range of tropical diseases. Species extinction would accelerate.... [and] for some low-lying countries, such as the Maldives, it could also be the last chapter.”¹⁶

The scientific consensus is that recent warming is largely the result of human activity. The most comprehensive studies are provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an organization established in 1988 involving more than 2,500 of the world’s leading climatologists. The progression of certainty regarding human causes is evident in its reports over time. The IPCC’s first study in 1995 concluded that “*the balance of evidence* suggests that there is a discernable human influence on the global climate.” In 2001, the IPCC’s judgment was less equivocal: “There is *new and stronger evidence* that most of the warming observed over the past 50 years is attributable of human activities.[emphasis added]”¹⁷ The IPCC’s 2007 report was even more certain, concluding that “most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-twentieth century is *very likely* due to the observed increase in anthropogenic [i.e., resulting from human activity] greenhouse gas concentrations.”¹⁸ And the most recent report in 2013 continued this trend, concluding, “It is *extremely likely* [95 percent confidence that] more than half of the observed increase in global average surface temperature from 1951 to 2010 was caused by the anthropogenic increase in greenhouse gas concentrations.”¹⁹

One of the more alarming aspects of climate change is that most of the world’s greenhouse gases are produced by a small percentage of its population—those wealthy and technologically advanced enough to support a lifestyle requiring large quantities of fossil fuels. A family of four in Seattle contributes much more to global warming—i.e., has a larger “carbon footprint”—than a family of ten in Bangladesh. As the majority of the world’s population pursues economic development and replicates the lifestyles of the industrialized North, the problem will get much worse. A world of 10 or 12 billion people living an American lifestyle would dramatically accelerate climate change if humans continue to rely on fossil fuels.

Although quick to emphasize that it is not the only culprit in climate change (methane gas is another), climatologists have focused on the concentration of carbon dioxide, measured in parts per million (ppm), in the atmosphere as a critical indicator of the magnitude and progression of the problem. They note that between 1959 and 2014, atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations rose from slightly more than 300 ppm to almost 400 ppm (prior to the Industrial Revolution, the level was about 250 ppm). Those emphasizing this measure assume that there is a level at which the concentration passes a critical threshold, an environmental point of no return, a “tipping point” beyond which climate change becomes irreversible and catastrophic. The fear is that beyond this point, a series of mutually reinforcing processes will combine to accelerate the already-dangerous changes. If rising temperatures melt the arctic permafrost, for example, large quantities of additional carbon dioxide currently trapped in the frozen ground will be released, raising temperatures even more in a rapid, vicious, and uncontrollable feedback loop. With estimates ranging from a high of 550 ppm to a low of 350 ppm, there is little agreement on what that tipping point might be.



The IPCC is the international organization that has taken the lead in assessing the threats to the world's climate as a result of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide.

Source: EPA/STF/Landov

Global warming may be the most overriding and widely publicized environmental problem, but it is by no means the only one. We can add to this list concerns about *biodiversity* with the extinction of animal, insect, and plant species; the shrinking of the world's major rain forests; acid rain; the erosion of farmland; the scarcity of fresh drinking water; and the use of toxic chemicals that are finding their way into the human food chain. The technical details and debates involved in many of these issues quickly become a mind-numbing array of data, statistics, charts, and tables that are almost impossible for a nonspecialist to sort out. But the overall picture is that of a fragile ecosystem suffering a series of substantial shocks in a relatively short period as a result of human economic and industrial activity. The combined effect is that we have reached a point where, to paraphrase the title of former vice president Al Gore's environmental manifesto, the "Earth is in the balance."²⁰

The Tragedy of the (Global) Commons

Before we can solve a problem, we need to appreciate its underlying dynamics or what causes and drives it. In considering the dilemmas of population growth, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, many have found it useful to frame them as *commons* problems, invoking the metaphor of **the tragedy of the commons**. Indeed, according to the World Bank, the metaphor of the commons has been "the dominant paradigm within which social scientists assess natural resource issues."²¹ In discussing the problem of climate change, for example, a recent World Bank study argued that the world's advanced industrial nations "cannot continue to fill up an unfair and unsustainable share of the *atmospheric commons*.[emphasis added]"²² The commons metaphor tries to illustrate the incentives that often lead people to act in ways that ultimately destroy something that they need to survive.

the tragedy of the commons

A metaphor in which actors fail to restrain their use of common resources, eventually depleting those resources for all; often used to conceptualize the issues of global population growth, resource consumption, and environmental degradation.

The commons metaphor references a time when many towns had tracts of land open to all, referred to as *commons*. If you have been to Boston, for example, you may have visited its central park, which is still known as the Boston Common. As the name implies, this land was public or communal, not private, property: Everyone was free to graze their animals. Problems arose because individuals decided the size of their herds. Because the animals were private property, individual herders enjoyed the full benefit of each additional animal that they fed on the commons. In doing so, however, they bore only a portion of the costs. When the animal grazed on the commons, the community as whole shared the costs. So the benefits of herd expansion were private and concentrated, while the costs were social and shared. As a result, there was always a rational incentive to acquire more animals because the herder enjoyed the full benefit while bearing only a fraction of the cost. But as herds grew larger, eventually too many animals grazed, and the commons were destroyed. The carrying capacity, so to speak, of the commons was exceeded, with a predictable result.²³

Many see our current global problems in similar terms. The commons in this case is not grazing land per se, but all the resources that we need to sustain the human herd—energy supplies, food, clean air, clean water, and so on. These are our global commons. If we run out of oil because of excessive consumption, it is gone for everyone, whether you personally used it or not. If the environment is destroyed, it is destroyed for everyone, regardless of whether you polluted or not.

Garrett Hardin on Restricting the Commons

If the Earth's future hangs in the balance, we are indeed confronting a drastic problem. Do drastic problems require drastic solutions? Some think so, including ecologist Garrett Hardin, one of the more controversial figures in debates about population growth and its consequences. Hardin has been influential in framing the issues raised by the Club of Rome as analogous to the tragedy of the commons on a global scale. He is not as shy as the Club of Rome in proposing solutions, however.

Hardin begins by pointing out the obvious: If the world has too many people, it is because people are having too many children. The only solution, therefore, is to have fewer children. Most people continue to believe, however, that procreation is not something that should be subject to government regulation. This is a luxury that Hardin thinks we can no longer enjoy. Arguing that we need to relinquish the "freedom to breed," he makes his case in the starker terms: "The most important aspect of necessity that we must now recognize is the necessity of abandoning the commons in breeding. No technical solution can rescue us from the misery of overpopulation. Freedom to breed will bring ruin to all.... The only way we can preserve and nurture other and more precious freedoms is by relinquishing the freedom to breed, and that very soon ... only so can we put an end to this aspect of the tragedy of the commons."²⁴

What would restricting the "freedom to breed" entail? Visions of infanticide and coerced abortions immediately come to mind, but very few (and certainly not Hardin) suggest such draconian measures. Once there is agreement that procreation is a legitimate target of social or government regulation, there are many policies that might encourage people to have fewer offspring while not forbidding reproduction.

Interestingly, few people have problems with government policies encouraging people to have *more* children. In fact, many countries have tax incentives for bigger families, especially in parts of Europe and Asia with low birth rates. People seem more reluctant, however, to use similar policies to discourage large families. But, Hardin would ask, why is it acceptable to offer tax benefits for second and third children, but not to impose tax penalties for additional children? The discussion of policy details, however, comes after the acceptance of the legitimacy and necessity of social and political regulation of population growth.

international food bank

Proposed as a means of responding to famines around the world. The idea was to create a ready stock of food that could be shipped rapidly to areas in need, thus saving thousands of lives. Opposed by Garrett Hardin because he thought that such aid would increase the population of areas that were already overpopulated.

population escalator Garrett Hardin's term to describe the effect of an international food bank. Refers to the steady increases in population that would result every time external assistance was offered to deal with recurring famines.

neotraditionalists Those, like the Club of Rome and Garrett Hardin, who believe that the world is rapidly approaching (or is already at) its limits to growth.

modernists Those who reject the analysis presented by the Club of Rome, they argue that even if there is a limit to the population that the world can support, we are not even close to that limit. Generally have a great faith in science's ability to solve problems and overcome what are often portrayed as limits to growth.

Even more controversial was Hardin's opposition to proposals for the establishment of an **international food bank** in the 1970s to assist countries in the event of famine. Famine, in Hardin's view, was often (though not always) a sign of overpopulation. Nations experiencing repeated famines have failed to come to grips with the problem of population growth. If the international community rushes in with food aid, this merely allows people to survive and population to grow, resulting in what Hardin refers to as a **population escalator**. Aid only rescues societies from their inability or unwillingness to control their population. Although feeding starving people might seem the moral thing to do, the inevitable result is continued overpopulation, future famines, and more misery. In typically provocative terms, he advised, "it is essential that those in power resist the temptation to convert extra food into extra babies."²⁵ Given the limited supply of food and other resources, Hardin viewed the world as akin to a lifeboat stocked with enough food and water to support ten people, but with fourteen people aboard. In this case, there are two options: share the food and water among all fourteen, which means that no one will survive, or recognize the need to reduce the population to ten so that the majority can make it. If we see the world's resources as a commons to be shared by all, the inescapable and logical result, in Hardin's view, is ruin for all.

Needless to say, Hardin's approach is not universally accepted. Even among those who agree with the basic logic and details laid out by the Club of Rome, his solutions are considered extreme. Most would rather tackle the problem through the less coercive means that Hardin viewed as inadequate. Others reject Hardin-esque solutions because they disagree with the underlying assumptions of a looming crisis brought on by global population growth. As a result, they also reject Hardin's metaphor of the Earth as a lifeboat without sufficient resources to sustain those on board. If they wanted to be as provocative as Hardin, the critics might suggest that a better metaphor would be that some of the people on the lifeboat want to eat like gluttonous fat pigs on their way to shore and are prepared to deny others enough food in the process. These critics of Hardin and the Club of Rome see a world of plenty, not a world of limits.

A World of Plenty

Examining competing visions of the future, Barry Hughes distinguishes **neotraditionalist** from **modernist** perspectives. The neotraditionalist approach is embodied in the analysis and predictions of the Club of Rome. The label *neotraditionalism* stems from a distinction often drawn between so-called traditional and modern societies.

Traditional societies tend to accept a fatalistic view of life as constrained by natural limits, whereas modern societies are characterized by a faith in people's ability to overcome nature's limits. The notion that people need to adjust to inherent limits to growth is, according to Hughes, a traditionalist view rejected by those he calls *modernists*, who believe people have the intellectual and technological capacity to overcome the limits that supposedly restrict human and economic growth. Modernists believe that Hardin and the Club of Rome, like Malthus before them, are wrong, and largely for the same reasons.²⁶

Malthus was clearly wrong in his time, and four decades after the Club of Rome's report, many of its predictions have not fared well either. Was the Club of Rome merely a little ahead of its time, or were its analyses and predictions fundamentally flawed? Modernists think the latter, arguing that visions of scarcity and ecological disaster have been wrong historically and are likely to be wrong this time as well. Modernists do not necessarily reject the principle that there is a limit to the population that the world can sustain; they simply do not think that we are anywhere near that limit. The modernist vision of the future rests on a few critical assumptions. First, global population is likely to level off at a sustainable level by the end of the century. Second, many of the supposed limits to growth are likely to be overcome by human ingenuity and technological advances. Third, many of the problems cited by the Club of Rome are the result of bad policies, not any inherent limits to growth. In sum, the predictions of the Club of Rome are likely to be seen a hundred years hence in much the same manner that people now see Malthus's predictions: fundamentally flawed because they extrapolate existing trends into the future without accounting for human adaptability, intelligence, and technology.

How Many People Will We Have?

Graphs showing global population growing at rapid rates well into the future are indeed scary. The doubling of population every thirty-five or forty years as far as the eye can see might well be catastrophic. Fortunately, modernists argue, this is unlikely to happen. Adhering to the **theory of demographic transition**, they see population growing in spurts that eventually level off, not in a consistently exponential fashion. The dramatic increase in global population in the middle and latter half of the twentieth century was an anomaly that is not likely to be sustained.

According to the theory of demographic transition, high rates of population growth are usually the result of social, medical, economic, and scientific advances that increase life expectancy and reduce infant mortality. As people live longer and more children survive infancy, population increases. This is what Europe experienced two or three generations ago as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Increasing life expectancy and decreasing infant mortality, however, are not initially matched by declining birth rates. If death rates decline while birth rates remain the same, population grows rapidly. Eventually, however, birth rates adjust downward, causing population to level off (see Table 13.4 and Figure 13.2). This adjustment might take a generation or two.

Why do birth rates eventually decline? First, the advances that improved life expectancy and infant mortality are usually part of a larger pattern of economic

theory of demographic transition Claims that periods of great population growth tend to be followed by a leveling-off. The same technological, economic, and social changes that cause population to grow in the first place by reducing death rates usually have long-term effects that result in declining birth rates.

TABLE 13.4

A Hypothetical Demographic Transition

	Crude Birth Rate	Crude Death Rate	Growth Rate (%)
Stage I	40/1,000	38/1,000	.2
Stage II	40/1,000	22/1,000	1.8
Stage III	24/1,000	22/1,000	.2

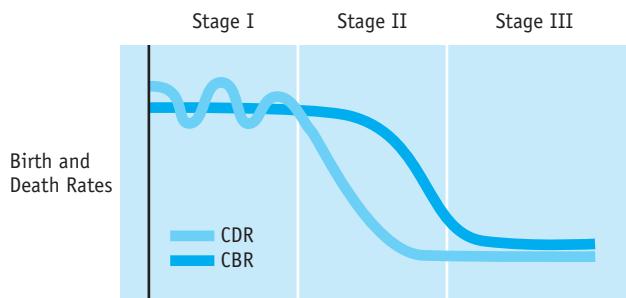
Source: © Cengage Learning.

growth that increases wealth and affluence. And if there is an iron law of demography, it is that wealth and fertility (childbearing) are *inversely* related: across societies and within them, wealthy people have fewer children. This might seem odd because wealthy people and societies should be able to afford more children, but the critical factor is the changing motivation for procreation. In poor societies, children are economic assets, often contributing income to the family when they reach their early teens. As societies and people become more affluent, they have children largely for their emotional and psychological benefits. And for many parents, two children provide all the emotional benefits they can tolerate.

