

Studying World Politics in a Time of Change



The Korean War. North Korea's attack on South Korea transformed the Cold War from a European struggle between the United States and communism into a global one. The Korean peninsula remains divided today and is one of the major flashpoints of international politics.

WORLD POLITICS: THEN AND NOW

World politics is in a period of transition. The Cold War is behind us and we have entered a new era. For the moment, we are content to speak of it as “post-Cold War” world politics. We do so because defining features have yet to emerge. As the following headlines from *The New York Times* (*NYT*) highlight, “post-Cold War” world politics does have a different look to it than did “Cold War” world politics. Yet, if one looks beneath the headlines, similarities also can be found.

CASE STUDY**Cold War World Politics Headlines*****June 25, 1950: War Is Declared by North Koreans; Fighting on Border***

The single-column article begins by stating that “The Russian-sponsored North Korean Communists invaded the American-supported Republic of South Korea today and their radio followed it by broadcasting a declaration of war.” This article and others that followed in the next few days contained statements from the State Department that hold the Soviet Union responsible for the attack; statements by Republicans linking the invasion to “weak” U.S. foreign policy in Asia; criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency for not anticipating the attack; speculation about the spillover effects of the invasion on the U.S. position in other Asian states and the damage done to U.S. prestige; reports from a special session of the United Nations Security Council that found North Korea guilty of breaking the peace and demanding its withdrawal; and stories about President Truman sending U.S. troops into combat.

March 26, 1957: Europeans Unite in Customs Union and Atom Agency

The signing of two treaties in Rome by West Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg is described as the “birth certificate of a European Federation of States.” The article describes the goal of the newly created common market as laying the foundation for the ultimate establishment of a central European government. Unity is to be gradual and future political institutions are to include a Court of Justice, Parliament, and a European Cabinet. It also notes that the agreement falls far short of the political–military unity that would have come about had the plans for a European Defense Community not failed due to French opposition.

June 2, 1973: West Yields to Demands of Oil-Exporting Lands

Buried on page 39 in the business section, this medium-length article contained the subhead “Dispute That Threatened to Reduce Production and Intensify World Energy Crisis Believed at End.” It reported on a decision by the major petroleum companies to yield to demands of the major oil-exporting countries for full compensation for the loss of revenue to them resulting from the devaluation of the dollar and its steady depreciation in foreign exchange markets. The agreement was to be in force until 1975. Taking part in the agreement were 8 of the 11 OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) members: Abu Dhabi, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Together, it was noted, these states accounted for 23 million barrels of oil per day, 15 percent of which went to the United States. The article stated that in the absence of an agreement it was feared that a repeat would occur of a 1970 crisis that led to higher oil prices. By the end of the year this agreement was in shambles, as was the international economy. An October 1973 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors led OPEC to place an embargo on oil for the West and to raise the price of oil to previously unimagined heights.



Cold War Covert Action

The overthrow of democratically elected Chilean president Salvador Allende by the military was one of the most controversial covert actions carried out by the United States. It became the centerpiece for a major congressional investigation into the CIA.

September 12, 1973: Allende Out, Reported Suicide; Marxist Regime in Chile Falls in Armed Forces' Violent Coup

Leading with a subhead stating "U.S.: Not Surprised," a series of articles detailed the military coup that brought down the government of Salvador Allende Gossens, a Marxist elected in 1970. This represented the first time in more than 40 years that the military had intervened in politics. Coup leaders claimed they did so in order to liberate Chile "from the Marxist yoke." They proceeded to arrest more than 100 communists and socialists and ordered others to appear at the Defense Ministry to face arrest. One of the articles noted that the United States "had a record of interfering in Chilean politics, principally with money before Dr. Allende came to power" and since then it largely had been a "disinterested bystander." Evidence would soon surface that the Nixon administration had actively worked to bring down Allende's government and that the CIA had been in contact with those who led the coup, leading to charges that they were involved in an assassination plot.

Post-Cold War World Politics Headlines

August 3, 1990: INVADING IRAQIS SEIZE KUWAIT AND ITS OIL; U.S. CONDEMNS ATTACK, URGES UNITED ACTION

Printed in all capital letters and running across the entire front page, this headline announced the beginning of the Persian Gulf War. With the subhead "NAKED AGGRESSION," the article contained a call by President Bush for collective action. The president also banned nearly all imports from Iraq and froze all of its assets in the United States. The reporter noted that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait presented Bush with a series of

Victory in Iraq

The Persian Gulf War was the first major post-Cold War military campaign entered into by the United States. Brought about by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it raised hopes that the post-Cold War era would be one in which the international community could unite against aggression. This hope faded as civil wars and ethnic conflicts came to dominate the global agenda and the international community often responded slowly.



dilemmas. The most pressing were (1) the difficulty of direct military action in the region, (2) fear of a surge in oil prices that could harm economic growth, (3) the negative impact this crisis could have on budget negotiations between the White House and Congress in which a gasoline tax was on the table, and (4) the possibility that a war could damage Republican chances in the fall election. Related articles spoke of limited U.S. military options due to the lack of warning and the geography of the region. Concern was also expressed that the invasion would lead to a reduction in U.S. influence in the region because it might serve as a rallying point for anti-U.S. sentiment.

May 10, 1993: Mysterious Disease Kills at Least 56 in One Month in Zaire

Found on page 14 of its international edition, this *NYT* article details the outbreak of still another deadly “emerging virus” in Africa that was believed to have killed at least 56 people, hospitalized another 100, and led to the quarantine of the city of Kikwit and its 600,000 inhabitants. Experts from the World Health Organization had begun to investigate the outbreak and the U.S. State Department was recommending that people planning to travel to Zaire postpone their trips until more information about the situation became known. Speculation focused on the possibility that the virus was Ebola or another hemorrhagic virus. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta were treating samples of the virus at biosafety level 4, the highest level of laboratory protection against infection. Although the sample was initially sent to the Tropical Disease Institute in Belgium, this facility no longer dealt with such viruses. Officials in Atlanta stated that they would have to release their information through the Zairian government.

A commentator noted that this situation typified how poorly prepared the international community was to detect and respond to emerging viruses such as Ebola, AIDS, and Legionnaire's disease.

May 26, 1997: Afghan North, Last Holdout, Falls to Army of the Taliban

Chanting "God is Great," Taliban religious fighters captured Mazar-i-Sharif, the last stronghold of their moderate Islamic opponents and in the process united Afghanistan for the first time since Soviet soldiers left in 1989. The Taliban grew out of Afghan refugee camps and for the previous three years had been capturing territory from local warlords or guerrilla forces. The article notes that the Taliban have imposed a "severe version" of Islam in the areas that have fallen under their control: Women are barred from working, alcohol is banned, and men are forced to pray in mosques. Their victory was seen as representing a potential security threat for the newly independent states of Central Asia, which had backed the now defeated moderate Islamic forces. Conversely, the Taliban's victory was seen as strengthening Pakistan's influence in the region because Pakistan had supported their cause. In the wake of this victory, Russia quickly promised to intervene if fighting spread across Afghanistan's northern borders to the Commonwealth of Independent States. The United States responded more positively, seeing a Sunni Afghanistan as a potential counterweight to Shiite Iran as well as a force that could lessen Soviet influence in Central Asia.

October 24, 1997: A Plunge in Hong Kong Shakes Market

What started as a currency problem for Thailand in July 1997 had by October turned into a regional economic crisis of major proportions. Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and now Hong Kong all found their currencies under attack from currency speculators and investors who feared for the future stability and health of the local currency. The 10.4 percent fall in the overall value of stocks traded on the Hong Kong stock market touched off a sellout in Japan, Europe, and the United States. Smaller stock markets in Brazil and Russia also came under pressure. The article cataloged several anticipated effects of the collapse of these Asian stock markets. The first casualty was expected to be the cancellation of several major public works projects such as the building of dams and bridges. Because in many cases American technology was a central component of these undertakings, the net result would be a decline in sales and profits for the involved companies. Second, the U.S. trade deficit with Asia was almost certain to grow. This could create political tensions between the U.S. and its Asian allies and between the president and Congress. Finally, it was suggested that the lack of a forceful American response to the Asian financial crisis raised renewed questions about the extent of America's influence in the region. Guarded optimism was expressed that the crisis could be contained and that prices would stabilize. Early the next week, prices on the Hong Kong stock market fell 12 percent and set off a "world-wide plunge" that sent prices on the New York Stock Exchange down 554 points in the twelfth worst day of trading ever, forcing it and other American stock markets to close early.

