

IR and Domestic Politics

POSC 1020 – Introduction to International Relations

Steven V. Miller

Department of Political Science



Goal for Today

1. *Build toward a strategic perspective of IR.*
2. *Highlight the important inter-play between domestic politics and foreign policy.*

Opening Up Pandora's (State) Box

Why look inside states to understand policy?

- Foreign policy is a public policy.
- It concerns all domestic constituents.

International relations—the cumulative effect of state-level foreign policies—is really no different.

- Major difference: the *added* threat of external rivals.

We continue to see that policies that are popular at home are disastrous abroad (and vice-versa).

The Case of Afghanistan in 2001

We see this strategic interplay in Taliban decision-making in September 2001.

- If the Taliban defied U.S. demands, the U.S. would likely attack.
- If the Taliban betrayed Al-Qaeda, the Taliban leaders would likely have died.

The Case of Afghanistan in 2001

The Taliban, under these conditions, still maximized its utility.

- It was mistaken in belief the U.S. would not take decisive action.
 - Though it had good reason to think this way.
- It had good reason to believe Al-Qaeda would've turned on them, though.
- The U.S. toppled the regime, but most Taliban leaders are still alive.

The Current Problem in Israel



Why does Israel pursue settlements in contested territories?

A Brief Description of the Problem

Israel has multiple issues with its neighbors, but the civilian community settlements receive a lot of attention.

- Built on territory occupied by Israel following Six Day War in 1967.
- Israel has stalled projects in some areas, but has intensified these projects in the West Bank.

The repercussions of these projects are wide-reaching.

- U.N. has repeatedly upheld these violate the Geneva Convention.
- Major obstacle to a peace process with Palestine.
 - About .7% of the West Bank has been allocated to Palestinians.
 - 30% has gone to settlements for Israeli nationals.
- Has also drawn criticism from international community writ large.
 - Even the U.S. has been critical of these projects.

So why does Israel continue to pursue these West Bank settlements?

The Current Problem in Israel

Answer: Likud and Kadima

- Likud, starting in 1977, pushed for these projects with backing from various religious groups.
 - For those curious, this is the party of Netanyahu.
- Even Kadima, a centrist party, has these settlements in the platform.
- Both parties serve as important foundation for Netanyahu's regime.

This is Israel's balancing act.

- Stop the settlements: lose the regime.
- Increase the settlements: risk terrorist retaliation.

All Politics is Domestic

If you were president/king, what would you do?

- Recall our assumption about state leaders' top priority.
- Would you provide peace and prosperity if you did not need to?
- Would you reward you/your friends if it could cost you your position?

The answer to most questions in politics is “it depends”.

- It depends on the institutional context the leader faces.

What Separates Autocracies from Democracies

So why don't all countries pursue peace and prosperity?

- Peace and prosperity are public goods, after all.

Argument: autocracies and democracies vary in their level of policy responsiveness.

- Peace and prosperity don't harm autocrats; just don't need either.
- Leaders are responsible only to those who keep them in power.

This is true in domestic politics and international relations.

- It's why the Kim family can be in charge of N. Korea since 1948, but George H.W. Bush got just one term.

Conclusion

We look inside states to understand their foreign policy dilemmas.

- What's popular at home may be unpopular abroad (and vice-versa).
- IR isn't that different from domestic politics and there's almost always overlap.

Prima facie, we see considerable differences in behavior from autocracies and democracies.

- A more thorough strategic perspective will highlight important nuances as well.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Why Open the Black Box of the State?

Conclusion