Birth rates also decline for a more straightforward reason. If many children die very young, people need to have more children to assure that some survive to adulthood. In countries like the United States, parents expect every child to live into adulthood: It is a rare tragedy when a parent buries a child. Throughout most of human history and in many parts of the developing world, the death of a child has not been unusual. But as infant mortality declines, there is less need to have a lot of children to assure the survival of a few. As children regularly and reliably survive, people start to have fewer. A final reason for declining birth rates is that economic growth and industrialization tend to alter the role of women in society. As women become more educated, work outside the home, earn their own income, and gain access to birth control, they tend to have fewer children. This is a point stressed by feminists and nonfeminists alike: improving the status of women is one of the keys to reducing population growth.²⁷

FIGURE 13.2

A hypothetical demographic transition

Source: Based on 2011 Matt Rosenberg (<http://geography.about.com>).

On a global level, different regions progress through this demographic transition at different times and rates. The advanced industrialized world has already gone through the cycle. Population grew rapidly during the first half and middle of the twentieth century and then leveled off. In Western Europe, many nations are now faced with birth rates so low that they worry about their ability to afford the generous welfare benefits that elderly citizens enjoy.²⁸ Much of the population growth that we see today is occurring in the developing world. Modernists predict that trend will continue and that “demographic transition theory reassuringly suggest[s] that the rest of the world will follow the same path as the industrialized West.”²⁹ Indeed, this already appears to be happening. In Taiwan and South Korea, for example, the birth rate in 1960 were about 40 per 1,000. By 2001, it was down to 14 per 1,000.³⁰ In 2010, it was lower still, at 9.4—one of the world’s lowest. Taking such trends into account, more recent estimates suggest that global population will continue to increase until about 2075, when it reaches approximately 9 billion and will stabilize around that number (see Table 13.5).³¹ Thus, although a doubling of population every thirty-five years would be a nightmare, this is almost certainly not going to happen.

It should be noted, however, that even some who accept the theory of demographic transition as an accurate portrayal of the past are starting to worry that the future might be different. The key issue is the link between affluence and declining fertility. In Europe and Asia birth rates plummeted as people became richer. But what happens if countries with high rates of population growth remain poor? Might continued poverty propel an unending spiral of overpopulation? Sub-Saharan Africa is the focus of concern. The population of Nigeria, for example, already Africa’s most

TABLE 13.5

Forecast Population Sizes

Median World and Regional Population Sizes (millions)

Year	2000	2025	2050	2075	2100
World total	6,055	7,827	8,797	8,951	8,414
North Africa	173	257	311	336	333
Sub-Saharan Africa	611	976	1,319	1,522	1,500
North America	314	379	422	441	454
Latin America	515	709	840	904	934
Central Asia	56	81	100	107	106
Middle East	172	285	368	413	413
South Asia	1,367	1,940	2,249	2,242	1,958
China region	1,408	1,608	1,580	1,422	1,250
Pacific Asia	476	625	702	702	654
Pacific OECD	150	155	148	135	123
Western Europe	456	478	470	433	392
Eastern Europe	121	117	104	87	74
European part of the former USSR	236	218	187	159	141

Source: Based on Wolfgang Lutz, Warren Sanderson, and Sergei Scherbov, “The End of the World Population Growth,” *Nature*, August 2, 2001, p. 544.

populous country, “is expected to increase by a mind-boggling factor of eight” by century’s end. And since “the country is already troubled by corruption, poverty, and religious conflict,” some wonder “how a government that can barely serve its population right now will respond when the demand on resources, social services, schools, and roads increases by a factor of eight.” The case of Tanzania is equally worrisome. Already one of the world’s poorest countries, its population is predicted to increase from 45 million today to 276 million in 2100. Taken together, “the poorest countries will grow especially rapidly, from 663 million people to almost 3 billion; if those countries stay stuck in their current state of development, many may be unable to handle the population booms.”³² Largely as a result of such concerns, the UN Population Division has begun to increase its estimates of global population to over 10 billion by 2100, and others are predicting more than 15 billion.³³

But even if one accepts the prediction that world population is likely to level off at 9 or 10 billion, this is still a lot of people. The question remains: Can the world’s resources and environment sustain indefinitely a population of even 9 or 10 billion? Modernists think so. An exhaustive survey of modernist responses to resource and environmental concerns is more than we can accomplish here. But let us look at a few issues to get a feel for the modernist perspective: food, energy resources, and climate change.³⁴

Feeding the World

Can the world feed 9 billion people when many are already starving in a world of 7 billion? Although we might assume that people are starving today because food is in short supply, we would be wrong: The world produces more than enough food to feed its entire population. The starvation problem is one of food distribution, not supply. Over the past few decades, global food production has actually been increasing *faster* than population. Since 1961, we have seen a roughly 250 percent increase in grain production and a 300 percent increase in meat production. Even more important are the per capita (per person) figures. Because the period since 1961 has been one of unprecedented population growth, it would be amazing if food production kept pace. In fact, the world produced more grain and almost twice as much meat *per person* in 2005 than in 1961.³⁵ Indeed, “many agronomists think the world could easily support 20 billion or 30 billion people.”³⁶ Because most expect global population to peak at about 9–10 billion, modernists expect the overall supply of food to remain more than sufficient. We also have no idea of what the genetic revolution will bring. Perhaps we will see a greater reliance on disease-resistant crops or grains engineered to have higher concentrations of essential nutrients (e.g., strains of rice much higher in vitamin A). When these advances are coupled with declining rates of population growth, the problem of feeding the world’s people is perhaps the least of our worries.

Until the last few years, this optimistic analysis was the norm. John Parker notes that “By the 1990s, most agricultural problems seemed to have been solved. Yields were rising, pests appeared to be under control, and fertilizers were replenishing dried soil.” Today, however, this optimism is beginning to wane. Dramatic increases in prices for basic agricultural commodities in 2007–2008 and again in 2011 have revived concerns about the ability to feed the world’s people. These increases resulted

from a “combination of factors—rising demand in India and China, a dietary shift away from cereals towards meat and vegetables, the increasing use of maize for fuel, and developments outside of agriculture.” The immediate result in many poor countries was food riots, bans on the export of foodstuffs, and price controls. A number of analyses saw rising food prices as important sources of political upheaval throughout the Arab world in 2011. The fear, however, is that rising prices signify a larger and enduring problem—the end of the era of cheap food and the emergence of a new era of scarcity. Parker articulates these concerns that rising agricultural commodity prices “seems to suggest that the world cannot feed its current population, let along the 9 billion expected by 2050.”³⁷

Fueling the World

We can find ways to grow more food, but other commodities are finite in that once we have used them all, we will have to wait millions of years for the Earth to replenish our supply. Fossil fuels are the case in point. There is no doubt that we are using fossil fuels more rapidly than the Earth is producing them. Consequently, there is no escaping the logical conclusion that we will run out of fossil fuels someday. Even if population stabilizes at 9, 10, or 11 billion people, this does nothing to prevent the depletion of oil, gas, and coal, although it will take a little longer than if we had 15 or 10 billion people. Having fewer people simply gives us more time, not more resources.

How do modernists respond to this logic of inevitable resource depletion? There are essentially two major responses. First, the supply of these fossil fuels is likely to be more than sufficient until viable alternatives are developed. Second, we need to differentiate *energy* from *fossil fuels*. Fossil fuels may have provided for most of our energy requirements in the industrial age, but there are other potential sources of energy (many of which are unlimited), and technological advances are likely to allow us to exploit these sources before we need them.

The bad thing about predictions, for those making them, is that they may not come true. Make too many bad predictions, and people start to question everything you say. Few predictions have fared as poorly as those concerning the depletion of fossil fuels. In 1891, the U.S. Geological Survey indicated that it was unlikely there was much oil to be found in Kansas and Texas. As recently as 1981, the U.S. Department of Energy predicted that by the end of the century, the price of oil would double or triple.³⁸ In 1972, the authors of *Limits to Growth* estimated that we would exhaust all known existing reserves of petroleum by 1992.³⁹ Not only were these predictions wrong, they were shockingly so. Needless to say, we did not run out of oil in 1992. Modernists delight in pointing to past predictions of resource depletion. Until recently, there was not even much evidence of price pressure. In constant 2000 dollars (i.e., adjusted for inflation), the price of oil has *declined* by more than 50 percent from the early 1980s to 2000.⁴⁰ Of course, by the summer of 2008, and again in 2011, oil exceeded \$100 a barrel and gas prices reached new heights, hovering around \$4 a gallon on average for some time, leading some to conclude that scarcity was finally translating into permanently higher prices, as predicted by the theory of peak oil. Not everyone shared this assessment, emphasizing the role of speculators, political unrest in the Middle East, and the declining value of

the dollar in pushing oil. In general, modernists think that existing reserves are greater than many assume and that new technologies will allow us to extract a lot of difficult-to-reach oil. Modernists concede, however, that the age of easy and very cheap oil may be approaching an end.

Although we can quibble about how long it will take, one day, these fossil fuels will be either exhausted or so expensive to extract as to be not economically viable. What then? Modernists stress that fossil fuels and energy are not the same. Running out of fossil fuels does not mean the end of our energy supply. Many theoretical alternatives to fossil fuels—hydroelectric, nuclear, solar, wind, biofuels and so on—are available. There are two problems at present, though. The technologies are not advanced enough at this time, and the energy produced is generally more expensive than fossil fuels. But the coming decades are likely to see improvements in the technologies of alternative energy sources, which will help make alternatives more economically viable and environmentally friendly. As the cost of fossil fuels increases, alternative sources will become more attractive and profitable. This is the silver lining of oil costing over \$100 a barrel—prices this high make alternatives economically feasible. We may run out of fossil fuels, but we will never run out of energy. This optimism and belief in technology is expressed by Bjorn Lomborg: “The important point … on energy is to stress not only that there are ample reserves of fossil fuels but also that the potentially unlimited renewable energy resources definitely are within our economic reach.”⁴¹

The Problem of the Environment

The environmental consequences associated with population and economic growth probably provide the greatest challenge to modernist optimism. There is no single modernist response to this complex range of concerns. To understand the range of responses, let us look at the issue of global warming and break down the issue into several distinct questions. First, is global warming occurring? Second, if so, what is causing it? And third, how much warming are we likely to see, and with what effects?

With regard to the fact of warming, almost no one denies that global temperatures have risen over the past century. The major points of contention are the causes, likely extent, and consequences of warming. The theory of global warming asserts not merely that temperatures are rising, but that human activity is the primary cause. Critics are quick to point out, however, that global temperatures have fluctuated throughout history, a fact that no one contests. The issue is whether current warming is occurring more rapidly than in the past. Unfortunately, no one was keeping records 18,000 years ago, so we need to look at indirect indicators of temperature, such as the accumulation of ice in Greenland, to gauge global climate thousands of years ago. This evidence convinces most that the current rate of warming is unprecedented. But these indicators are open to different interpretations. A 2003 survey by Harvard scientists concluded that global temperatures appear to have been significantly higher during the Middle Ages than they are today.⁴² The problem is that systematic records of actual temperatures begin in the second half of the 1800s. If this period was unusually cool, using it as a baseline for measuring warming might be misleading.⁴³

There is, however, no genuine disagreement on at least one major point: the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has been increasing due to fossil fuel consumption. Even the George W. Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which was criticized for its equivocal position on global warming, concluded that "there is *no doubt* this atmospheric buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is largely the result of human activities. [emphasis added]"⁴⁴ The precise relationship between rising carbon levels and temperatures, however, remains unclear, as evidenced by a recent puzzle that *The Economist* explains as follows: "over the past 15 years, air temperatures at the Earth's surface have been flat while greenhouse-gas emissions have continued to soar." Despite the addition of "roughly 100 billion tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere between 2000 and 2010.... about a quarter of all the CO₂ put there by humanity since 1750," temperatures were steady. Even James Hansen, the former head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and a climate change activist, concedes that "the five-year mean global temperature has been flat for a decade."⁴⁵

A few have seized on the puzzle of rising carbon levels, but steady surface temperatures, to reject the entire theory of human-induced climate change. James Hansen and most climatologists are not among them. For most, this simply suggests that we do not fully understand how all the influences on climate interact. This uncertainty and complexity makes predictions about the future, which are essential in thinking about appropriate policy responses, difficult. Remember the IPCC's prediction that global temperature will increase between 2.5° and 10.4° Fahrenheit by 2100. Eight degrees is a substantial range—we can probably adapt to the lower end, but the upper end would undoubtedly be catastrophic.

Today, most modernists accept the reality of human-induced warming and the need to halt or reverse existing trends. As is usually the case, for modernists, the solution is to be found in technology. Assuming the need to reduce emissions and stabilize atmospheric carbon dioxide, there are only two options: consume less energy or find sources of energy that generate fewer (or, better yet, no) harmful emissions. Even in the absence of climate change, we would still need alternative energy sources because fossil fuels are being consumed faster than they are replenished. In this sense, solving the energy problem is intimately linked to solving the climate change problem. The unanswered question is whether alternatives can be developed and adopted in time, before the consequences of fossil fuel consumption pass the so-called tipping point.

The Good News

Although recognizing some genuine problems, modernists reject the chorus of what they consider Malthusian predictions of gloom and doom. Such predictions have been notoriously wrong in the past and need to be viewed with deep skepticism today. The problems are either nonexistent (food availability), capable of "solving themselves" (population growth), or amenable to technological solutions (energy and climate change). Furthermore, the endless recitation of problems only serves to obscure the evidence of a better life for virtually everyone on the planet. On whatever measure one chooses, human life is better today than it was a

hundred years ago. As a result, Lomborg anticipates that “children born today—in both the industrialized world and developing countries—will live longer and be healthier, they will get more food, a better education, a higher standard of living, more leisure time, and far more possibilities—without the global environment being destroyed. And that is a beautiful world.”⁴⁶ The difference in vision between this view and that of the Club of Rome could not be starker.