May 25, 2000: House in 237–197 Vote Approves Normal Trade Rights for China

Describing it as a “stunning victory for the Clinton administration,” *The New York Times* observed that 20 years of annual congressional reviews of China’s trade status were all but at an end. The reviews were seen by China as humiliating but critics of its human rights record saw them as a valuable tool with which to leverage Chinese leaders. American firms and farming interests lobbied for the measure, while labor unions, religious groups, environmentalists, and veterans organizations opposed it. The large margin of victory was achieved through a series of last-minute legislative maneuvers. Together these measures reportedly added more than 20 “yes” votes to the winning total.

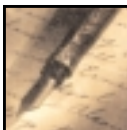
September 12, 2001: U.S. Attacked

Following with “Hijacked Jets Destroy Twin Towers and Hit Pentagon in Day of Terror,” this article recounted the experiences of those inside the World Trade Center and those watching in horror from the streets of Manhattan. In the article, one man voiced a thought expressed around the United States on September 11, 2001. “This is America. How can it happen in America? How?” This was the only story on front pages that day. Other headlines stated “A Somber Bush Says Terrorism Cannot Prevail,” “President Vows to Exact Punishment for Evil,” and “Awaiting the Aftershocks.” In the weeks that followed, U.S. newspapers were filled with accounts of the tragedy in New York, Washington, and western Pennsylvania. Stories of U.S. efforts to garner global support for a worldwide war against terrorism were prominent, and in early October, headlines spoke of U.S.-British bombings of Afghanistan. November brought news of the Taliban evacuation of Kabul and the arrival of U.S. Marines. December news stories told of Osama bin Laden’s videotape that directly linked him to the September 11 attacks. The Documenting History box on page 9 presents an excerpt from President George W. Bush’s address to Congress and the American people, calling for unity and a global campaign to end terrorism.

Beneath the Headlines

A moment’s reflection on these events highlights at least three important aspects of the field of world politics. First, they illustrate just how complex world politics is as a field of study. Our brief sampling of Cold War headlines along with those from the post-Cold War era show underlying similarities across time periods as well as evolution. Viewed from a broad perspective the agenda of world politics is largely unchanged. Issues of conflict and cooperation and of military and economic interaction are present in both. This would be true if we extended our search back to the interwar period, the years leading up to World War I, or earlier.

However, if we change our perspective and take a more tightly focused look, we can see evolution. Events are not simply repeating themselves. The politically divided Korean Peninsula, which for so long appeared always to be on the brink of war, took a major step toward reunification and peace with a breakthrough South Korea–North Korea summit conference in 2000. Conflict reemerged in Afghanistan, but the enemy was now the Taliban and Osama bin Laden rather than communism. The cost of



DOCUMENTING HISTORY

September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attack

Below is an excerpt from a Speech by President George W. Bush to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001.

In this speech, President Bush comments on the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. His address is a call for unity and action. The full text can be found at <http://whitehouse.gov/news/release/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, members of Congress, and fellow Americans:

In the normal course of events, presidents come to this chamber to report on the state of the Union. Tonight, no such report is needed. It has already been delivered by the American people.

We have seen it in the courage of passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground—passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me to welcome his wife, Lisa Beamer, here tonight. (Applause.)

We have seen the state of our Union in the endurance of rescuers, working past exhaustion. We have seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers—in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. We have seen the decency of a loving and giving people who have made the grief of strangers their own.

My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union—and it is strong. (Applause.)

Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done. . . . (Applause.)

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars—but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war—but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks—but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day—and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack. . . .

And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. (Applause.) Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every

terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. (Applause.) Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. (Applause.) The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. (Applause.) The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. (Applause.)

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. . . . (Applause.)

Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Applause.) From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. . . .

We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world. The United States is grateful that many nations and many inter-

(continued)

national organizations have already responded—with sympathy and with support. Nations from Latin America, to Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to the Islamic world. Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: An attack on one is an attack on all.

The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, cannot only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what—we're not going to allow it. (Applause.)

Looking Back/Looking Forward

As we shall see in later chapters, terrorism is not an entirely new foreign policy problem. As with so many of the issues we will deal with in *International Politics in a Changing World* it is a problem that present unique and unprecedented problems but whose roots go back to the Cold War period and even earlier. Terrorist attacks stunned the world at the Munich Olympics and with the destruction of Pan Am flight 107 over Lockerbie, Scotland. As you read this chapter think about the ways in which President Bush's speech reflects how policy makers think about foreign policy problems. How would an analyst have talked about September 11, 2001? What information would you put in the speech?

Persian Gulf oil reemerged as an issue in 2000 with gas prices in many parts of the United States soaring over the \$2-per-gallon mark. Yet 2000 was not a replay of 1973. The international oil market was quite different. Oil-producing states were not nearly as unified, multinational oil companies were more numerous, and nearly three decades of environmental legislation were in place to reduce harmful automobile emissions.

Second, these events embody very different types of questions for policy makers and analysts. For policy makers, events are problems to be solved. They are action-forcing incidents that challenge policy makers to formulate a response in a setting that is often characterized by incomplete information and very real time constraints. For analysts, these events represent puzzles to be solved or mysteries to be unraveled. They are incidents that can be revisited many times and reexamined as new information comes to light. Such was the case in 1997 when India stunned the world by announcing that it had tested a nuclear device. Policy makers felt an immediate need to act. Immediate efforts had to be undertaken to deter Pakistan from testing its own nuclear device; India had to be deterred from testing more bombs; and a G8 Economic Summit conference was about to take place where united action would be expected. The time that analysts use for reflection and data gathering was not available to policy makers.

Third, the complexity and diversity of events highlighted above raises questions about how we should go about studying them. Are the well-established ways of looking at world politics as useful today as they were four decades ago? Can one theoretical perspective give us insight into all of these issues? If the answers to these questions are "no," then what additional theories should we employ and what is their relationship to the scholarship that has preceded them? Are they supplementary perspectives to be used with the more traditional theories or do they replace them?

**9-11**

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon catapulted post-Cold War international relations into a new phase in which the United States has sought to lead a global coalition against terrorism. Support from other states was initially strong but became uneven with the passage of time.

STUDYING WORLD POLITICS: POLICY MAKERS AND ANALYSTS

It is this mix of continuity and newness that makes studying world politics challenging today. Our purpose in the remainder of this chapter is to introduce the ways in which policy makers and analysts put together the mental maps they use to understand world politics. We begin here because it is the efforts of these two groups to define issues and frame solutions that give world politics its defining characteristics as a field of study.

Differing Perspectives

Policy makers and analysts go about creating their mental maps of world politics differently. A long-standing tension exists between the two over how best to unlock the essence of world politics. Policy makers frequently complain that the models used by analysts to study foreign policy do not capture the essence of what they do and that their findings are so abstract that they provide little by way of policy guidance. Policy makers also point out that compared to analysts they do not have the luxury of spending as much time as they need to find information, formulate answers, and double-check their work. They operate in a world of time pressures, where decisions must be made even if the information available is incomplete or of questionable validity. Moreover, in choosing a course of action, policy makers note that they must take into account factors having nothing to do with the theoretical correctness of the solution. Policy makers must also ask these important questions: Can the policy be implemented; will the public support it; and what will its effect be on a state's broader interests?

For their part, analysts often are frustrated by the lack of understanding policy makers exhibit in dealing with problems; their inability to see connections between issues; and their willingness to embrace policies that produce a consensus irrespective of whether or not that policy has any analytical integrity. We need to be sensitive to these differences in perspective because they explain much of the tension that exists between the two, and the controversy that surrounds formulating a policy response to problems as diverse as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, human rights violations in China, or the destruction of the Amazon rain forest.