Global Problems, Global Solutions?

Common resources link people together. In the tragedy of the commons, each herder’s prosperity depends on others using their common land responsibly. It is one of the ironies of social relations that interdependence is a source of both conflict and cooperation. If one’s behavior had no effect on others, everyone could afford to ignore one another’s irresponsibility. If one herder overgrazes his private land, this would be of little concern to others. But if someone overgrazes the commons, all suffer. Disagreements about the use of common resources are always a potential source of conflict. The need to protect the commons, however, also creates incentives for cooperation. If the resources and environment needed to sustain life on this planet are really in danger, the prospects for conflict and the need for cooperation are both great. When such commons problems present themselves at the global level, they are particularly challenging.

Esty and Moffa explain the dilemma: “[C]limate change stands out as the quintessential global collective action problem....[because] the atmosphere into which greenhouse gases are emitted is inescapably shared by all nations....[but] the polluting activities often require local, state/provincial, or national monitoring and control.” Echoing Hardin, they note that “where a natural resource is shared among many countries as in the case of the atmosphere (or the oceans), fostering sustainable resource use often proves to be excruciatingly difficult. Some countries (or subjurisdictions) may not share the views of others as to how serious the problem is, how much should be invested in a policy response, or how to trade-off a commitment to the shared problem versus other priorities.”⁴⁷ And even when agreements are reached, there remain other problems. As Ruth Bell explains, “Enforcement has always been the Achilles’ heel of international environmental agreements, largely because nations submit to international oversight, which they see as a threat to their sovereignty, only with the greatest reluctance.”⁴⁸ This is not to say that commons problems are impossible to solve in the absence of government, merely that they are more difficult. Different theoretical perspectives offer varying degrees of optimism regarding the ability to solve international commons dilemmas.

Not surprisingly, realists tend to emphasize the obstacles to cooperation in dealing with problems of the global commons. Anarchy makes it more difficult to reach and enforce international agreements while the finite nature of many resources increases the likelihood of conflict. Scarcity always breeds conflict as actors compete for control of, and access to, the resources they need. Of course, in the popular imagination, the resource most likely to fuel conflict is oil. Because the world’s major economies are so dependent on oil, it is not too far-fetched to imagine future conflict

among oil-thirsty nations such as China, India, and the United States as they vie for control of Middle East oil. But oil is not the only potential source of conflict. There are other more mundane resources that might create problems. In many parts of the world with large populations and small supplies of fresh water, this most basic of all resources already creates tension. There has, for example, been a longstanding dispute between Israel and Jordan over their rights to water from the Yarmouk River. There is a similar conflict between the United States and Mexico because the United States uses almost all the Colorado River's water before it reaches the Mexican border. In a world of increasing scarcity, "resource wars" might become commonplace.⁴⁹

On the environmental front, there will also be conflicts over who should bear the burden of protecting the commons. The Kyoto Protocol (1997), which sought to curb global warming by reducing greenhouse emissions, provides an illustration. A central flaw with the agreement in the eyes of critics was its failure to impose restrictions on all nations. Wealthy industrialized nations such as the United States faced substantial reductions, while China, India, and other developing nations did not. Opponents saw such disparities as unfair. Supporters, however, thought it was perfectly reasonable that the nations responsible for past emissions bear the burden of future reductions. Developing nations fear that restricting their emissions would doom them to permanent underdevelopment. All of this is complicated further by recent studies indicating that some developed countries are "reducing" their emissions simply by shifting carbon intensive production to developing nations and importing the resulting products. As a result, "while Europe may pride itself on emitting less carbon from its own territory than it did in 1990, from a consumption point of view the carbon embodied in imports from China alone all but cancels out the gain."⁵⁰ So China can argue that its carbon emissions are increasing largely to meet the demands of foreign consumers. These distributional questions about who should bear the costs of protecting the global commons are likely to remain a source of conflict.

Liberals certainly recognize all these difficulties in solving global commons problems. International anarchy precludes some of the solutions available at the national level. Conflicting interests make agreements difficult, and national sovereignty creates enforcement problems. No one thinks that these are easy problems. Liberals would be quick to note, however, that the history of dealing with international environmental problems is by no means a catalog of failure. The obstacles have not always proven insurmountable. One can point to well over one hundred international treaties and conventions addressing an extremely diverse range of problems, including endangered species, the dumping of toxic wastes in the oceans, biodiversity, the exploitation of Antarctica's resources, and acid rain. Nations, international organizations, and NGOs have been able to create rules and institutions to protect the environment and regulate access to resources. In these cases what we have seen is the emergence of successful **international regimes**, a somewhat abstract concept used to describe "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations."⁵¹ Such regimes typically include treaties that specify rules of behavior, as well as institutions/organizations that foster negotiation, information sharing, and compliance monitoring.

Many cite the Montreal Protocol of 1987 as an example of success. The origins of this protocol can be traced to the mid-1970s, when scientists became aware of a hole

international regimes A broad term used to characterize the institutions, norms, practices, and decision-making procedures that have been created to shape international behavior in given issues areas.

in the Earth's critical ozone layer and identified chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as the main culprit. Given the widespread use of CFCs in refrigeration, air conditioning, and aerosol sprays, there were reasons for pessimism regarding the prospects for successful regulation. But scientists, environmental activists, and NGOs were able to raise public awareness of the problem and pressure governments and international organizations to act. Negotiations resulted in this protocol, in which 22 nations agreed to cut their use of CFCs in half by 1998. When data indicated that the problem was worse than anticipated, the timetable accelerated for phasing out CFCs altogether. Developed nations agreed to end all use of CFCs by 2000, and developing nations agreed to do likewise by 2010. A total of 189 nations have signed the protocol, leaving only 6 relatively insignificant holdouts. One of the protocol's more innovative provisions was the so-called Multilateral Fund, to which developed nations contributed money to offset the costs incurred by developing nations. In many respects, the process appears to have been a great success. Levels of CFCs have either stabilized or decreased, and compliance appears to be quite good. As a result, "the global response to ozone depletion is often invoked as a direct policy precedent for dealing with increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere."⁵²

The Kyoto Protocol represented an attempt to replicate the success of Montreal. The results so far, however, have not been encouraging. The agreement's overall purpose is to set targets for the reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. As indicated previously, a particularly controversial element of the protocol is the differential obligations. Industrialized nations promised to reduce emissions by 5.2 percent from their 1990 levels by 2010 (which would be about 29 percent below what they would be without Kyoto). Not all countries are required to reduce emissions. Developed nations have targets as high as 10 percent, while developing nations do not have to reduce emissions at all. Although 160 nations signed the Kyoto Protocol, several, including the United States, have refused to ratify the agreement. The reasons for this are many, but they usually focus on fears about the economic consequences of reducing carbon emissions. While many nations have met the targets of the Kyoto Protocol, there is little evidence that it has had much impact on the overall problem. A recent World Bank study noted that global carbon emissions have actually *increased* by 25 percent since the adoption of the protocol in 1997.⁵³ There is also no indication that increases in the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide are slowing. Despite subsequent climate conferences in Bali (2007), Copenhagen (2009), and Cancun (2010), a political solution to the emissions problem seems far off. Stephen Walt notes the lack of progress in a tongue-in-cheek essay on the top news stories of 2013 that did *not* happen: "Here's what did happen last year: a record typhoon in the Philippines, disappearing glaciers, and a further decline in Arctic sea ice. What didn't happen was serious progress toward a global agreement on measures to slow or halt man-made climate change. Listen closely: The sound you hear is humankind fiddling while the Earth warms."⁵⁴

Skeptics see the fate of Kyoto as a more likely harbinger of efforts to deal with other problems of the global commons. CFC emissions were much easier to eliminate because there were economically viable substitutes. The cost of reducing CFC use was not that great. The same cannot be said for greenhouse gases. The reliance on fossil fuels is far greater, and alternatives much more expensive and less developed.



Indian students protest the failure of the United States to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The sign also illustrates how just a single person in a developed nation is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than dozens or even hundreds of people in developing nations.

Source: Kamal Kishore/Reuters/Corbis

Eliminating carbon emissions is a problem of an entirely different magnitude than eliminating CFCs. The World Bank explains that with respect to reducing greenhouse emissions, “the tightness of the weave between climate and industrial development suggests adjustment costs are likely to be substantial—and that past comparisons such as acid rain and ozone depletion are of limited relevance.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

Few issues are more important than the future of the global commons, and few problems appear more daunting. Attempts to protect the global commons must overcome several obstacles. The first is uncertainty about the nature and magnitude

of the problems. Scientists do not agree on such critical issues as the likely course of population growth, the supply of fossil fuels and the viability of alternative energy sources, or the extent of future global warming and its consequences. The second obstacle is the absence of a central political authority to solve problems that are global in scope. Although it is not impossible to deal with global problems in the absence of a central political authority, this undoubtedly complicates matters. This chapter has discussed these scientific and political issues. But there is at least one other feature of many commons problems—especially those that are environmental in nature—that makes them difficult to solve: the lag between actions and their effects.

Focusing on the issue of climate change, Ruth Greenspan Bell notes that “part of the problem is that the threat still feels abstract. Despite accumulating evidence, the full impact of climate change has not yet been felt; for now, it can only be modeled and forecast.” As a result, “much of the planning for meeting this challenge has also had a somewhat abstract feeling.”⁵⁶ The climate change that we see today is the result of emissions from years, even decades ago. There is a lag between the actions that cause some problems and the point at which people finally begin to feel the effects. Solving such problems requires that people change their behavior now, perhaps in very costly ways, to avoid problems that they are told will manifest themselves decades in the future, perhaps beyond their lifetimes. The costly solutions are real and immediate, while the consequences of failing to act are distant and speculative. Furthermore, actions to mitigate the problem will take some time to show results. People need to have a very long mental time horizon in order to alter their behavior now to prevent problems in the future. It is often very difficult to mobilize people to solve such problems, even when there is a consensus on their existence and a government to deal with them. Without such a consensus or government, the difficulties are magnified.

The danger, many fear, is that because of the time gap between actions and effects, the political will to act will lag behind the need for action. Current emissions will produce future warming, and by the time the effects are sufficient to spur nations to action, further warming will be irreversibly set in motion. If people must feel the worst effects of environmental damage before altering their behavior, the will to act may not emerge until the window for meaningful action has closed. “Like the frog in the pan of heating water that does not notice the temperature is rising until it is too late,” Bell worries, “human beings have been lulled into believing that they have many years to deal with climate change.” But if this assumption is false, “when dramatic changes finally do occur, it will be too late for remedial action.”⁵⁷ There is no assurance that the political “tipping point” at which action will take place is the same as the environmental tipping point beyond which it is too late. On some levels, threats to the global commons present challenges for scientists who must figure out the nature of, and solutions to, the problems that we confront. On another level, the threats pose a challenge to the international community that must find a way to deal with global problems in the absence of a central political authority. But at a deeper level, the most critical challenge might be to people’s ability to take an apparently distant and seemingly speculative future into account when shaping their present behavior.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- In recent decades, people have increasingly begun to worry about the interrelated issues of global population growth, the depletion of resources, and environmental degradation.
- Although Thomas Malthus feared the consequences of population growth more than two centuries ago, these same concerns emerged in somewhat different form in the 1960s and 1970s.
- The terms of the debate were set in 1972, when the Club of Rome released its study *Limits to Growth*, predicting that in the following century, the world would reach the maximum level of population than its resources and environment could support. If population did not level off before that point, the result would be a declining standard of living for everyone on the planet.
- The issues raised by the Club of Rome are conceptualized using the metaphor of the tragedy of the commons, which attempts to illustrate why people often overuse common resources. On a global scale, the “commons” in question are limited natural and environmental resources.
- If this vision of the future is correct, the only long-term solution lies in restraining population growth. Exactly how this is to be accomplished is often a matter of some controversy. Garrett Hardin has argued that the first critical step is recognizing the need for government policies that restrict population and encourage people to have fewer children.
- Not everyone accepts the Club of Rome’s analysis of the “predicament” facing humankind. In opposition to this *neo-traditionalist* vision is a *modernist* view.
- Modernists present a more optimistic assessment, claiming the problems highlighted by the Club of Rome are mostly nonexistent, exaggerated, or solvable.
- Drawing on the theory of demographic transition, modernists predict that global population will level off at about 8–9 billion by the end of the century.
- On the question of natural resource depletion, modernists are skeptical of predictions of imminent exhaustion. These sorts of predictions have a very poor track record. Most resources (e.g., fossil fuels) remain sufficiently plentiful to sustain our population until scientific progress leads us to feasible and unlimited substitutes.
- On environmental issues, modernists also fear that many problems, such as fears of global warming, are being exaggerated. Those environmental problems that do exist have technological solutions. They argue that we have the ability to sustain the world’s probable population with minimal effect on the global environment.
- Even if there is agreement on the scientific questions, there remains the obstacle of crafting a solution to global commons problems in a world without a central political authority. Realists are inclined to think that resources and environmental problems will increase conflict, not encourage the cooperation necessary to solve them. Liberals are more optimistic that international regimes can be developed to help deal with commons problems even in the absence of a central political authority.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. In what sense is climate change an example of a “commons” tragedy?
2. Why are commons problems so much more difficult to solve at the global level than at the domestic level?
3. Why is the underlying problem of global population growth so difficult to solve?
4. What are the similarities and differences in the problems posed by CFCs and greenhouse emissions?
5. Why do some believe that global population will level off by the end of the century? Why are others not so sure?

KEY TERMS

carrying capacity, 321
 climate change, 322
 Club of Rome, 320
 doubling time, 320
 global commons, 318
 global warming, 322

greenhouse gases, 322
 international food bank, 326
 international regimes, 335
 modernist, 326
 neotraditionalist, 326
 Nonrenewable resources, 320

peak oil, 321
 population escalator, 326
 renewable resources, 320
 the tragedy of the
 commons, 324

theory of demographic
 transition, 327
 Thomas Malthus, 318
 zero population growth
 (ZPG), 321

FURTHER READINGS

A good place to begin is with the landmark study that shaped much of the debate for the past few decades: Donella Meadows et al., *Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972). The Worldwatch Institute publishes a popular collection of essays every year entitled *State of the World* (New York: W.W. Norton, annual) dealing with the issues raised in the larger debate about population growth, environmental problems, and resources depletion. Another fairly comprehensive overview is John Dryzek and David Schlosberg, eds., *Debating the Earth: An Environmental Politics Reader* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998). A popular statement of concern echoing the views of the Club of Rome is Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992). Garrett Hardin's *Living Within Limits: Ecology, Economics, and Population Taboos* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000) is a

thought-provoking, if controversial, exploration of many of these issues. The classic response to arguments about growing resource scarcity was presented in Julian Simon and Herman Kahn, *The Resourceful Earth* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1984). Bjorn Lomborg's *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001) is an extremely controversial attempt to counter what he sees as exaggerated concerns about population growth, resources, and environmental degradation. For a good survey of alternatives to oil, see Michael Parfit, "After Oil: Predicting the Future," *National Geographic* (August 2005): 4–31. A recent analysis of the science and politics of climate change is Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't Tell You About Global Warming* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

THE GLOBAL COMMONS ON THE WEB

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-15391515

This Web site shows the global population clock—find out your place in the growth of global population, as well as the current world population and future projections.

[www.scientificamerican.com/section/ climatewire/](http://www.scientificamerican.com/section/climatewire/)

The latest in climate news, research and analysis from the renowned magazine *Scientific American*.

www.ipcc.ch

The official Web site of the IPCC, the leading organization examining the problems of global warming.

<http://e360.yale.edu/content/topic.msp?id=5>

An excellent Web site on global environmental issues and debates.

www.climatedebatedaily.com

A useful site that draws together divergent views on the reality, causes, consequences, and solutions to global warming and climate change. Also provides links to literally hundreds of Web sites and blogs on almost every conceivable issue and point of view associated with climate change.

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/>

A wide ranging Web site maintained by reporter Andrew Revkin on issues of the global commons. The site's title gives a hint of its focus: "Nine Billion People. One Planet."

NOTES

- ¹Robert Kunzig, "7 Billion," *National Geographic* (January 2011). Accessed at: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/seven-billion/kunzig-text>.
- ²Donald McNeil, "Malthus Redux: Is Doomsday Upon Us, Again?" *New York Times* (June 15, 2008), p. WK3.
- ³John Feeney, "Return of the Population Timebomb," *The Guardian* (May 5, 2008). Accessed at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/may/05/returnofthepopulationtimebomb>.
- ⁴Decca Aitkenhead, James Lovelock: "Enjoy Life While You Can: In 20 Years, Global Warming Will Hit the Fan," *The Guardian* (February 29, 2008). Accessed at: www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2008/mar/01/scienceofclimatechange.climatechange.
- ⁵See Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine, 1968), which is a classic early statement of concern about population growth.
- ⁶Michael Latahm, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 104.
- ⁷J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), p. 340.
- ⁸Donella H. Meadows et al., *Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972), p. 9.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 23.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹See Kenneth S. Deffeyes, *Hubbert's Peak: The Impending World Oil Shortage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
- ¹²"Saudi America," *The Economist* (February 15, 2014). Accessed at: <http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21596553-benefits-shale-oil-are-bigger-many-americans-realise-policy-has-yet-catch>.
- ¹³See Richard Hebring, "The Gross Society: We are Entering the Age of Energy Impoverishment," *Pacific Standard: The Science of Society* (April 18, 2014). Accessed at: http://www.psmag.com/navigation/nature-and-technology/gross-society-entering-age-energy-impoverishment-79381/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+miller-mccune%2Fsummary_feed+%28Pacific+Standard+-+Summary+Feed%29.
- ¹⁴Brian Merchant, "The Man Who Predicted the Future for BP Says Peak Oil is Nigh," *Motherboard* (December 24, 2013). Accessed at: <http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/the-man-who-predicted-the-future-for-bp-says-peak-oil-is-nigh>.
- ¹⁵Alex Morales, "UN Tells Oil, Gas Industry to Leave Fuel in the Ground," *Bloomberg News* (April 3, 2014). Accessed at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-03/un-tells-oil-gas-industry-to-leave-fuel-in-ground.html>.
- ¹⁶McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, pp. 110–111.
- ¹⁷Citations from the Union of Concerned Scientists Web site on global warming: www.ucsusa.org/globalenvironment/globalwarming/page.cfm?pageID=497.
- ¹⁸*Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policymakers*, p. 10. The report can be accessed at www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf.
- ¹⁹Dana Nuccitelli, "Global Warming: Why Is IPCC Report so Certain About the Influence of Humans?" *The Guardian* (September 27, 2013). Accessed at: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2013/sep/27/global-warming-ipcc-report-humans>.
- ²⁰Albert Gore, *Earth in the Balance* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
- ²¹Daniel Bromley and Michael Cernea, *The Management of Common Property Natural Resources*, World Bank Discussion Paper no. 57 (1989), p. 6.
- ²²World Bank, *World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2010), p. 1.
- ²³There are numerous statements of the tragedy of the commons. See, for example, Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), and Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* (1968): 243–248.
- ²⁴Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons," p. 248.
- ²⁵Garrett Hardin, *Managing the Global Commons* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1977), p. 269.
- ²⁶Barry Hughes, *World Futures: A Critical Analysis of Alternatives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). For more on the distinction between traditional and modern societies, see Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1958). Different labels have also been used to describe these competing perspectives, such as *eco-optimists* and *eco-pessimists*, *neo-Malthusians* and *cornucopians*, and so on.
- ²⁷On the theory of demographic transition, see: John I. Clarke, *The Future of Population* (London: Phoenix, 1997), and Hughes, *World Futures*, pp. 73–76.
- ²⁸See Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Population Implosion," *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2001): 42–53, and Carolyn Lynch, "Population Loss Trends Cited," *Washington Post* (March 22, 2000), p. A28.
- ²⁹Latahm, *The Right Kind of Revolution*, p. 96.
- ³⁰Hughes, *World Futures*, p. 75. The figures for the year 2001 come from the Population Reference Bureau (www.prb.org).
- ³¹Wolfgang Lutz, Warren Sanderson, and Sergei Scherbov, "The End of World Population Growth," *Nature* 412 (August 2, 2001): 543–545. The authors concede a predicted population of about 12 billion on the high end. The figures in this book represent the most likely population figures.
- ³²Max Fisher, "The Amazing, Surprising, Africa-Driven Demographic Future of the Earth, in 9 Charts," *Washington Post* (July 16, 2013). Accessed at: www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/07/16/the-amazing-surprising-africa-driven-demographic-future-of-the-earth-in-9-charts/.
- ³³Malcolm Pitts and Martha Campbell, "The Myth of 9 Billion," *Foreign Policy* (May 9, 2011). Accessed at: www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/09/the_myth_of_9_billion.
- ³⁴The classic statement of modernism is Julian Simon and Herman Kahn, *The Resourceful Earth* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1984). See also Gregg Easterbrook's *A Moment on the Earth: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism* (New York: Viking, 1995), and Ronald Bailey, ed., *The True State of the Planet* (New York: Free Press, 1995). A more recent study is sure to become the new classic statement of modernism: Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- ³⁵See Worldwatch Institute, *Vital Signs 2006–2007: The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). Accessed at: www.worldwatch.org.
- ³⁶McNeil, "Malthus Redux," p. WK3.
- ³⁷John Parker, "The 9 Billion-People Question: A Special Report on Feeding the World," *The Economist* (February 24, 2011), p. 3.
- ³⁸Hughes, *World Futures*, pp. 104–105.
- ³⁹Meadows et al., *Limits to Growth*, p. 58. There are predictions concerning the depletion of other natural resources as well, not a single one of which has proved correct.

⁴⁰Lomborg, *Skeptical Environmentalist*, p. 123 (Figure 65).

⁴¹Lomborg, *Skeptical Environmentalist*, p. 132.

⁴²Brian Matthews, "Middle Ages Were Warmer Than Today, Say Scientists," *Daily Telegraph*, April 6, 2003. Accessed at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk>.

⁴³See Brian M. Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300–1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

⁴⁴Accessed at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/content/climateuncertantie>.

⁴⁵"Climate Science: A Sensitive Matter," *The Economist* (March 30, 2013). Accessed at: www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21574461-climate-may-be-heating-up-less-response-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

⁴⁶Lomborg, *Skeptical Environmentalist*, p. 352.

⁴⁷Daniel C. Esty and Anthony Moffa, "Why Climate Change Collective Action Has Failed and What Needs to be Done Within and Without the Trade Regime," *Journal of International Economic Law* (September 2012), p. 777.

⁴⁸Ruth Greenspan Bell, "What to Do About Climate Change," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2006): 108.

⁴⁹See Michael Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Owl Books, 2002), and Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰See "Daily Chart: Greenhouse Gases, The Cost of Trade," *The Economist Online* (April 26, 2011). Accessed at: www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/04/greenhouse_gases.

⁵¹Stephen Krasner, ed., *International Regime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 2.

⁵²Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't Tell You About Global Warming* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 25.

⁵³World Bank, *World Development Report 2010*, p. 233.

⁵⁴Stephen Walt, "2013 News Stories That Never Were," *Foreign Policy* (December 26, 2013). Accessed at: www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/12/26/the_2013_stories_that_never_were.

⁵⁵World Bank, *World Development Report 2010*, p. 236.

⁵⁶Bell, "What to Do About Climate Change," p. 109.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 105–106.

Where Do We Go After Kyoto?

For perhaps the first time in history, many of the problems facing humanity in the twenty-first century are truly global in scope. As global problems, their solutions require genuinely international and cooperative action. The dilemma is how to craft and implement global solutions in the absence of a global government or even international institutions capable of enforcing agreements designed to protect the global commons. On one level, both of the essays here wrestle with the problem of finding global solutions in the context of an anarchic global order. Martin Wolf and Scott Barrett agree on much. They share a belief in the severity of the world's climate crisis. They recognize the need for a realistic solution within the confines of the existing global political order: There are no calls for world government or anything like it. They also agree that previous attempts to deal with climate change (most notably Kyoto) have failed. But do they agree on why Kyoto failed and what to do in its wake? Read these essays, which focus on two questions. First, what do Barrett and Wolf see as the underlying obstacles to effective global action that caused Kyoto to fail? Second, how are their analyses of Kyoto's failure reflected in their proposals for future action?

How Not to Repeat the Mistakes of the Kyoto Protocol

PERSPECTIVE 1

Scott Barrett¹

YaleGlobal, 14 November 2007

WASHINGTON: It's not enough for countries to want to slow climate change. Countries have a much harder task—figuring out exactly how the world can cooperate to counteract climate change. Unfortunately, the Kyoto Protocol is not a model.

The Kyoto Protocol was an early attempt at collective action. However, even if the Kyoto Protocol works exactly as intended, global emissions and atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will continue to rise. Compared with Kyoto's base year, 1990, emissions have already risen 28 percent. Kyoto aims to limit the emissions of only a subset of countries by just 5 percent. Emissions thus continue to rise even as we enter the implementation period next year. To meet a goal such as stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, emissions eventually must decline—and dramatically.

Al Gore, who won the Nobel Prize for Peace this year along with the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has said emissions should fall



¹ Reprinted with permission of *YaleGlobal Online*, www.yaleglobal.yale.edu. Copyright © 2007 Yale Center for the Study of Globalization.

90 percent by 2050. How can the world move from the current situation, in which emissions are rising steadily, to the desired one, in which emissions are falling—fast?

An effective international agreement for climate change mitigation must do three things.

First, a treaty must attract broad participation. This is not only because all countries emit greenhouse gases. It is also because, should only some countries reduce emissions, comparative advantage in the carbon-intensive industries may move to the other countries, causing these other countries to increase their emissions—a phenomenon known as “trade leakage.” Kyoto failed to convince the world’s biggest emitter and only superpower, the United States, that it should participate—reason enough to call the agreement a failure.

I blame the agreement rather than George Bush. The Clinton–Gore administration did not attempt to get the U.S. Senate to ratify Kyoto. Nor did it pass legislation to reduce U.S. emissions. And President Bush, the unilateralist, did bend to another international agreement. When the World Trade Organization authorized Europe to impose trade restrictions against the U.S. for illegal steel tariffs, Bush withdrew the tariffs. This is what a good treaty needs to do—change the behavior of states by changing the incentives that cause states not to cooperate. The World Trade Organization does this. The Kyoto Protocol does not.

Second, a treaty must deter countries from not complying. Canada’s Parliament ratified the Kyoto Protocol; its participation in the treaty is thus not a problem. Under the agreement, however, Canada must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 6 percent below the 1990 level through 2008–2012, and in 2005 Canada’s emissions were 33 percent above the Kyoto target.

Canada’s government has given up on the idea of meeting the Kyoto target. It aims instead to reduce the rate of growth in emissions, hoping that emissions will peak from 2010. However, a government-funded roundtable of experts has concluded that the government’s own policies will not meet even this modest goal. Canada’s previous government predicted that Canada’s emissions would exceed the Kyoto target by 45 percent by 2010. It now looks like that prediction will not be far off.

Why would Canada, a country in good standing in international affairs, fail to fulfill its legal obligations? One reason is that the cost to Canada of complying with Kyoto would be, in the words of the above roundtable, “considerable.” Another reason is that, unlike other agreements such as those under the World Trade Organization, Kyoto does not punish countries for non-compliance. A final reason is that Canada’s compliance with Kyoto would not prevent the climate from changing and indeed would have almost no discernible effect. Why should Canada undertake “considerable” sacrifice for that?

An effective international agreement must not only tell countries what to do; it must create incentives for countries to do what the treaty says must be done.

Third, an agreement must get countries to participate and comply with an agreement in which substantial action is required. It’s easy to get countries to participate and comply with an agreement that requires little. A prime example is the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Only four countries failed to ratify this agreement—Andorra, the Holy See, Iraq, and Somalia. However, this

agreement does not require that parties reduce their emissions. Similarly, the big emitting developing countries like China and India are parties to the Kyoto Protocol, but that's because the treaty does not require them to limit emissions. Russia is also a party to the Kyoto Protocol, and its emissions are capped, but the cap is so generous that it has no effect.