We should be careful not to overstate the gap in perspectives between policy makers and analysts. It is a divide that can be bridged. Alexander George believes that the most promising way to proceed is to focus on “the relationship between knowledge and action in the conduct of foreign policy.” He refers to this as policy-relevant knowledge and sees it as being comprised of three types of information: (1) general conceptualizations of strategy, (2) generalizations about the conditions under which strategies will succeed, and (3) actor-specific knowledge about an adversary.¹

The Force of Habit and the Dilemma of Change

Most of us are creatures of habit. Our days are governed by routines. We rise at the same hour; eat the same foods day after day; watch the same television shows; listen to the same radio station; and read the paper in a fixed sequence. Our habits extend beyond the way in which we organize our daily lives. They also organize the way we look at the world. Our typical response to a problem or situation that demands a decision is not to go out and collect all of the relevant information, identify all of our options, and weigh the evidence accordingly. Rather, we fall back on shortcuts.² We know what we like and dislike; what we want to accomplish and avoid; and what is important to us. We take this information and combine it with an intuitive understanding of how and why things happen as they do. The result is a mental map that allows us to respond quickly and confidently to questions put before us.

Because it saves us from the burden of examining every new question in great detail, we tend to stick with our mental maps as long as they provide us with answers that work. We do not expect to be right all of the time but as long as our mistakes are few in number and tolerable in cost we generally do not see a need to rethink our approach to dealing with problems. In fact, even when our mental maps consistently give us “wrong” answers we often are reluctant to abandon them. By their very nature, habits and routines bring with them a certain comfort zone.

The Cold War generated habits of thought and action that served both policy makers and analysts well. The United States and Soviet Union were the central protagonists in a global struggle for supremacy. All other aspects of world politics paled in importance. The American–Soviet competition seemed to have settled into a pattern characterized by predictable behavior and governed by commonly accepted rules of engagement. The same held true for intra-alliance relations. U.S.–Japanese economic conflict became a regular feature of world politics, as did the ebb and flow of efforts at European integration.

The consistency of these patterns bred a sense of confidence that we really did understand world politics. We spoke confidently about the basic forces driving world politics, the causes of war, the obstacles to economic development, and the role of international law and organizations in settling disputes. Even when we disagreed with one another or encountered cases that we could not quite explain, our faith was not shaken. We were confident that in time additional information would surface, validating our position. We had become so accustomed to its presence that few could conceive of a world without the Cold War. Its abrupt and unexpected ending had a tremendous impact on the study and conduct of world politics. Where once there existed certainty, there was now room for doubt.

In a most fundamental sense, the end of the Cold War deprived policy makers and analysts alike of the luxury of falling back on habit and stock answers to explain unfolding events. As James Schlesinger, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency and Secretary of Defense, put it, with the end of the Cold War and breakup of the Soviet Union, we had lost our “magnetic north pole.”³ No longer was there a trusted place from which to take one’s bearings in addressing foreign policy problems.

The process of questioning the continued value of old habits of thought in studying world politics is well under way. We are, however, far from reaching any consensus on how to think about politics today. Some have adopted an optimistic stance. With the routine of the Cold War broken they saw a time to create a “new world order” in which peace, prosperity, and democracy would replace war and competition as the driving forces in the international arena. Others have responded pessimistically. Prophesizing a period of increased tension and conflict, one observer wrote shortly after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall that “we may soon come to miss the Cold War.”⁴ To get a better sense of how such fundamentally different evaluations of the contemporary scene can be held by individuals viewing the same events, we need to understand how policy makers and analysts construct the mental maps they use to study world politics.

POLICY MAKERS: LEARNING BY ANALOGY

Policy makers learn by matching the present with the past.⁵ They search for historical parallels or analogies to help guide them through the uncertainty of dealing with problems for which there is incomplete or contradictory information. They often do so poorly. Early in World War I, Woodrow Wilson feared that Great Britain and the United States would go to war over the U.S. insistence on its right to sail the seas freely. He reasoned that “Madison and I are the only two Princeton men who have become President. The circumstances of the War of 1812 and now run parallel.”⁶ An example of a more effective use of historical analogies is the Cuban missile crisis during which the United States was confronted with the unexpected problem of responding to the presence of Russian offensive missiles. Here, President John Kennedy rejected calls for an air strike by invoking images of Pearl Harbor (where the Japanese struck without warning) and World War I (which escalated in an unanticipated fashion). He chose a middle course of action. The United States placed a naval blockade around Cuba and warned the Soviet Union that if the missiles were not removed, further military action would be taken.

Rational policy making

An image of the policy-making process that sees decision making as the product of informed choice in which all alternatives are weighed and the option chosen is that which holds the best chance of realizing one's goals at acceptable costs.

Policy makers rely so heavily on historical analogies because of our limited ability to process and interpret large amounts of information. This reality runs against the idealized image of rational policy making that we carry around in our minds.⁷ **Rational policy making** is characterized by (1) clearly articulated goals, (2) complete information, (3) subdivision of the problem into specific tasks or issues, (4) consideration of alternatives, and (5) matching solutions with values. Instead of being “value-maximizers,” policy makers tend to act as “value-satisfiers.” Their search for solutions does not proceed until they find the best answer but rather ends when a satisfactory and sufficient answer is found. Moreover, their search does not begin from a clean slate in which information and values are combined from the “bottom-up” to produce a policy choice. Policy makers approach problems from a “top-down” perspective in which incoming information is matched against a preconceived idea about how to proceed. In doing so policy leaders have been found to respond to ambiguity by interpreting it to suit their needs rather than questioning their starting assumptions or policy preferences. Similarly, they are not open to new and contradictory bits of information. Such information tends to get discarded or ignored.

Historical analogies are relied on so heavily by policy makers as the starting point for evaluating information and solving foreign policy problems because they perform important tasks.⁸ They

1. Define the situation by providing a point of reference,
2. Give policy makers a sense of the political stakes involved,
3. Suggest possible solutions,
4. Point to the likely success or failure of policy options, and
5. Warn policy makers of possible dangers in policy options.

We can illustrate these points by looking at one of the most powerful and frequently invoked historical analogies: “Munich.” Under terms of the Versailles treaty that ended World War I, Germany was to demilitarize permanently its territory east of the Rhine River, but in 1936 Hitler sent German military forces into the Rhineland. Next came the annexation of Austria into Germany, followed by a demand to incorporate the Sudetenland, the ethnically German part of Czechoslovakia, into Germany. Munich was the site of a 1939 conference in which British and French leaders gave in to Adolph Hitler’s demands for the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain proclaimed the Munich agreement as signaling “peace in our time.” However, shortly after Munich, Hitler moved against the rest of Czechoslovakia and on September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland. With this, Britain and France declared war on Germany and World War II was under way.

Munich analogy

An image of the past invoked by policy makers as they cope with a current problem. It warns against the danger of appeasing aggression as the British and French did in dealing with Hitler at the 1938 Munich conference.

The **Munich analogy**, which refers to the consequences following the Munich agreement, performs all five of these tasks. First, it helps to define the situation as one of a state making demands on the international community for territorial concessions. Moreover, the Munich analogy equates the aggressor with Hitler, which sets off an additional set of analogies regarding the nature of that country’s political system and the mental makeup of its leader. Second, the Munich analogy clearly speaks to the political stakes involved. Historical tracts tend to treat Chamberlain as a disgraced leader who was duped by Hitler’s false promises. His

is a place in history to be avoided at all costs. The Munich analogy also offers possible solutions. French and British leaders adopted a policy of appeasement at Munich. Rather than resist Hitler's demands or treat them as illegitimate, they sought to accommodate them through a diplomatic dialogue that removed the problem from the international agenda. By implication, the Munich analogy also suggests adopting the course rejected at Munich: resisting Hitler's demands and fighting to protect the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia. It advises policy makers that there is little to be gained by appeasing an aggressor state. The moral costs associated with appeasement are also great. Chamberlain is not only seen as having failed to protect Great Britain's national interest but he is also seen as having turned his back on the people of Europe.

In the 1990s President George Bush invoked the Munich analogy in justifying military action against Iraq in the Persian Gulf War. Munich was also voiced repeatedly as the international community sought to frame a response to the fighting between Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs following the breakup of Yugoslavia. But the Munich analogy was not the only one put forward as the fighting in Bosnia escalated. Also cited were Vietnam, Lebanon, and Grenada. Each suggests a different set of lessons from the past.