An agreement that fails to induce the U.S. to participate, that fails to create an incentive for Canada to comply and that fails to limit the emissions of the fastest growing large economies is a failed agreement.

While the world's attention focuses on Kyoto, another international agreement works quietly behind the scenes to make a material difference. This is the Montreal Protocol—the agreement for protecting the ozone layer. Ozone-depleting substances, it turns out, are also greenhouse gases, but the relationship between ozone and climate change is complicated. Ozone is a greenhouse gas, so an agreement that protects ozone will increase warming. As well, in limiting the use of ozone-depleting substances, the Montreal Protocol has caused substitutes—including nonozone-destroying HFCs, a greenhouse gas—to increase. The Kyoto Protocol controls HFCs. So the Montreal Protocol has positive and negative effects for the climate.

A recent study, however, has shown that the overall effect of the Montreal Protocol on greenhouse gases is helpful. The study by G. J. M. Velders et al., published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, calculates that the Montreal Protocol has been, and will continue to be, more helpful than the Kyoto Protocol, even assuming that Kyoto is implemented perfectly. Already, this study estimates, the Montreal Protocol has achieved four times as much as the Kyoto Protocol could ever hope of achieving.

Indeed, only a month ago, the Montreal Protocol was revised again. This time, the agreement to phase out HCFCs, a greenhouse gas, was accelerated. Moreover, manufacture of HCFCs produces HFCs, as a byproduct. Preliminary estimates suggest that the agreement negotiated in Montreal in September will have more than twice the intended impact of the Kyoto Protocol. This is on top of the larger effect Montreal has already had in reducing the concentration of greenhouse gases.

What is the Montreal Protocol's secret of success? One difference between Montreal and Kyoto is that Montreal imposed restrictions on all countries from the start. A second difference is that Montreal created strong incentives for participation and compliance—a combination of carrots and sticks. A final difference is that Montreal created a system for positive feedback, with each step in reducing ozone depletion creating incentives for countries to take yet another step.

Ten years after Montreal was first negotiated, the agreement had been adjusted and amended seven times. Ten years after Kyoto was negotiated, that agreement has not entered the implementation phase. Montreal is doing nearly as much as is possible to protect the ozone layer and much more than Kyoto to protect the climate. Kyoto, meanwhile, has made virtually no difference.

There's a lesson in this for future climate negotiations. Rather than cap aggregate greenhouse emissions directly, attention should turn to the actions that can be taken to limit the emissions of individual gases. Montreal could do it, so why not a different kind of climate treaty? Any new climate treaty must break the problem up, addressing different gases in different ways and focusing on sectors rather than economy-wide targets.

PERSPECTIVE 2**Why the Climate Change Wolf Is so Hard to Kill Off****Martin Wolf²***Published: December 4, 2007 Last updated: December 5, 2007*

The point of the story of the boy who cried wolf is that, finally, a wolf did appear. I feel the same way about the intellectual heirs of Thomas Malthus. Malthusians have finally found a wolf called climate change. Many now agree. But it is far away and coming slowly. "If the worst comes to the worst," mutter the rich to themselves, "we can always let our children cope."

This is the complacency that the latest Human Development Report from the United Nations Development Programme attacks. It does a good job, too. But does it do a good enough job to turn the Bali climate change conference into a call for effective action? I fear not. This is not because it fails to make a morally sound case. It is rather because humanity will change its behavior only when convinced that the lifestyle the better off enjoy now—and the rest of the world aspires to—remains in reach.

This cynical view of human behavior is fully consistent with what has happened so far. For it is as if the Kyoto treaty had never been. Is this judgment too harsh? Consider just a few of the many facts contained in this report: atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide continue to rise at a rate of 1.9 parts per million a year; over the past 10 years the annual growth rate of emissions has been 30 per cent faster than the average for the past 40 years; if the rate of emission were to rise in line with current trends, stocks of CO₂ in the atmosphere might be double pre-industrial levels by 2035; and that, argues the International Panel on Climate Change, would give a likely temperature increase of 3°C, though rises of over 4.5°C cannot be excluded. If the science is right, the world is doomed to significant climate change.

The report takes a temperature increase of 2°C as the threshold of "dangerous climate change". Achieving that means draconian cuts in emissions: "If the world were a single country it would have to cut emissions of greenhouse gases by half by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.... However the world is not a single country. Using plausible assumptions, we estimate that avoiding dangerous climate change will require rich countries to cut emissions by at least 80 percent, with cuts of 30 percent by 2020. Emissions from developing countries would peak around 2020, with cuts of 20 percent by 2050."

The one point in favor of George W. Bush's U.S. or John Howard's Australia is that they were not hypocritical. For the signal feature of most of the commitments made so far has been the failure to meet them. The vaunted European emissions trading system has been more a way of transferring quota rent to a few big emitters than an effective means of emissions control. The U.K. government has,

² Martin Wolf, "Why the Climate Change Wolf is so Hard to Kill Off," *Financial Times*, December 5, 2007. Reprinted by permission of FT Syndication.

for example, been honest enough to admit that large electricity generators gained £1.2bn in quota rent for 2005 alone.

Can the world do better in future? Yes, but it will find it difficult. If we are to understand why, we must confront the fact that the world is far from a single country. This creates three huge problems: collective (in)action; perceived injustice; and indifference.

First, not only does each country want to be a free rider on the efforts of others but none feels wholly responsible for the outcome.

Second, the contributions made by different countries to the problem have been (and remain) enormously different. Collectively, the rich countries account for seven out of every 10 tons of CO₂ emitted since the start of the industrial era.

While China is the biggest emitter in the world, its emissions are still only one-fifth of U.S. levels per head. India's are one-fifteenth.

Third, as the report spells out in compelling detail, the heaviest cost will be borne by the world's poor. Among the most frightening consequences are those for rainfall and glaciers: water shortages could become severe across large swaths of the globe. Poor people are far less able to cope with climatic disasters than rich ones. But this, if we were honest, is why the rich are unlikely to make the huge reductions in emissions the report demands. The powerful will continue to act without much consideration for the poor. This, after all, is a world that spends 10 times as much on defense (much of it useless) as on aid to poor countries.

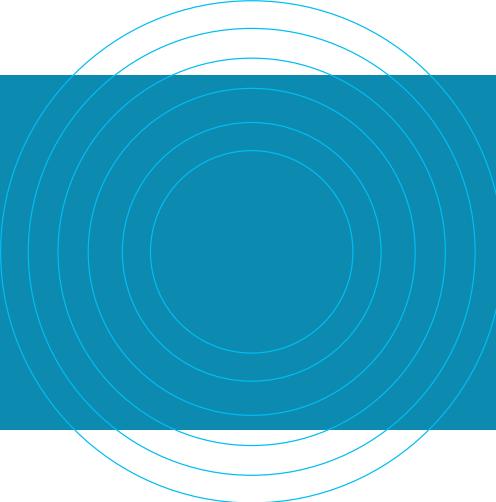
How might this change? The answer is that we must appeal at least as much to people's self-interest as to their morality. Yes, we have a moral obligation to consider both the poor and future generations. Yes, the fact that the changes in the composition of the atmosphere are, to all intents and purposes, irreversible makes early and effective action essential. But acceptance of these points will not be sufficient to obtain meaningful action, instead of pious aspirations and much pretence. A good example of the latter is the proposition that it is enough to lower the carbon intensity of output. Alas, it is not, unless the reduction is very large indeed.

Two things are needed. The first is convincing evidence that the true risks are larger than many now suppose. Conceivable feedback effects might, for example, generate temperature increases of 20°C. That would be the end of the world as we know it. I cannot imagine a rational person who would not seek to eliminate even the possibility of such outcomes. But if we are to do that, we must also act very soon.

The second requirement is to demonstrate that it is possible for us to thrive with low-carbon emissions. People in the northern hemisphere are not going to choose to be cold now, in order to prevent the world from becoming far too hot in future. China and India are not going to forgo development, either. These are realities that cannot be ignored.

The UNDP report argues that the low-carbon future it wants could be achieved at a cost of 1.6 per cent of global output between now and 2030. Such round numbers look attractively modest. But the question people will still ask themselves is what this might mean for their own standards of living. Advocates of change will have to persuade people that living in a low-carbon economy does not mean giving up everything they enjoy. People will not wear hair shirts, whatever they may pretend.

In short, if they are to tolerate radical change in energy use, people must first be frightened and then they must be offered a good way out. The truth, moreover, is that this will happen only if the U.S. also takes the lead. No country will deliver radical cuts if the U.S. does not do so, too. No leaps forward in science and technology will occur if the U.S. is not prepared to commit its resources to those ends. The U.S. can no longer wait for a lead from others. Either it takes the lead now or the cause, in all probability, will be lost. Our children and grandchildren will then find out whether it was a real wolf or not.



Index

- absolutist monarchism, 6–7
Acharya, Amitav, 313, 315–316
adaptive instincts, 109–110
Africa
 decolonization in, 162
 development, compared to
 East Asia, 166–167
 fair trade and, 155
 IMF bailouts, 164
 import substitution in, 163
 vibrancy of, 176
aggression
 forms and manifestations, 119
 functions of, 109–110
 vs. lethal aggression, 109
 vs. violence, 116–121
 See also terrorism; violence;
 war(s); war and human
 nature
aggressor, identifying, 67
agricultural subsidies, 140
al-Qaeda, 291–292, 294, 296, 298
Allison, Graham, 278
American Civil War, 91
American Revolution, 8, 30
Amnesty International, 242
anarchy
 analyzing, 51
 centrality to realists, 37–38
 constructivism and, 50
 leading to power politics,
 59–60
 security amidst, 70–71
 war and, 57–58, 60
anarchic, 59
Angell, Norman, 75–76
animal behavior, aggression
 and, 108–111, 113
Annan, Kofi, 243
anocratic nations, number
 of, 82
appeasement, 20
appeasement gesture, 111
Arab Spring, 95, 103–105
“Arab Spring, Israeli Winter,”
 103–105
Archibugi, Daniele, 296–297,
 299–302
arms control. *See* nuclear
 proliferation
Asia
 birth rates in, 326, 329
 China’s role in, 75–78
 development compared to
 Africa, 166–167
 IMF bailouts, 164
 nuclear apartheid and, 276
 race to the bottom in, 190
 See also individual country
 names
assassination, leading to
 World War I, 296
atrocities
 crisis in Darfur, 255
 humanitarian interventions
 and, 237–239
 reserving intervention for
 most egregious, 251
 Syrian conflict, 231–235
 See also genocide; terrorism
Aum Shinrikyo, 294–296
Austria-Hungary, 10–11, 16
autarky, 137
autocratic nations, number
 of, 82
balance of power, 60–62
balance of power theory, 61–64
balance of threat, 63
bandwagoning, 61
Baran, Paul, 172
Barnett, Michael, 238
Barrett, Scott, 343
barriers to free trade
 GATT and, 134–135
 globalization and, 189
 reduction in, 165
 subsidies, 140
 tariffs, 139–140, 158
Battle of Leipzig, 9
Baucus, Max, 156–157
Bauer, P.T., 169
Beauchamp, Zach, 77–80, 255
Bederman, David, 214
Beijing. *See* China
Bell, Ruth Greenspan, 334, 338
Bello, Walden, 254
Benghazi. *See* Libya
Beres, Louis René, 293,
 313–315
Berlin Wall, 26–27
Bernanke, Ben, 140
*The Better Angels of Our
 Nature: Why Violence
 Has Declined*, 122
Bhagwati, Jagdish
 economic policy, 164
 free trade, 138, 154, 158–159
 on India’s economic policies,
 168–169
 on race to the bottom, 195,
 197
bin Laden, Osama, 292–293,
 314–315
biodiversity, 324
biological weapons, 279, 295
bipolarity, 27
birth rates, death rates and,
 327–329
black markets, nuclear
 proliferation and, 278–279
Boji Company, 207
borderless world
 as myth, 194–195
 vision of, 187–193
The Borderless World, 188
bourgeoisie, 42
Brecher, Jeremy, 192
Brierly, James, 219, 221, 223
Brilmayer, Lea
 on natural law tradition, 221
 response to moral diversity
 and imperialism, 249–250
 view on human rights
 violations, 244
Broyles, William, 120
budgets, balancing, structural
 adjustment and, 173
Builder, Carl, 278
Bull, Hedley, 224

bureaucracy, foreign aid and, 181
 Burke, Edmond, 34
 Bush, George W.
 Kyoto Protocol and, 344
 response to 9/11 attacks, 297
 views on clash of civilizations, 306
 war on terrorism, 306–307
Business Organization and the Myth of the Market Economy, 174
 Campos, Paul, 213
 Canada
 compliance with Kyoto Protocol, 344
 as US trading partner, 194–195
 capital, mobility of, 189–190
 capitalism, 42, 44
 Keynes on, 165
 neoliberalism and, 164–170, 174
 See also free trade;
 International Monetary Fund (IMF)
 capital market liberalization, 165
 carbon dioxide (CO₂),
 countries' emissions, 321, 335, 344–345, 347
 dire predictions, 318
 global warming and, 322–323, 333
 carbon footprint, 323
 Carpenter, Ted Galen, 91
 Carr, Edward Hallett
 collective security, 68
 compulsory jurisdiction, 216
 development of realism, 36–37
 international law, 213
 Carroll, James, 266
 carrying capacity, 321
 casualties
 nuclear war, 288–289
 World War I, 16–17
 World War II, 21
 chaos, fear of, 223
 checks and balances, 86
 chemical weapons
 international law and, 214–215
 US doctrine, 266
 as WMDs, 279

Cheney, Dick, 306–307
 Chile, economic development of, 168–169
 chimpanzees, violence among, 130
 China
 economic development, 168
 labor, 206–208
 nuclear proliferation, 273–274
 race to the bottom thesis and, 205
 rise of, 75–80
 Samsung and, 190
 “China Has Not Replaced America—and It Never Will,” 77–80
 “China’s Rise and the Road to War,” 75–77
 Ching, Frank, 248–249
 chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), 336–337
 Christianity, realism and, 34
Civilization and Its Discontents, 108
 civilizations
 clash of, 303–306, 313–317
 identified by Huntington, 304–305
 Clark, Ann Marie, 242
 clash of civilizations, 303–306, 313–316
 “Clash of Civilizations?
 No, of National Interests and Principles,” 315–316
 class, Marxism and, 42, 44
 classical realists, 35–36
 Claude, Inis
 balance of power, 61
 coexistence of states, 69
 on world government, 66
 climate change
 beyond tipping point, 318
 defined, 322
 effects of, 322–323
 fossil fuels and, 321
 human activity and, 323
 Kyoto Protocol, 335–336, 343–348
 responses to, 332–333
 Club of Rome, 320–321, 325–327, 339
 Cobden, Richard, 136
 Cold War
 conflict and containment, 23–24
 curious peace, 26–27
 easing, 25
 expansion, 24
 history, 22–23, 30
 as period of peace, 271–272, 275
 post-Cold-War world, 28–29
 resurgence and end, 25–26
 collective egoism, 35
 collective reprisal, 224
 collective security, 66–69
 Combs, Cindy, 293
 commercial liberalism, 40
 commercial revolution, 4
 commodities, traded within nation, 144, 151
 common good, free trade and, 146–148
 commons, as metaphor, 324–325
 comparative advantage, theory of, 136–137, 151
 compulsory jurisdiction, 216–217, 228
 Concert of Europe, 10
 conditionality, 164
 conflict
 inevitability of, 35
 intractable, 305–306
 See also war; names of individual conflicts
 conflict group, nation-state as, 36
 conscription, 14
 conservatism, 34–38. *See also* realism
 constrained state thesis, 187
 constructivism
 applied to international relations, 49–50
 democratic peace and, 86–87
 humanitarian intervention and, 247
 relationship between international law and national interests, 226–227
 consumer
 free trade and, 146–148
 natural resources, 322
 oil, 325, 333
 primacy of, 138–139, 151
 containment, 23
 contras, aid to, 25
 conventions, 213
 core, industrial, 171
 core states, 44
 Corn Laws, 136
 corporate taxes, globalization and, 191–192, 210
 corruption, as barrier to development, 169–170
 cosmopolitan response
 conclusion, 307–308
 defined, 296–297
 intellectual roots, 299–300
 introduction, 291
 root causes, 298–299
 vs. statist, 301
 cost of labor, 196
 Costello, Tim, 192
 costs of production, globalization and, 191
 countries, 2. *See also* modern state system; nations
 Crenshaw, Martha, 292
 crime, vs. war, terrorism as, 297–298, 301
 crisis stability, 277
 Cronin, 308
 Crook, Clive, 145
 cults, Aum Shinrikyo, 294–296
 cultural differences. *See* clash of civilizations
 culture, war and, 114–116
 customary law, 213–214
 cyberterrorism, 293
 D’Amato, Anthony, 301
 Darfur genocide, 255
 death rates, birth rates and, 327–329
 debt crisis, 164
 declining terms of trade, 163
 decolonization, 24, 162–164
 degree of power, 64
 degree of satisfaction, 64
 dehumanization, 120
 Dell, David, 157
 democracy
 defined, 87–88
 vs. democratization, 95
 number of democratic nations, 82
 See also democratic peace theory

- democratic deficit, 193
 democratic liberalism, 40
 democratic pacific union, 83
 democratic peace theory
 American Civil War and, 91
 causes of peace, 93–94
 conclusion, 95–96
 constructivism and, 86–87
 criticisms, 90–93, 97
 democracy and, 88
 democratization vs.
 democracy, 95
 essential features of
 democracy, 88
 evidence supporting, 88–89
 institutional thesis, 86, 97
 introduction, 81–82
 in Middle East, 95, 100–105
 peace between democracies,
 89–94
 political-cultural thesis, 86, 97
 sources of, 83–89
 World War I and, 91–92
 dependency theory, 171–172
 Der Speigel, 205
 détente, 25
 Deutsch, Karl, 70
 development and global
 inequality
 conclusion, 175
 corruption as barrier to
 development, 169–170
 decolonization to structural
 adjustment, 162–164
 dependence and exploitation,
 171–172
 foreign aid, 180–184
 introduction, 161–162
 market and, 166–170
 neoimperialism as barrier to
 development, 171–174
 neoliberalism and, 164–170
 Oxfam on, 161
 Third World, 168–169
 Dhaka, Bangladesh, factory
 tragedy, 191
 Diamond, Jared, 298–299
 diplomatic immunity, 223
 disequilibrium, 112
 divine right of kings, 6
 division of labor
 free trade and, 136–137
 international, 162
 Doctors Without Borders, 246
 domestic law, 212–213
- domino theory, 24
 doubling time, 320–321
 Downes, Alexander, 93
 Drezner, Daniel, 195
 dumping, 140
- Easterly, William, 180–182
 economic base, Marxism and,
 42–43
 economic efficiency, 142–143
 economic inequality, Oxfam
 on, 161
 economic injustice, 298–299.
 See also development and
 global inequality;
 poverty; wealth disparity
 economic nationalism, 135
 economies, 2012 rankings, 29
 egoism, collective or group, 35
 empires, multinational states,
 10–12
The End of the Nation State,
 188
 energy, vs. fossil fuels,
 331–332
 environment
 challenges to, 332–333
 consumption and, 322–323
 degradation, 320
 dire predictions, 317–319
 inadequate resources,
 320–324
 peak oil, 321
 See also carbon dioxide
 (CO₂); climate change;
 resources
 environmental movement, 319
 NGOs, 319
 protests in China, 79
 Environmental Protection
 Agency (EPA), response
 to climate change, 333
*An Essay on the Principle of
 Population*, 318
 ethnic cleansing. *See* genocide
 ethnic groups, map of
 distribution in Austrian–
 Hungarian Empire, 11
 ethologists, 108–110
 euro, adoption of, 43
 Europe
 overseas empires, 1913, 15
 on eve of World War I, 13
 See also names of individual
 countries
- European Union
 admission into, 147
 adoption of euro, 43
 security community and,
 70–71
 Evans, Gareth, 246
 evolutionary lag, 112
 external balance of power, 61
- Faces of the Enemy*, 120
 fair trade
 argument for, 154–158
 enacting, 157–158
 vs. free trade, 145, 148–149,
 154–159
 as protectionism, 158–159
 Fallows, James, 142, 147
 “False Pretence for War in
 Libya?” 262–264
 Feeney, John, 317–318
 feminism
 free trade, 148
 humanitarian intervention,
 254
 international politics,
 45–49
 Marxism and, 45
 structural adjustment, 173
 root cause of terrorism,
 300, 309
 war and, 121
 feminist theories, 48
 Ferguson, Niall, 302
 Fettweis, Christopher, 29, 50
 feudal Europe, map, 3
 films and videos, violent, 119
 Fine, Jonathan, 294
 fiscal austerity, 165
 fissile material, 278
 food production
 boost in, 183
 Club of Rome and,
 320–321
 distribution vs. shortage,
 330–331
 food aid and, 326
 technological increase, 318
Foreign Affairs, 304
 foreign aid, development and,
 180–184
 “Foreign Aid Is in Everyone’s
 Interest,” 183–184
 foreign investment, IMF and,
 173
 Forsythe, David, 244
- fossil fuels, 321, 323, 331–332.
 See also resources
 Fox, Robin
 aggression in animals, 109,
 112–113
 critic of democratic peace
 theory, 83
 war and aggression, 113–114,
 122
 free riders, 140, 148
 free trade
 case for, 135–140
 conclusion, 149–150
 consumers, nation, and,
 146–148
 contemporary challenges,
 139–140
 disadvantages, 141–149
 economic efficiency and,
 142–143
 vs. fair trade, 145, 148–149,
 154–159
 with impunity, 156
 introduction, 133–134
 Liberal International
 Economic Order and,
 134–135
 origins of, 136–138
 primacy of consumer,
 138–139, 151
 unlimited, 156
 within and among nations,
 138, 143–146
 French Revolution
 foreign soldiers, 7
 history and significance,
 8–10, 30
 peace before, 6
 “terrorism” coined during,
 292–293
 Freud, Sigmund, 108
 Friedman, Milton, 165
 Friedman, Thomas, on
 globalization, 189, 199
- Gaddis, John Lewis
 on Cold War, 22
 nuclear weapons and “long
 peace,” 275
 on terrorism, 307–308
 Gang of Four, 166–167
 Gates, Bill, 193–194
 GATT rounds. *See* General
 Agreement on Tariffs and
 Trade (GATT)

gender, 46–47
 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 134–135, 151
 “General Treaty for the Renunciation of War.” *See* Kellogg-Briand Pact
 Geneva Convention
 Geneva II negotiations, 233–235
 judicial hierarchy and, 218–219
 genocide
 accusations of, in Libya, 262–263
 Darfur, 255
 dehumanization and, 120
 Holocaust, 240
 international customary law and, 214
 Rwandan, 238–239, 253–255
 war and, 129–130
 Germany
 in age of total war, 17–21
 as multistate nation, 10–11
 unification of, 12
 World War I and, 91–92
 Gibbs, David, 251, 254
 Gilpin, Robert
 economic development, 166–167
 globalization and sovereignty, 198
 international politics, 36, 38, 41
glasnost, 26, 30
 global commons
 birth and death rates, 327–329
 conclusion, 337–338
 defined, 317
 environmental concerns, 332–333
 fossil fuels, 331–332
 introduction, 317–319
 modernist responses, 330–334
 overpopulation and limited resources, 320–326
 population explosion, 317–318, 320–321
 problems and solutions, 334–337
 resource shortages, 318–319
 resources and environment, 321–324
 view of plenty, 326–334

global inequality. *See* development and global inequality; poverty; wealth disparity
 globalism, 42. *See also* Marxism
 globalization
 borderless world, 187–195, 202
 conclusion, 197–201
 constrained state thesis and, 187
 defined, 186, 202
 ending tyranny of location, 188–189
 fair trade and, 154–158
 healthy, 209–210
 hopes and fears, 201
 introduction, 185–187
 location and, 194–194
 mobility of capital, 189–190
 myth(s) of, 193–197
 optimism, 199–200, 202
 race to the bottom, 190–193, 195–197, 205–210
 resistance, 200–201, 202
 skepticism, 197–199, 202
 trade and, study of, 169
 global regimes by type, 82
Global Village or Global Pillage, 192
 global warming. *See* climate change
 Global Zero, 285
 Goering, Hermann, 240
 Goldstein, Joshua, 115, 245
 Goodall, Jane, 130
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 25–26
 Gore, Al, 343–344
 government, world, 65–66, 211–213, 215
 Great Britain
 casualties in World War I, 16–17, 19
 development of, 174
 Great War. *See* World War I
 greenhouse gases, 322–323, 345. *See also* carbon dioxide (CO₂), climate change
 Greider, William, 172, 201
 gross domestic product (GDP)
 effect of globalization, 198
 global, 195
 Grossman, David, 119, 121
 Grotius, Hugo, 212
 group egoism, 35
 gunpowder revolution, 4, 5
 Haggard, Stephen, 167
 Hamilton, Alexander, 145–146
 “The Handouts That Feed Poverty,” 180–182
 Hansen, James, 333
 Hardin, Garrett, 325–327, 334, 339
 harmony of interests
 free trade and, 138–139
 liberalism and, 38–39
 Hashim, Ahmed, 276
 hegemonic stability theory, 64
 Helliwell, John, 194
 Hezbollah, 302–303
 hierarchy, in animal groups, 110
 highly enriched uranium (HEU), 278
 Hitler, Adolf, 20–21. *See also* Holocaust; World War II
 Hobbes, Thomas, 212
 Hochman, Jiri, 68
 Hoffman, Bruce, 293, 294, 302
 Hoffman, Stanley, 252
 Holmes, Richard, 120
 Holocaust, 240
 Holy Roman Empire, 4
 Honecker, Erich, 26
How Much Do National Borders Matter? 194
 “How Not to Repeat the Mistakes of the Kyoto Protocol,” 343–345
 Howard, Michael, 305
 Hughes, Barry, 326–327
 Human Development Report, UN Development Programme, 346
 humanitarian intervention
 abstraction to action, 250–251
 case against, 248–254
 case for, 242–247
 conclusion, 254–255
 defined, 242–243
 determining responsibility, 245–247
 Libya, 259–262
 introduction, 237–239
 liberalism and, 247, 256
 limits of, 253–254
 moral diversity and, 248–250
 national sovereignty vs., 237–238, 248, 256
 NGOs and, 241–242
 problem of power, 251–252
 realism and, 237, 253–254
 right vs. obligation, 244–245
 UN Charter, 240–241
 human nature, 34. *See also* war and human nature
 human rights
 growth of activism, 241–242
 international law and, 213
 sovereignty and, 240–242
 Human Rights Watch, data on Libya, 262
 Huntington, Samuel
 clash of civilizations, 304, 313, 315
 civilizations identified, 304–305
 on humanitarian intervention, 253
 Hurd, Ian, 218
 idealism, 38
 identitive compliance, 222, 224
 Ikenberry, John, 28
 “The Illusion of Conflict in International Trade,” 139
The Imperial Animal, 109
 imperialism
 Austrian-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, 11–12
 end to. *See* decolonization
 European, second wave, 14
 moral diversity and, 249
 neocolonialism, 171
 import substitution, 163
 in-group/out-group hypothesis, 93
 in-groups, 113
 India
 carbon dioxide emissions, 335
 demand for fossil fuels, 321
 economic development of, 167–168
 increasing food needs, 331
 nonparticipation in NPT, 269
 as nuclear power, 267
 nuclear proliferation and, 273–274, 276–277
 individual level, 51