- "Vietnam" refers to the decade-long American involvement that was justified on the basis of containing the spread of communism. Along with "Munich" it is perhaps the most frequently invoked historical analogy. It brings warnings of the dangers of involving oneself in civil wars, the pitfalls of a strategy of graduated escalation in which force is applied gradually rather than in massive amounts, the possible futility of trying to bomb a state to the bargaining table, and the prospect of major domestic unrest should military action not produce a quick victory.
- "Lebanon" refers to the 1983 terrorist attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut where 241 U.S. peacekeepers were killed. They were stationed there following an Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon that was designed to root out Palestinian guerrillas. When large numbers of refugees were killed in camps under the control of Israel's Lebanese allies, it had the effect of plunging Lebanon deeper into civil war. It warns against viewing peacekeeping as a noncombat operation or one in which U.S. forces will be welcomed.
- "Grenada" refers to the 1983 invasion of this Caribbean island. Carried out to rescue American medical students and rid the country of its communist government, this military operation is generally treated as an example of a successful use of force by the United States. By invoking its memory, commentators suggest that military action to bring peace to what was once Yugoslavia can be accomplished much more easily than pessimists believe possible.

As this brief listing suggests, wars are a particularly powerful source of historical analogies. The presence of more than one historical analogy to choose from means that learning from the past is not a passive act. Policy makers may choose from a range of historical analogies. Which one they pick is the product of several factors. Foremost among these is ease of recall. Policy makers rely most heavily

on those analogies that come most quickly to mind. Many of the most frequent historical analogies are generational events that leave deep scars in the collective consciousness of a society. Both Vietnam and Munich fall into this category.

Firsthand personal experiences also serve as an important source of historical analogies. We tend to overgeneralize from events experienced firsthand and neglect insights that might be gained by closely examining the experiences of others. This came through with great clarity in Vietnam when U.S. officials all but ignored the French colonial experience in Indochina. Firsthand experiences that occur early in a policy maker's career are especially influential because it is then that he or she is most open to competing images of reality and ways of approaching problems. As Henry Kissinger, secretary of state under President Richard Nixon, noted in his memoirs, "policy makers live off the intellectual capital they have brought with them into office; they have no time to build more capital."⁹

Another factor that influences which historical analogies will be chosen from those available is its fit with the problem at hand. Evidence suggests that policy makers do not engage in anything approaching an in-depth matching of analogies and policy problems. Instead, they are attracted to the surface commonalities between the two cases. Three features of a past event command the most attention. First, what happened. Policy makers pay far more attention to what happened than why it happened. Hitler invaded Poland; Vietnam fell; Iraq invaded Kuwait. Focusing on *what* happened rather than on *why* creates a type of tunnel vision that obscures from view potentially important differences between the present and the past. Second, policy makers are concerned with success and failure. Multiple dangers exist here. Most policies are designed to achieve several goals and dichotomizing outcomes as a success or failure is insensitive to this point. Moreover, few successes or failures are total nor are they necessarily permanent. There is also the problem of cost. Was too high a price paid for the success; were there alternatives that would have succeeded at a lesser cost? In the case of a past policy that is defined as a failure, there is the implication that some other course of action would have brought success. Finally, in looking to explain the success or failure of a Vietnam or Munich, policy makers place the greatest emphasis on the most visible aspects of the situation. Diplomatic and military histories are written in terms of personalities and strategies, not bureaucratic planning or luck.

The Search for New Analogies

Even if it were not for the end of the Cold War and the changing agenda of world politics, the great historical analogies of the past were likely to lose much of their ability to shape contemporary policies in the twenty-first century. The significance of Munich as a policy-guiding analogy lessens with each passing year as the generation of leaders who entered the political arena in the 1930s passes from view. The **Vietnam analogy**, which refers to the consequences stemming from the American involvement in that war, may also soon lose much of its influence as a post-Vietnam leadership generation moves into positions of political power. The end of the Cold War has accelerated this process of decay by rearranging the foreign policy agendas of states and calling into question many of our basic assumptions about the dynamics of world politics.

Vietnam analogy

An image of the past invoked by policy makers as they cope with a current problem. It warns against the dangers of making incremental military commitments that can entrap a state in an endless conflict such as happened to the United States in the Vietnam War.

The lessened influence of generational events directs our attention to first-hand personal experience as an important source of future historical analogies. Two important consequences may follow from this shift. First, because personal experiences vary widely, we are likely to see a great deal of debate within and between states over how to address foreign policy problems. Much energy will be directed at crafting political symbols to frame political debates over the meaning of “national security” and “national interest.”¹⁰ It follows that we may also see frequent policy reversals as different individuals gain power and new historical analogies gain acceptance. We can expect this condition to continue until the overarching glue provided by a common generational event returns. Once the most likely candidate to replace Munich and Vietnam in the minds of policy makers was the Persian Gulf War. Public opinion polls show that there has been a decided increase in public support for cooperative efforts since the conclusion of that war, but a fundamental realignment in patterns of thought has not taken place.¹¹ Controversy also surrounds the question of whether the Persian Gulf War should be the analogy used in preparing for future conflicts. Somalia and Bosnia, where the conflicts were internal and where the international community was in far less agreement on the identity of the aggressor or the proper response, are put forward by many as more relevant analogies. None of these analogies prepared the United States for a global war against terrorism. President George W. Bush noted that this would be a new and unprecedented type of warfare. Perhaps the World Trade Center will be the analogy of the future.

Second, we may see a wider variety of historical analogies put forward than in the past. No longer is foreign policy making limited to presidents or prime ministers. The voices of legislators, lobbyists, and private citizens now carry considerable weight. Also there is an increased presence of minorities in the policy process. For example, in the United States the personal experiences of women, African-Americans, and Hispanic-Americans often read quite differently from those presented in standardized accounts of the American past. Their repertoire of historical analogies may result in quite different ways of acting and looking at foreign policy problems. Although the forces producing this condition are largely domestic in nature, they are not entirely separate from the end of the Cold War. Wars, and preparation for war, are seen as requiring centralized power free from the restraints of competing political forces.¹² The end of the Cold War thus may signal an end to “foreign policy making as usual” and open the decision-making process up to voices and historical analogies not heard before.

ANALYSTS: LEARNING FROM THEORY

It is not the case that policy makers are concerned with the past, but analysts are not. The difference lies in how the past is studied, the types of mental maps created. Whereas policy makers tend to work from an intuitive feel for the past and focus on singular historical parallels, analysts strive to find patterns among a larger range of events and are far more explicit in how they conduct their inquiry.

Explicitness is crucial to the analysis of world politics because it allows us constantly to check our reasoning against additional cases and lets others explore the soundness of our arguments.¹³

Methodology

Analysts disagree over which research strategy is best suited for uncovering these underlying patterns. David A. Lake and Robert Powell characterize the choice of a methodology as a “bet” as to the best way to investigate a problem.¹⁴ Two different methodologies have received the most attention or had the most bets placed on them.¹⁵ The first is based on the historical method and is referred to as the **traditionalist approach**. Historians seek to acquire knowledge of an event or problem by immersing themselves in its every detail. The task of the scholar is to capture the entire essence of a subject. Not only must the whys and whats of diplomatic and military undertakings be recounted but the context of action must be recreated. An in-depth familiarity with the topic, firsthand observation, and a thorough examination of original documents are the core research tools for the historian. Truth is established by marshaling all of the evidence gathered using these tools and presenting it in a persuasive manner.

During the 1960s many analysts began to apply a very different methodology to the study of world politics. Referred to by some as the **scientific method** and by others as **behavioralism**, this methodology took as its point of departure the belief that events could be understood better if they were taken out of context and examined with other events of the same kind in some type of controlled fashion. Doing so would allow scholars to replicate the work of others. Replication was important to behavioralists because it lay at the heart of the scientific method. Scientific truth was established not by a single researcher making a persuasive case for his or her position but by the ability of others to duplicate this research strategy and get the same result. Replication in the study of world politics was seen as impossible using the traditionalist approach to inquiry.