- industrial core, 171
 Industrial Revolution, 12–16
 effect on resources and production, 318
 global inequality and, 162
 as precursor to globalization, 189
 infant industries, 145, 151
 infant mortality, 327–328
 instinct, 109
 institutional thesis, 86
 instrumental violence, 117
 intellectual property, rightful ownership of, 155
 intelligence, and war, 110–114
 interdependence, 187–188
 interests, harmony of, 39
 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 323, 333
 internal balance of power, 61
 international anarchy, 57–58, 60
 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 270
 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 245
 International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, 302
 International Court of Justice (ICJ), 216–218
 International Criminal Court (ICC), 231–235
 international division of labor, 162
 international food bank, 326
 international history
 absolutism and limited war, 6–7
 age of revolutions, 7–16
 Cold War, 22–27
 emergence of modern state system, 2–6
 introduction, 1
 post–Cold War, 28–29
 World Wars, 16–21
 International Labour Organization (ILO), 158–159
 international law
 compliance as norm, 222
 conclusion, 227
 constructivist view, 226
 contextualized, 212–215
 customary, 213–214
 defined, 212
 vs. domestic law, 213
 effective legal system and, 216–219
 enduring value, 220–226
 failures, 220–222
 fear of chaos, 223
 introduction, 211–212
 liberalism and, 224–226
 power and, 219–220
 reasons for compliance, 222–224
 Syrian conflict and, 231–235
 vague and conflicting obligations, 215–216
 weakness, 215–220
 international level, 51
 International Monetary Fund (IMF)
 conclusion, 175
 defined, 134
 dependency theory and, 172
 failure of structural adjustment and, 172–174
 hypocrisy of neoliberalism and, 174
 loan to Mexico, 164
 neoliberalism and, 164–170
 reforms required for loans, 161
 structural adjustment policies, 164
 as surrogate government, 192–193
 international politics
 conclusion, 51–52
 constructivist approach, 49–50
 feminism, 45–49
 introduction, 33–34
 liberalism, idealism, and liberal internationalism, 38–41
 Marxism, 41–44
 perspectives and levels of analysis, 51
 realism, 34–38
 international regimes, 335
 international relations, applied to terrorism, 296
 Interpol, 302
 interstate trade, 138
 investments
 foreign, in developing nations, 195–196
 “home bias” in, 195
 See also development and global inequality
 invulnerable second-strike, 273
 Iran, nuclear proliferation and, 265–266, 273–274
 Iranian hostage crisis, 223–224
 Irish Republican Army (IRA), 294, 296
 irrational conflict, 35
 Irwin, Douglas, 135, 169
 Islam fundamentalism
 root causes of terrorism, 298
 religious fanaticism and terrorism, 303–306, 313–315
 war against enemies of, as contemporary terrorism, 294
 Israel
 Arab-Israeli conflict, 103–105
 massacre of Olympic athletes in Munich, 302
 nuclear threats to, 265–266, 273
 “Is War Inevitable?” 128–132
 James, William, 129–130
 Japan
 Aum Shinrikyo, 294–296
 fascism in, 20
 rice production and economic efficiency, 143
 World War II and national sovereignty, 240
 Jarrah, Balkees, 231–234
 Johnston, Andrew, 298
 Johnston, Iain Alastair, 79
 judicial hierarchy, 218–219, 228
 Jung, Alexander, 205–208
 Kant, Immanuel, 83
 Kantor, Mickey, 172
 Karon, Tony, 299
 Keck, Margaret, 241
 Keck, Zachary, 285, 288–289
 Keen, Sam, 120, 122
 Kellogg-Briand Pact, 220–221, 228
 Kennan, George
 analysis of Soviet policy, 23 on humanitarian intervention, 246, 253
 realism, 35–36
 Kersten, Mark, 231, 234–235
 Keynes, John Maynard, 165
 Khadafy, Moammar. *See* Qaddafi, Moammar
 “Kicking the Nuclear Habit: Why We Need a World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” 286–287
 killing, reluctance to, 115–116
 Kissinger, Henry, 253
 Klotz, Audie, 226
 Kochler, Hans, 252
 Kolko, Gabriel, 43
 Kouchner, Bernard, 246, 249, 252
 Krauthammer, Charles, 271, 301
 Krockowski, Wilfried, 207
 Krueger, Alan, 302
 Krugman, Paul, 139
 Kuchan, Charles, 69
 Kuchan, Clifford, 69
 Kuperman, Alan J., 259, 262–264
 Kurtz, Stanley, 305
 Kyoto Protocol, 335–336, 343–348
 labor
 in China, 206–208
 division of, 136–137, 162
 globalization and, 205
 US, globalization and, 209–210
 value and cost of, 196
 labor unions, fair trade and, 158–159
 Landes, David, 166
 Laqueur, Walter, 292–293, 295–296
 Latham, Robert, 92, 162
 Lau, Stanley, 207
 launching on warning, 277–278
 law(s)
 Corn Laws, 136
 customary, 213–214, 228
 domestic, 212–213
 international. *See* international law

- law(s) (*continued*)
 contradictions in, 215, 228
 treating terrorism as crime, 297–298
- law enforcement strategy, as response to terrorism, 297–300
- Layne, Christopher, 91–94, 96
- Lazonink, William, 174
- League of Nations
 collective security and, 67–69
 as experiment in collective security, 67–69
 failure, 19–20
- Lee, John, 75–77
- Lehman, Nicholas, 297
- lethal aggression, 109, 112
- levée en masse, 9
- levels of analysis, 51
- Leviathan, 212
- Levin, Sandy, 155
- Lewis, Bernard, 303–304, 313
- liberal democratic states, 88
- liberal institutionalism, 41
- Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO), 134–135, 151
- liberal internationalism, 38–41
- liberalism
 as dominant philosophy, 38–41
 global commons problems, 335
 globalization, 199–200, 202
 humanitarian intervention, 237, 240, 247, 256
 vs. Marxism, 44
 nuclear proliferation, 280–281
 promise of international law and, 224–227
 root causes of terrorism, 300, 309
See also cosmopolitan response; neoliberalism
- Libya, intervention in, 255, 259–264
- Lilliey, Mary, 93
- limiting factors, 131–132
- Limits to Growth*, 320, 331, 339
- Linker, Damon, 253
- List, Friedrich, 142–147, 151
- location
 importance of, 193–194, 202
 tyranny of, 188–189
- long peace, 27, 275
- Lorenz, Konrad, 109, 111–113, 117, 123
- Louis XVI, 8
- Lovelock, James, 318
- Lula, Karolina, 293
- Lumsdaine, David, 226
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 221
- Malanczuk, Peter, 219–220, 227
- Malcolmson, Robert, 275
- male dominance, 45, 47–49
- Maleckova, Jitka, 302
- Malthus, Thomas, 318–320, 327, 339, 346
- Manchuria, 20
- Mandelbaum, Michael, 12
- Manhattan Project, 22
- Mansfield, Edward, 95
- Mao Zedong, 274
- map of democracies, 81, 84–85
- Marshall Plan, 23
- Marshall, S.L.A., 115–116
- Marx, Karl, 42, 200–201
- Marxism
 approach to international law, 219
 democratic peace theory, 96
 as dominant philosophy, 34, 41–44
 feminism and, 45
 free trade, 147–148
 humanitarian intervention, 254
 resistance to globalization, 200–201, 202
 root causes of terrorism, 300, 309
 war and, 121
- McCloskey, Deirdre, 168
- McNeill, J.R., 319
- Mead, Margaret, 118
- Mearsheimer, John
 balance of power, 60
 on China's rise, 76
 limits of moral action, 253
 peace during Cold War, 27
 terrorism, 296
- Medellin v. Texas*, 218–219
- Megginnes, Maria, 91–92
- mercantilism, 135–136
- Merkel, Angela, 46
- Mearsheimer, John, on nuclear proliferation, 271–273, 280
- Metz, Steven, 297
- Michalak, Stanley, 37, 58, 222, 252
- Micklethwait, John, 193–194, 196–197
- Microsoft, location of, 193–194
- Middle East
 democratic peace theory and, 95, 100–105
 nuclear proliferation as stabilizing factor, 274
See also names of individual countries
- military might
 China vs. US, 78
 expenditures, 28–29
 nuclear. *See* nuclear proliferation
- Millennium Villages project, 181–184
- Miller, Steven, 276
- mobility of capital, 189–190
- modernism
 climate change, 333, 339
 food resources, 330–331, 339
 fossil fuels, 331–332, 339
 response to global commons challenges, 333–334
 theory of demographic transition, 327, 329
 in world of plenty, 326–327
- modern nationalism, 10–12
- modern state system, 2–6
- monarchism, absolutist, 6–7
- Montagu, Ashley, 116–117
- Montreal Protocol, 335–336, 345
- moral diversity, problem of, 248–250
- Morgenthau, Hans
 on constructivism, 49–50
 as realist, 35–36, 49
 on vagueness in law, 216
- Morris, Benny, 103–105
- Morris, Desmond, 109–113
- Mueller, John, 27, 41, 275
- Multilateral Fund, 336
- multilateral intervention, 243, 245
- multinational states, 10–12
- multistate nations, 10–11
- Munich Agreement, 20
- municipal law. *See* domestic law
- Musharraf, Pervez, 315–316
- Muslims. *See* Islam
- mutual assured destruction (MAD), 273
- The Naked Ape*, 109
- Napoleonic Wars, 9–10
- national economy, trade restrictions and, 147
- national interests
 collective security and, 69
 international law and, 219–220, 226, 228
See also utilitarian compliance
- national security, nuclear proliferation as threat to, 286–287
- national self-determination, 10
- The National System of Political Economy*, 142
- nationalism, modern, 10–12
- nations
 four types of, 64
 nuclear powers, 267
See also individual country names
- natural law tradition, 221
- nature vs. nurture, 107, 108, 123
- Negroponte, Nicholas, 188
- neocolonialism, 171
- neoimperialism, 171
- neoliberalism
 defined, 165
 vs. dependency theory, 171
 hypocrisy of, 174
 IMF and, 164–170
 as neoimperialism, 170–174
 vision, 170
- neorealism, 37
- neotraditionalism, 326–327, 339
- newly industrializing countries (NICs), 166
- Nicaragua, ICJ case against US, 217–218
- Niebuhr, Reinhold, 35
- Nigeria, population and resources in, 329–330
- 9/11. *See* September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
- Niva, Steve, 47
- Nixon, Richard, and détente, 25
- nonfirers, 116
- nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
 environmental, 319
 human rights activism, 241–242

- nonneutrality of the state, 43–44
nonrenewable resources, 320
nonstate actors. *See* terrorists;
transnational actor
nontariff barriers, 139–140
North American Free Trade
Agreement (NAFTA),
133–134
North Atlantic Treaty
Organization (NATO), 24
North Korea, nuclear
proliferation and, 270, 273
nuclear abstainers, 268
nuclear apartheid, 276
“nuclear denial,” 277
Nuclear Nonproliferation
Treaty (NPT), 267,
269–270, 282
nuclear powers, map of, 267
nuclear proliferation
arguments about ending,
285–289
as balance of terror, 277–278
case against, 275–279,
286–287
case for, 271–274, 288–289
conclusion, 280–281
fears about, 274–275
gamble, 275–276
introduction, 265–266
“managed,” 272
nonproliferation and,
266–271
among poor countries,
276–277
terrorist and black market
concerns, 278–279
widespread, 272–274
Nuclear Security Summits, 288
nuclear umbrella, 268, 282
Nuremberg war crimes trials,
240
O’Hanlon, Michael, 251
Obama, Barack
actions in Libya, 262–264
Prague speech, 288
speech on US policy in Libya,
259–262
Ohmae, Kenichi, 188, 194
oil
conflict over, 334–335
costs, 331–332
discovery and production,
322
Oklahoma City bombing, 297,
301
Ollman, Bertell, 200
Olopade, Dayo, 176
Olympic athletes, Israeli,
massacre in Munich, 302
On Aggression, 109
optional clause, 216
Organization of American
States (OAS), 241
Organization of Petroleum
Exporting Countries
(OPEC), 163–164, 319
Organski, A.F.K., 64
Ottoman Empire, 10–11, 16
overpopulation. *See* world
population
Oxfam, on global economic
inequality, 161
pacific public thesis, 83
Pakistan
nuclear proliferation, 266,
267, 269, 273–274,
276–277
post-9/11 actions, 315–316
Palestinian Liberation
Organization (PLO),
massacre of Israeli
athletes, 302
Pannagariya, Arvind, 154,
158–159
Parekh, Bhikku, 248
Parker, John, 330–331
Paulson, Henry, 155
peace
during Cold War, 271–272,
275
nuclear proliferation as
force for, 270–272, 280
through strength, 58
See also democratic peace
theory
“Peace versus Justice in Syria,”
234–235
Peace of Westphalia
codification of national
sovereignty and, 240
as origin of international
law, 212
place in history, 2, 6, 30
peaceful societies, 114–115,
123
peak oil, 321
Pei, Minxin, 79
Pentagon attack. *See*
September 11, 2001,
terrorist attacks
perestroika, 26, 30
periphery, 171
periphery states, 44
Perpetual Peace, 83
“Perspective the Promise of
Democratic Peace,”
100–103
Pillar, Paul, 292
Pinker, Stephen, 122
Pinker, Steven, 40
plutonium, 278
Polanski, Sandra, 158–159
political-cultural thesis, 86
political inequality, as root
cause of terrorism, 299
Pollexfen, John, 191
Pomerantz, Steven, 301, 307
pooled sovereignty, 71–72
popular sovereignty, 8, 244
population growth
escalator, 326
limiting factors and, 131
war and, 129
See also world population
Porter, Bruce, 17
positive law tradition, 221
positive-sum game, 139
post–Cold War, balance of
power and, 65–66
poverty
debunked as cause of
terrorism, 302–303, 305,
309
foreign aid and, 180–184
See also wealth disparity
Powell, Colin, 306
power
defined, 60
international law and,
219–220
military might, 78
power politics
alternatives, 58–71
ameliorated by
international law,
225–226
anarchy leading to, 59–60
balance of power, 60–62
balance of threat theory,
62–64
common vision, 65
conclusion, 71
defined, 60
humanitarian intervention
and, 251–252
inevitability of, 59–65
introduction, 57–58
peace through strength, 58
preponderance theory, 64–65
world government, 65–66
precedents, 218
predatory pricing, 145
preemptive strike, 277
preponderance theory, 64–65
pricing, predatory, 145
private sphere, vs. public, 47
privatization, 165
*Proceedings of the National
Academy of Sciences*, 345
proletariat, 42
proliferation optimists, 270
proliferation pessimists, 270
protectionism, 139, 154,
158–159
“Protectionism’s Other Names,”
158–159
Protestant Reformation, 4, 5, 30
pseudo-specification, 120
public sphere, vs. private, 47
Putin, Vladimir, 88
Qaddafi, Moammar, 259–261
race to the bottom
borderless world and,
190–193
decisions about, 205–210
myth of, 195–197
racism, nuclear proliferation
and, 276
radicalism, 42. *See also* Islam
fundamentalism; Marxism
radiological weapons, 279
rational conflict, 35
rational public thesis, 83
Raustiala, Kal, 198
Ravenal, Earl, 66
Read, Walter Russell, 272
Reagan, Ronald, Cold War and,
25–26
realism
cause of terrorism, 301–302
global commons, 334–335,
339
globalization, 197–199, 202
humanitarian intervention
and, 237, 253–254