Behavioralists identified three problems as standing in the way of arriving at a scientific understanding of world politics. First, there was no agreed on vocabulary to guide research. All might agree that power was central to the study of world politics but some analysts defined power in terms of resources; for others it was defined as a goal; and for still others it was defined as a means to achieving a goal.¹⁶ Second, even when analysts agreed that power should be defined in terms of resources, disagreement existed over how to operationalize the concept or give it concrete meaning. Should power be measured in terms of economic resources or military resources? If in terms of military resources, what should be counted: tanks, personnel, nuclear warheads, delivery vehicles, or aircraft? Finally, because findings were presented in a highly personal fashion it was often unclear from traditionalist accounts why an event happened. Did poverty and political alienation have to exist simultaneously to produce revolutions or did poverty lead to political alienation, which then produced a revolution?

What behavioralists wanted were highly structured studies in which **independent** and **dependent variables** were defined, the nature of causation was specified, and terms were operationally defined. Independent variables are the factors one uses to explain an event. A dependent variable is the event one tries to explain.

Traditionalist approach

A way of studying world politics that emphasizes the uniqueness of events and relies on historical case study analyses as their primary methodology. It is generally contrasted with the scientific method.

Scientific method

A way of studying world politics that seeks to emulate the method of investigation employed in the sciences. It makes great use of quantitative data and emphasizes regularities and commonalities in events in constructing and testing theories. It is often contrasted with the traditionalist method.

Behavioralism

An approach to studying international relations that emphasizes the actions of individuals or groups and studies them through the scientific method.

Independent variable

The factor thought to influence, affect, or cause some other phenomenon.

Dependent variable

The event or political phenomenon that one is trying to explain.

They wanted studies to be organized around a **hypothesis**, which stated a relationship under investigation using clearly identifiable dependent and independent variables (i.e., high levels of poverty—the independent variable—lead to revolution—the dependent variable). Moreover, each of these terms would be defined in operational terms (i.e., a high level of poverty exists when x percentage of the population has an income below y dollars; a revolution exists when x percent of the adult population takes up arms against the government). These variables are often presented as part of a mathematical or formal **model** that seeks to take a theoretical argument and present its core ideas in a more precise and exact fashion than would otherwise be possible. For the behaviorist the ability of models to explain world politics is constrained only by the tools available and our understanding of the problem. Insights emerge from a *modeling dialogue* in which researchers continually modify their models to take into account findings from other modeling efforts.¹⁷

Behavioralists also argued that if the study of world politics was to advance it had to expand its attention in two different directions. First, concepts from outside political science were turned to in order to provide a broader picture of world politics. Particularly influential were theoretical insights rooted in literature from sociology, economics, anthropology, and psychology. Second, behavioralists also began to direct their attention to forces other than the state in explaining world politics. Important independent variables were also believed to exist in the structure of the international system and human nature. Each of these (people, the state, and the international system) was seen as comprising a distinct **level of analysis**. Each level of analysis comprises a different group of variables that can be used to explain a political phenomenon. Understanding world politics required that one view events from different levels of analysis and discover links between levels (see Figure 1.1).

Hypothesis

A proposition relating two variables in a cause-and-effect relationship.

Model

A simplified depiction of a complex process or structure.

Levels of analysis

An approach for organizing variables in world politics that groups them according to where they are located. Most commonly three levels of analysis are identified: individual, state, and international systems.

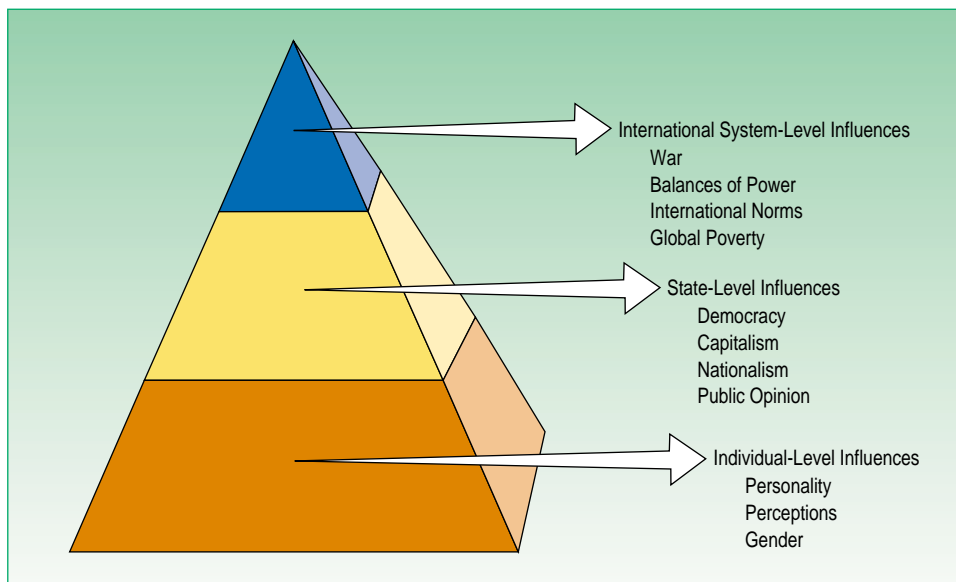


FIGURE 1.1
Levels of Analysis
Used for Studying
World Politics

Traditionalists countered with two arguments of their own. First, by importing the value-free approach of the natural sciences to the study of world politics, behavioralists had lost sight of the larger normative questions that were at the heart of international relations. Instead of inquiring about the conditions that produced peace and war or the meaning of the national interest, behavioralists had become obsessed with measuring and quantifying phenomena. Second, in spite of their concern for methodological rigor, behavioral research was also producing inconsistent and contradictory results because of the inherent difficulty of measuring and assigning precise meanings to key concepts. From the point of view of the traditionalist, the net result was a tendency to prove the obvious and measure what was readily available rather than tackle the truly important questions.

The traditionalist–behavioralist debate ended in a compromise that sought to combine the positive features of both into world politics research. It acknowledged that the study of world politics must be carried out in a more rigorous fashion than was the case with traditionalist research, while at the same time insisting that attention must be paid to the larger, normative issues central to the study of world politics such as security, welfare, justice, power, and peace.

Recently a third methodological approach to studying world politics has gained favor among analysts. **Postmodernism** takes exception to the assumption made by both traditionalism and behavioralism that it is possible to find a correct answer to any analytical issue.¹⁸ All knowledge is held to be contextual and dependent on one's perspective. Finding truth is impossible because there is no universally shared experience. All one can hope to do is promote a dialogue that unearths the hidden assumptions and distortions that are present in narrative accounts of world politics. Rather than working with past events in order to manage the present and future, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct speeches and writings in order to show how something was possible given the language, imagery, and symbols used in these narratives.¹⁹

Postmodernism

An approach to studying world politics that emphasizes understanding context and perspectives in lieu of the pursuit of scientific objectivity.

Theory

Apart from being divided over what methodology to employ in studying world politics, analysts have also disagreed over what features of world politics are most important. Evidence of this disagreement can be found in the range of theories used by analysts in their studies. **Theories** are mental maps that help us understand world politics in ways that take us beyond the limits of intuition and the listing of information. Consisting of general statements that specify how phenomena are linked together, theories help make world politics understandable by simplifying it and directing our attention to what is held to be its key features.

Theories allow us to perform four important tasks in studying world politics. First, they allow us to describe what is happening in an economical fashion. We do not have to scrutinize the front pages of newspapers day after day or delve into medieval history to present a narrative account of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Theories direct our attention to a more select list of factors held to be important by our theoretical perspective. Second, theories allow us to explain what is happening. Here we move beyond simply identifying what has transpired and begin to organize discrete pieces of information into a coherent picture. One of the most challenging aspects of world politics is that it is possible to put the

Theory

A set of interrelated propositions that seek to explain political phenomena.

pieces together in any number of ways depending on one's theoretical perspective. It is this ability that lies at the root of much of the controversy over how best to study world politics. Third, theory allows us to predict. We can use the understanding of how and why phenomena are linked to look into the future, confident that when one part of the pattern begins to emerge the rest will follow. Finally, because theories provide us with insight into the dynamics of world politics, they allow us to prescribe solutions to problems. Here, we are making a normative, or value-based, statement about how a problem ought to be addressed. We do so in the hopes of "fixing" the problem or at least moving us closer to some desired position such as a peaceful and democratic international system. Without theory to guide us we would have little to go on when making recommendations or choosing among competing proposals.

In the following section we present a brief overview of how international relations theorizing has developed over time. Doing so will allow us to gain a better understanding of the major points of dispute among the contending theoretical perspectives that now vie for prominence in the study of world politics.²⁰

Idealism versus Realism

Prior to World War I the study of world politics existed at the fringes of several academic disciplines—most notably history, philosophy, and law. A unifying theme running through the writings to emerge from these disciplines was the belief that the fundamental characteristics of world politics were unchangeable. The peace, prosperity, and stability of the period between the late 1880s and the onset of World War I reinforced this bias and created a sense of complacency among analysts. Their writings largely were directed at describing current events and exploring the writings of philosophers such as Machiavelli, Thucydides, and Hobbes for what they said about the nature of world politics.

World War I changed that. How could such a tragic war happen? Building on their liberal intellectual tradition, American scholars sought answers within the context of an essentially legalistic and moralistic framework. War was not inevitable; it occurred because of the way in which the international system was structured and as a result of bad leadership. The cure for the first problem was to do away with the prewar emphasis on power politics and its primary method of keeping the peace—the **balance of power system**. This is an international system that is organized around the preferences of the major powers who take it upon themselves to balance each other's power and maintain order. In its place, international laws, agreements, and institutions would be established to allow the inherent reasonableness of individuals to surface and collaborative peace efforts to flourish. The solution to the problem of bad leadership was democracy. Wars occurred when people either did not know what was happening or were misled. If the process of making foreign policy could be opened to public scrutiny and citizens could exercise greater control over public officials, leaders would be less able to steer countries into war.

As one would expect from a perspective that viewed human nature as essentially good, this scholarship was optimistic in tone and confident that the necessary changes could be brought about to ensure international peace and prosperity. This approach to thinking about world politics led to several major innovations. In 1919 the League of Nations was established as part of the Treaty of Versailles,

Balance of power system

An international system that is organized around the preferences of major powers, one of which self-consciously takes the role of balancer. It switches sides freely, ensuring that no group of states can dominate all others and thus maintaining peace.

Collective security

A means for providing for international peace that is based on an “all-against-one” logic. An attack on any state is considered an attack on all. It presumes a state’s loyalty to the international community takes precedence over its loyalty to allies.

Idealism

A perspective for studying world politics that emphasizes the importance of community, international law and organization, and cooperation.

which formally ended World War I. The League of Nations tried to make war illegal. It also sought to replace the prewar balance of power system with one based on the principles of **collective security**. Now, peace would be maintained by having all states pledge in advance to unite against aggression rather than relying on the individual efforts of states to hold would-be aggressors in check. In 1922 the leading sea powers met at the Washington Naval Conference where they agreed on a formula that would limit the size of their respective navies. They did so in hopes of denying any one state a decisive military advantage in sea power and preventing a costly naval arms race. In 1928, the United States and France negotiated the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which outlawed war as an instrument of foreign policy.

President Woodrow Wilson is closely identified with this school of thought (which critics would soon refer to as **idealism** because of its emphasis on the idea of community and rejection of power). He was a major force behind the creation of the League of Nations. In his “Fourteen Points” speech to Congress in 1918, he championed many of the causes that occupied an important place on the idealists’ political agenda. Numbered among them were self-determination, open diplomacy (“open covenants, openly arrived at”), reduction in armaments, and an end to colonialism. That the U.S. Congress refused to join the League of Nations was an early sign that idealism was not embraced by all and that a challenging perspective would soon crystallize.

In Europe, Hitler came to power in Germany and set it on the road to rearmament, expansionism, and war. In Asia, Japan pulled out of arms control agreements, built up its military establishment, and invaded Manchuria. In Africa, Mussolini’s Italy annexed Ethiopia as part of its plan to establish an Italian empire. By 1939 the world was once again at war. Two very different responses were made to the growing gap between the principles espoused by scholars and the realities of world politics.²¹ One group of writers insisted that the principles were correct and could ensure peace if applied correctly—and there was some truth to their argument. Much of the reform agenda they championed was never implemented or executed properly. Colonialism was not ended. The agreement reached at the Washington Naval Conference was abandoned in the 1930s. And the League of Nations proved unable to stop the expansionist aims of Germany, Japan, or Italy.

A second group of scholars concluded that the problem lay not in the application of these principles but with the principles themselves. World politics was not an exercise in writing laws and treaties or in creating international organizations; it was a struggle for power carried out under conditions that bordered on anarchy. Adherents to this new school of thought referred to themselves as *realists* and labeled the others *idealists*.

Realists argued that the focus of research in international relations must be on the state and discovering the fundamental forces that drive world politics. Such a focus would reveal that leaders have far less freedom to maneuver than idealists believed to be the case. Realists maintained that laws and morality played little part in the workings of world politics and that a state’s primary obligation was to itself, not the international community, other states, or humanity. Self-preservation under these conditions demands that a state be able to protect itself because it cannot count on help coming from any other quarter. Policy makers, concluded realists, must always engage in the pursuit of power. To do otherwise (to put one’s faith in the defensive ability of laws, organizations, or public

opinion) invites war and defeat. Peace is possible only when states follow their own narrowly defined self-interest. Creating institutions that ignore these fundamental principles or trying to change them were held to be utopian and bound to fail.

Realism emerged from World War II as the preeminent theoretical perspective for studying world politics. No realist scholar was more influential than Hans Morgenthau.²² Writing in 1948 he defined world politics as a struggle for power governed by “objective laws that had their roots in human nature.” Morgenthau continued that the concept that provided us with the best guide for maneuvering through the landscape of world politics was “interests defined in terms of power” (just as economists think of interests as defined in terms of wealth) and that the supreme virtue in world politics was “prudence.” World politics left little room for embracing universal moral principles, taking on moral crusades, or trying to discern the motives of policy makers.

Cold War Challenges to Realism

Realism did not go unchallenged as the dominant approach to studying world politics during the Cold War. The two most significant challengers were globalism and dependency theory.²³ Before examining these approaches, we should note that by this time realism had also undergone a transformation of sorts. Many analysts now defined themselves as adherents of **neorealism**, as opposed to classical realism.²⁴

Neorealists continue to view world politics as a competitive struggle for survival among states in an anarchic international system in which international law, international organization, and morality have little influence. They part company with their classical realist counterparts over what they see as the central driving force behind this condition. For classical realists it is basic human nature. People are inherently selfish and bent on acquiring power. Neorealists attribute this condition to the structure of the international system. This structure is a product of state interaction. It emerges spontaneously out of the efforts of states to secure their own survival. Once created, it becomes a force that states can no longer control but, instead, controls them. Thus, states are forced into building up their power resources and practicing balance of power politics by the logic of how the international system is structured.

Globalism served as a generic term to cover a variety of realist critiques that agreed on several points.²⁵ First, realism had overemphasized the role of the state. States were still the major actors in world politics but they were not the only ones of importance. The actions of multinational corporations, international organizations, terrorist groups, and nongovernmental bodies must be studied if world politics is to be understood. Moreover, the state was not a unitary actor. Congress, the president, and the State Department all have different foreign policy views and are capable of acting on them independently of the others. Under such conditions terms like “U.S. foreign policy” and “the national interest” lose much of their conceptual clarity and theoretical importance. Second, globalists rejected the sharp distinction between the domestic and foreign arenas. The two have become blurred and, as a result, the agenda of world politics has expanded to encompass human rights, environmental, and development questions. Third, realism was insensitive to the reality of, and potential for, cooperation in world politics. It was a

Realism

The classic perspective for studying world politics. It starts from the assumption that world politics is a struggle for power carried out under anarchic conditions. This relentless competition is rooted in the sinful condition of human nature. Security, not peace, is the principal objective of foreign policy.

Neorealism

Shares with realism the emphasis on power politics and the devaluation of morality in explaining foreign policy. It differs from realism in emphasizing the distribution of power in the international system rather than human nature as the primary reason for this.