- realism (*continued*)
 international law, 219, 227
 international politics, 34–38
 limits of humanitarian intervention and, 253–254, 256
 vs. Marxism, 44
 nuclear proliferation, 280, 282
 on terrorism, 296
See also statist response
 “reglobalization,” 198
 regulations, race to the bottom and, 210
 Reich, Robert, 209
 Reiff, David, 244
 religion
 fanaticism and terrorism and, 303–305, 313–315
 Marxism and, 42–43
 wars fought despite, 129–130
 renewable resource, 320
 reprisal, 223
 resources
 environment and, 321–324
 levels of consumption, 318–319
 overpopulation and, 320–326
 scarcity of, 334–335
 responsibility to protect (R2P), 245, 247, 256
 revisionist state, 36
 revolutions
 age of, 7–16
 American, 8, 30
 Arab Spring, 103–105
 French, 8–10, 30
 Industrial, 12–16, 30
 Reynolds, David, 26
 Ricardo, David, 135–137, 138, 141–142, 151
 Rice, Condoleezza, 100–103
 Riess, Mitchell, 266, 268
 Risse-Kappen, Thomas, 87
 Rodrik, Dani
 commodities and raw materials, 163
 global economic breakdown, 199
 import substitution, 174
 race to the bottom, 192
 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. *See* International Criminal Court (ICC)
- root causes of terrorism, 298–300, 302–303, 308–309
 “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” 303–304
 Rosato, Sebastian, 93
 Rosecrance, Richard, 49
 Rowden, Rick, 174
 Rubin, Jeff, 189
 rule of law, 246
 Rule, James, 300
 Russett, Bruce, 89, 91, 94, 96
 Russia
 opposition to ICC
 involvement in Syrian conflict, 232–233
 post–Cold War nuclear proliferation and, 272
 Russian Empire, 10
 Rwandan genocide, 129, 238–239, 253–255
 Sachs, Jeffrey, 180, 183–184, 192
 Sahnoun, Mohamed, 246
 Samsung, case in China, 190
 Scandinavia, as security community, 70
 scarcity
 conflicts over, 334–335
 food, 330–331
 fuel, 331–332
 overpopulation and, 320–326
 problem exaggerated, 333
 threat to global commons, 318–319
 Schell, Jonathan, 272, 281
 security
 amidst anarchy, 70–71
 collective, 66–69
 security community, 70
 security dilemma, 37, 60
 selection bias, 193
 self-determination, national, 10
 self-help, 59–60
 semi-periphery, 171
 September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
 as act of war, 297, 301
 backgrounds of attackers, 303
 Bush’s response, 297, 307–308
- clash of civilizations and, 313–316
 condemned by Islamic nations, 315
 cosmopolitan response, 299–300
 Huntington’s theory of civilizations and, 305
 introduction, 291–292
 responses to, 296–297, 309
 significance of scale, 294
 understanding root causes, 298
- Seville Statement on Violence, 126–128
 sex, vs. gender, 46–47
 Shapiro, Judith, 79
 shared sovereignty, 71–72
 Shiite, conflict with Sunnis, 304–305
 Sikkink, Kathryn, 241
 Smith, Adam, 135–136, 138, 141–142, 151, 255
 Snyder, Jack, 95
 social conflict, 35
 social learning
 conditioning and, 118–120
 war and, 114–116
 Solarz, Stephen, 251
 soldiers
 dehumanization and, 120, 122
 killed in Somalia, 253
 studies of behavior in battle, 115–116
See also casualties
 Somalia, US soldiers
 killed in, 253
 “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 23
 sovereignty
 defined, 6
 globalization as threat, 185–187
 human rights and, 240–242
 interventions vs., 237–238, 248, 256
 limits of, 243–244
 modern notion, 4
 pooled and shared, 70–71
 popular, 8
- Soviet Union
 détente and, 25
 end of, 28
 perestroika, 26, 30
 “*The Sources of Soviet Conduct*,” 23
See also Cold War; Russia
 spacing, 110
 Spiro, David, 90
 spurious relationships, 93
 state level analysis, 51
 states
 modern state system, 2–6
 status quo vs. revisionist, 36
 statist response
 clash of civilizations, 303–306
 common ground with cosmopolitan approach, 301
 vs. cosmopolitan, 297, 299
 crux of, 307
 defined, 296
 vs. feminist response, 300
 introduction, 291
 religious fanaticism and, 303–306
 root cause of terrorism and, 302–303, 305
 status quo state, 36
 Statute of the International Court of Justice, 213, 216
 Stewart, Devin T., 154–158
 stimulus and response, 119
 Storr, Anthony, 107, 113
 strategic trade policy, 145
 “A Strategy to Promote Healthy Globalization,” 209
 strength, peace through, 58
 structural adjustment policies
 cure and diagnosis, 164
 from decolonization to, 162–164
 defined, 164
 failure of, 172–174
 subjects, 6–7
 subsidies
 as barriers to free trade, 140
 reductions in, 165
 suffrage, universal adult, 87–88
 Sullivan, Andrew, 273
 Summers, Lawrence, 205, 209–210
 Sunnis, conflict with Shiite, 304–305

- superpowers. *See* Soviet Union, United States
- superstructure, 42
- sustainability, resource shortages and, 318–319
- Syria, role for International Criminal Court (ICC) in conflict, 231–235
- Taj, Benjamin, 189
- Taliban, 300, 305, 315
- Tanzania, population and resources in, 330
- tariffs as challenges to free trade, 139–140
fair trade and, 158
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and, 134–135
reductions, 165
See also barriers to free trade; subsidies
- taxes, globalization and, 191–192, 210
- Tepperman, Jonathan, 273
- The Territorial Imperative*, 109
- territorialism, 131–132
- terrorism bleak outlook, 308
clash of civilizations and, 303–306
conclusion, 307–308
contemporary, 294
cosmopolitan response, 296–301, 307–308
cyberterrorism, 293
as crime vs. war, 297–298
defined, 292–293, 309
distinguishing between types, 293–296
domestic vs. international, 297, 301–302
frameworks for understanding, 296–297
intellectual roots of cosmopolitan strategy, 299–300
introduction, 291–292
massacre of Israeli Olympians in Munich, 302
9/11. *See* September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
- Oklahoma City bombing, 297, 301
- root causes of, 298–300, 302–303
- statist response, 301–307
- “Terrorism and the Global Clash of Civilizations,” 313–315
- terrorist groups al-Qaeda, 294, 296
Arab. *See* Islam
fundamentalism
Aum Shinrikyo, 294–296
diversity of, 294–296, 298
Hezbollah, 302–303
IRA, 294, 296
nuclear threat, 278–279, 282, 287
Taliban, 300, 305, 315
- theories of power, 61–65
- theory of demographic transition, 327, 339
- The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 255
- Third World from decolonization to structural adjustment, 162–164
economic development in, 169
exploitation in, 171
See also development and global inequality
- Thirty Years War codification of national sovereignty and, 240
defined, 2
international law and, 212
modern notion of sovereignty, 4
Protestant reformation, 5–6, 30
- Thomas, Daniel, 49, 247
- Thucydides, 35
- Tickner, J. Ann, 300
- Tiger, Lionel, 109, 113, 122
- total war, age of, 16–21
- trade declining terms of, 163
free. *See* free trade
international, 183
interstate, 138
- trade leakage, 344
- tragedy of the commons, 324–325
- Trager, Robert, 303
- Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), 134
- transnational actor, 296
- treating climate change mitigation, 344
in international law, 213–214, 228
judicial hierarchy in US, 218
Kellogg-Briand Pact, 220–222
Treaty of Versailles, 19–20
vague and conflicting, 215–216, 228
- trench warfare, 18
- tribunal, as response to terrorism, 298, 301
- Truman, Harry, 24
- Truman Doctrine, 24
- tyranny of location, 188–189
- Ukraine, nuclear proliferation and, 272
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 344–345
- unilateral intervention, 243
- United Nations humanitarian interventions and, introduction, 237–239
inability to handle terrorism, 302
power politics and, 252, 256
responsibilities and limits of, 246–247, 256
terrorism and, 302
- United Nations Charter, 240–241
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 196
- United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 346
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *See* Seville Statement on Violence
- United Nations Security Council Cold War, 238
forceful intervention, 241–243
nuclear nonproliferation and, 270
- R2P, 245–247
- Syrian conflict and, 232–234
veto power in, 252
- United States attack on. *See* September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
development, 174
failure to participate in Kyoto Protocol, 344–345
ICJ’s ruling for Nicaragua, 217–218
oil production in, 321
opposition to ICC, 231
political landscape, 40
relationship with China, 76
shift in nuclear proliferation doctrine, 266
trading partners with Canada, 194–195
- “United States Must Redefine ‘Fair Trade,’” 154–158
- United States politics, conservative vs. liberal, 40
- “The United States Should Support ICC Involvement in Syria,” 232–234
- universal adult suffrage, 87–88
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 241–242
- uranium. *See* highly enriched uranium (HEU)
- U.S. Department of Energy, inaccurate predictions, 331
- U.S. Geological Survey, 331
- “U.S. Policy in Libya,” 260–262
- utilitarian compliance, 223
- value of labor, 196
- Vasquez, John, 71
- Velders, G.J.M., 345
- “Vietnam Is the New China: Globalization’s Victors Hunt for the Next Low-Wage Country,” 206–208
- Vietnam, 19, 24–25
- violence vs. aggression, 116–117
instrumental, 117

- violence (*continued*)
 physical, as feature of terrorism, 293
See also aggression; terrorism; war(s); war and human nature
- Wade, Robert, 198
 wages, globalization and, 191, 197
 Wagner, Wieland, 205–208
 Walt, Stephen
 balance of threat theory, 63
 climate change, 336
 imbalance of power, 27
 Waltz, Kenneth
 balance of power, 62
 globalization, 197
 national system, 37
 power politics, 59
 widespread proliferation, 272–275, 280
 world government, 66
 Walzer, Michael, 251
 war(s)
 archeological evidence of, 129–130
 between democracies, 89–94
 vs. crime, terrorism as, 297–298, 301
 defined, 89, 91
 inevitability of, 128–132
 international anarchy, 57–58
 September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as, 297, 301
 small, 130
 See also aggression; conflict; names of individual wars
 war and human nature
 abstract thought, 112–114
 aggression, instincts, and war, 108–114
- conclusion, 121–122
 conditioning and social learning, 118–120
 culture and social learning, 114–116
 curse of weapons, 110–112
 functions of aggression, 109–110
 introduction, 107–108
 peaceful instincts, 120–121
 relationship between, 126
 reluctance to kill, 115–116
 violence vs. aggression, 116–121
- war on terror
 combined response, 308
 giving meaning to, 306–307
- Washington consensus, 165
 wealth disparity
 between nations, 163–164, 171–172
 billionaires, 175
 concentration of wealth, 161–162
 globalization and, 199–200
 neoliberal vision, 170
- weapons
 chemical, 279
 as curse of intelligence, 110–112
 Manhattan Project, 22
 WMDs, 279
 See also nuclear proliferation
- weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), 279
 Weart, Spencer, 87, 92
 “Well, What Is the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?” 45–46
 Wendt, Alexander, 71
 Western, John, 245
- Wheeler, Nicholas, 244
 Whitman, Jim, 246
 “Why the Climate Change Wolf Is so Hard to Kill Off,” 346–348
 Wilentz, Sean, 303
 Wilson, Edward O., 126, 128–132
 Wilson, Woodrow, on League of Nations, 69
 Wittner, Lawrence, 285–287
 Wolf, Martin
 climate change, 343, 346–348
 globalization, 198–199
 tyranny of location, 188–189
 Wolfensohn, James, 299
 Wooldridge, Adrian, 193–194, 196–197
 workplace safety, globalization and, 191
 World Bank
 data on foreign investment in developing nations, 195–196
 defined, 134
 developing economies and, 169, 172, 174
 as surrogate government, 192–193
 tragedy of the commons and, 324
- World Court. *See*
 International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- world government, 65–66, 211–213, 215
 world population
 in developing world, 329
 explosion, 317–318, 320–321
- historical growth rates, 320
 population growth and limiting factors, 131
 projected growth, 327–330, 339
 putting limits on, 325–236
 resource shortages and, 320–326
 threats from nuclear war and, 289
 throughout history, 318
 war and, 129
- World Summit, 2005, 245
 World Trade Center attack. *See* September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
 World Trade Organization (WTO), 135, 151
 World War I
 assassination beginning, 296
 democratic peace theory and, 91–92
 failure of deterrence, 277
 place in international history, 16–18
 road to, 16
- World War II
 casualties, 288
 place in international history, 21
 road to, 19–20
- Young, Iris, 296–297, 299–302
- Zagorcheva, Dessislava, 303
 Zalewski, Marysia, 45–46
 zero population growth (ZPG), 321
 zero-sum game, 139