Globalism

Shares with idealism an emphasis on cooperation and international law and organization as the central aspects of world politics. Asserts that this is less due to the inherent goodness of people than it is to the changed nature of world politics problems that are now so complex they require collaborative efforts rather than unilateral action.

Dependency theory

A perspective on international politics that stresses the exploitive nature of the relationship between rich and poor countries that are rooted in capitalist international economic relations.

partial theory—one that saw only the darker side of world politics. Finally, globalists contended that military power had lost much of its utility as an instrument of foreign policy due to the growing economic interdependence among states. Taken together these conditions depicted a global arena in which states were not condemned to war and in which reform and progress were possible.

Dependency theory rejected realism for quite different reasons and lacked the optimism that characterized much of globalist writing.²⁶ Dependency theory is a perspective on international politics that stresses the exploitive nature of the relationship between rich and poor countries that are rooted in capitalist international economic relations. In the forefront of those who adopted the dependency perspective were Latin American scholars who saw two major blind spots in the literature on political development. First, it emphasized political forces to the virtual exclusion of economic ones in explaining the fate of developing states. Second, development problems were treated as domestic issues with little regard for the international context within which states were trying to develop. Realism contributed to both of these failings through its dichotomizing of foreign and domestic policy, and its claim that policy makers constantly seek either to keep power, use power, or demonstrate power.²⁷

Dependency theorists argued that shifting one's attention away from domestic political factors to economic and international ones placed the plight of developing states in an entirely different light. For example, the end of colonialism did not mark the end of the exploitation of developing states by industrialized states; it only changed the form of that exploitation from military to economic. Developing states remained in an inferior, dependent position. Wealthy states used their positions of economic dominance in order to structure the international system to serve their interests. Their positions of dependency left developing states unable to define effectively their own development goals or to advance the welfare concerns of their populations because their economies were set up and organized to serve the interests of the industrialized states. Goods were manufactured for export to these states while the production of basic goods for domestic consumption was neglected.

Post-Cold War Challenges to Realism

The issues raised by globalists and dependency theory about the proper focus of international relations theorizing were never resolved. The debate was cut short by the sudden and unexpected collapse of communism in the Soviet Union. A new debate has begun. The value of realism is once again at its center. Is it a theory that still provides us with a useful mental map for making sense of the complexities of world politics or does it distort our understanding of what is transpiring in the world around us? For some, the answer is no because realism has become “stretched beyond all recognition.”²⁸ It is now a “hindrance rather than a help” in directing research and shaping public discussions on world problems today because all that is left of its core meaning are the notions that states are rational actors and that the international system is anarchic. This criticism has been accepted as a call to action by some. One noteworthy line of inquiry seeks to root realism in evolutionary theory to give it back its distinctiveness.²⁹

In addition to questions about its internal coherence, realism continues to face challenges from competing perspectives. We will concentrate our attention

on three of the most visible lines of criticism: neo-idealism, feminism, and constructivism.³⁰

In his 1993 presidential address to the International Studies Association, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., raised this question: Is this the neo-idealist moment in international studies?³¹ Prior to the ascendancy of realism, idealism was the dominant theoretical perspective for studying international relations. Its assertions about the inherent ability of people and states to cooperate; the importance of democracy for world peace; and the moderating impact of international law, international organization, and disarmament informed the actions of a generation of policy makers. Realist theory pictured a far darker side of world politics, one that corresponded well to the maneuvering of Hitler and Stalin. As realist theory rose in prominence, idealism faded away. Periodically, its core ideas would reemerge, always as part of some other critique of realism (for example, see our discussion of globalism) rather than as a full-blown neo-idealist challenge. The end of the Cold War changed this. Now, policy makers and theorists began to talk in earnest about promoting democracy, bringing about significant cuts in weapons systems, strengthening the United Nations, and promoting international law. In this changed international system, Wilson appeared to be more of a visionary than a naive statesperson, and the failings of idealism due more to the temper of the times than the ideas themselves.

This newfound respectability has placed **neo-idealism** at the forefront of challengers to realism. A modern variant of idealism, neo-idealism places special emphasis on the role of international organizations, shared values, and nonstate actors in the study of world politics. It has led to charges that the realists, not the idealists, misread the lessons of history and oversimplified the concept of power. For example, Stanley Kober argues that using an idealist perspective would show that World War II occurred not because of the necessities of geopolitics but because of the nature of German politics, thereby reaffirming the idealist argument that a country's foreign policy is linked to the structure of its domestic political institutions.³² In a similar vein, Robert Keohane wrote in 1998 that "to analyze world politics in the 1990s is to discuss international institutions: the rules that govern elements of world politics and the organizations that help implement those rules."³³ Superpowers, even unchallenged ones, need rules. Without general rules the cost of achieving foreign policy goals through "arm-twisting" would be too great.

A second line of criticism comes from feminist writings on international relations. **Feminist theory** asserts that realism is a fundamentally flawed theoretical perspective because it denies the influence of gender on the conduct and study of world politics.³⁴ A focus on gender directs our attention to culturally constructed categories and socially learned behaviors that are associated with masculinity and femininity. Moreover, it sensitizes us to the extent to which the two sets of behavior are linked in our minds (it is impossible to define something as masculine without making implicit use of feminine as a companion category) and the extent to which masculine qualities constantly are valued over feminine qualities in certain spheres of life. International relations is one of these areas.

Feminist theorists note that mainstream writings on world politics, whether they are realist or not, generally treat the field as "ungendered" because its anchoring concepts (anarchy, power, the state, interdependence) and fundamental questions (war, peace, justice) transcend ideas of gender rather than build on them. However, the mental maps we rely on to simplify the world are rooted in

Neo-idealism

A modern variant on idealism that places special emphasis on the role of international organizations, shared values, and nonstate actors as forces for organizing world politics.

Feminist theory

A perspective for studying world politics that takes as its point of departure the gendered nature of political phenomena and the need to explicitly take gender into account in one's analysis.

our own experiences. This is important because gender sets limits on how we view reality and in the process distorts it. Thus, writers on world politics theorize about what is important to them and do so in terms of concepts that make sense to them. Feminist theorists then proceed to catalog the overwhelming extent to which writers on international relations have been males.

We can illustrate the point by returning to the first debate between realists and idealists. A series of concepts is relied on to structure the field, which has the practical effect of removing women. Among these are the concepts of the state, power, and the distinction between public and private affairs. As we have seen, the state is treated by realists as the central actor in world politics. Two important dimensions to state behavior are “interests defined in terms of power” and the “reasons of state” argument, which holds that state morality differs from that governing human relations in our private lives.

Feminist theorists note that in each case, gender is relevant. Rebecca Grant argues that the model for the modern state is the Greek state, which also “marked the transition from societies based on kinship to the domination of patriarchal units like the male-headed family.”³⁵ With the development of the state, two sets of social relations were established. Female roles centered on a private sphere of family and home, while male roles extended to include the public roles of citizen and soldier. This led to a distinction between public and private morality; a distinction that feminist theory does not embrace. Instead, it sees one set of moral principles linking all areas of human activity and denies the possibility of arbitrarily dichotomizing the human experience.

Because the state was the product of male thinking, state power was conceived of in masculine terms with the expected emphasis on control and domination. Feminist scholarship defines power in terms of collaboration, nurturing, or power *to* rather than power *over*. From the feminist perspective, power relations look less like steep pyramids with permanently assigned positions of superiority and inferiority and more like a rotating circle in which no one is always on top.

J. Ann Tickner has constructed a feminist reformulation of classical realist principles to illustrate the extent to which they provide different ways of looking at world politics. She focuses on Morgenthau’s six principles of realism.³⁶ A comparison of the two is presented in Table 1.1. Tickner concludes that presenting a feminist alternative to Morgenthau is not to deny the validity of his work but to allow us to begin to think about world politics in multidimensional terms and recognize the existence of multiple realities.

A third challenger to realists comes from constructivists. This perspective emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis and the need to determine the meaning of ideas and events from the setting in which they are put forward. From their perspective, power, anarchy, economics, and institutions do not structure international behavior. Rather, it is ideas that matter. Understanding world politics requires that we understand the social, cultural, and intellectual context within which international events are embedded. No automatic response exists. There is no reason to expect consistency of response across time and space. As Alexander Wendt comments, “anarchy is what states make of it.”³⁷ Throughout the Cold War and after, Israel and North Korea pursued nuclear weapons. Both are small states surrounded by hostile neighbors and from an objective reading of their security concerns acquiring nuclear weapons made sense. Yet, the United States responded quite differently to the two. North Korea was defined as a rogue state

TABLE 1.1

Morgenthau's Principles of Realism and Feminist Theory

<i>Morgenthau's Principles of Realism</i>	<i>Tickner's Reinterpretation</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature, which is unchanging; therefore, it is possible to develop a rational theory that reflects these objective laws. 2. The main signpost of political realism is the concept of interest defined in terms of power which infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible. Political realism stresses the rational, objective and unemotional. 3. Realism assumes that interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid but not with a meaning that is fixed once and for all. Power is the control of man over man. 4. Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action. 5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. It is the concept of interest defined in terms of power that saves us from moral excess and political folly. 6. The political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere; he asks 'How does this policy affect the power of the nation?' Political realism is based on a pluralistic conception of human nature. A man who was nothing but 'political man' would be a beast, for he would be completely lacking in moral restraints. But, in order to develop an autonomous theory of political behaviour, 'political man' must be abstracted from other aspects of human nature. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A feminist perspective believes that objectivity, as it is culturally defined, is associated with masculinity. Therefore, supposedly 'objective' laws of human nature are based on a partial, masculine view of human nature. Human nature is both masculine and feminine; it contains elements of social reproduction and development as well as political domination. Dynamic objectivity offers us a more connected view of objectivity with less potential for domination. 2. A feminist perspective believes that the national interest is multidimensional and contextually contingent. Therefore, it cannot be defined solely in terms of power. In the contemporary world the national interest demands cooperative rather than zero sum solutions to a set of interdependent global problems which include nuclear war, economic well-being and environmental degradation. 3. Power cannot be infused with meaning that is universally valid. Power as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with femininity. 4. A feminist perspective rejects the possibility of separating moral command from political action. All political action has moral significance. The realist agenda for maximizing order through power and control gives priority to the moral command of order over those of justice and the satisfaction of basic needs necessary to ensure social reproduction. 5. While recognizing that the moral aspirations of particular nations cannot be equated with universal moral principles, a feminist perspective seeks to find common moral elements in human aspirations which could become the basis for de-escalating international conflict and building international community. 6. A feminist perspective denies the autonomy of the political. Since autonomy is associated with masculinity in Western culture, disciplinary efforts to construct a world view which does not rest on a pluralistic conception of human nature are partial and masculine. Building boundaries around a narrowly defined political realm defines political in a way that excludes the concerns and contributions of women.

Source: J. Ann Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Realism: A Feminist Reformation," *Millenium* 17 (1988), 429–40.

Constructivism

An approach to studying world politics that emphasizes contextual analysis and the need to determine the meaning of ideas and events from the setting in which they are cast.

whose possession of nuclear weapons was to be feared and openly challenged. Israel was seen as more responsible. Its presumed possession of nuclear weapons was regretted but not seen as threatening to U.S. security. What mattered were ideas (our view of Israel and North Korea), not the possession of nuclear weapons.

Those who adhere to **constructivism** seek to “problematize” the study of world politics. Rather than accept state interests as a given or the influence of anarchy, economics, or international law as all-encompassing, they seek to show how and why these forces came to exert the influence they have over state behavior. In doing so, constructivists place norms and ideas at the center of the study of world politics. There are no underlying and permanent rules of international relations, as realists maintain. Changing norms and ideas structure the way in which international actors define their interests and relate to others. They define identities and generate expectations about how to behave. Change in world politics is a by-product of changes in the ideas that shape how individuals and leaders think about international relations.³⁸

Between Celebration and Despair

Where does this leave us? Borrowing from the title of a recent review of the literature in the field, it leaves us somewhere between celebration and despair.³⁹ Celebration because the latest challenges to realism have given new life to long dormant perspectives on international relations and allowed new ones to be aired. Despair because it seems we are further than ever away from a consensus on how to study world politics and what to study. And if the postmodernists are correct, there is little likelihood that we will ever reach a true understanding of the field. Stephen Walt, who argues that the many perspectives currently competing for dominance all capture important aspects of world politics, puts a middle perspective forward.⁴⁰ “Our understanding [of world affairs] would be impoverished were our thinking confined to only one of them.” Similarly, the “complete” diplomat of the future needs to be aware of the role that power, economics, domestic politics, and ideas play in world affairs.

We are also left somewhere between celebration and despair when looking at the gap separating analysts from policy makers. The divide remains real. James Kurth recently asserted that “most academics . . . are only academics. . . . They therefore have not had the breadth of experience to give them a sense of the reality of international relations.”⁴¹ More charitably, Joseph Lepgold notes that a continuum of activity exists that is devoted to the study of world politics problems and runs the gamut from pure theory building at one extreme to pure policy making at the other.⁴² In between we find intermediate activities involving case study analysis of world politics problems and the analysis of issue-oriented puzzles that link the two worlds. An example of how this might be done comes from studying why military interventions work: “Skilled practitioners benefit from acting a bit like social scientists” in examining case studies and making inferences about the likely effects of a contemplated intervention.⁴³ Bridges linking these research agendas already exist and are necessary if our understanding of world politics is to increase. The challenge is to strengthen them and provide for more interaction and collaboration between analysts and policy makers. Table 1.2 presents a framework for understanding how the work of policy makers and analysts relates to one another.

TABLE 1.2

The Two Worlds of Studying World Politics

<i>PROFESSIONAL IR LITERATURES AND ACTIVITIES</i>			
<i>Theory Building</i>		<i>Policy Applications</i>	
<i>Group I</i>	<i>Group II</i>	<i>Group III</i>	<i>Group IV</i>
General theory	Issue-oriented puzzles	Case-oriented explanations	Policy making
Low	Proximity to Specific Policy Problems		High

Source: Reprinted with permission from *Political Science Quarterly* 113 (Spring 1998), 43–62.

CONCLUSION

The conduct and study of world politics are undergoing dramatic changes in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The catalyst for these changes was the sudden and unexpected ending of the Cold War. This event shook us free from the sense of complacency and routine that had come to characterize world politics as a field of study. Today, both policy makers and analysts are reexamining their basic assumptions about world politics and reevaluating the usefulness of the mental maps they have relied on to make sense of its complexity. These mental maps are not identical, so the search for new answers will proceed differently. For policy makers this reexamination will center on the continued usefulness of historical analogies such as those embodied in the terms “Munich” and “Vietnam” and configuration of new ones. For analysts it will take the form of continuing debates over the value of realism as a theoretical model of world politics and the proper methodology to use in carrying out studies.

Our purpose in *International Politics in a Changing World* is not to argue the case for any particular historical analogy or theoretical model. Rather, we seek to make two points. First, understanding world politics today requires an appreciation of the past and present as well as a concern for the future. We need to have both a sense of what has happened (and is happening) plus an awareness of how these events can be studied in order to prepare for the future. For this reason, the next chapter presents an overview of how international relations as a field of study has addressed two topics: understanding the Cold War and building democracy. The former is a topic that once was of primary concern; the latter is now among the most written about subjects in the field. We continue this concern for establishing a foundation for studying world politics in the second and third parts of *International Politics in a Changing World*. They are constructed as a primer on the study of world politics focusing on basic concepts (Part II) and issue areas (Part III).

Second, the study and practice of world politics has become so complex and differentiated today that single or universal answers on how to approach a problem are becoming increasingly unsatisfactory. Answers must be grounded in an

appreciation for the context within which the problem is taking place. For this reason, the final section of *International Politics in a Changing World* is organized around regions rather than specific topics. Each chapter presents an overview of the international relations history of the region, an overview of the “architecture” of the region—its key international organizations—and an introduction to the perceptions of key states. We also look in detail at one or two key issues in the study and practice of world politics that are particularly germane to the international politics of the region as a way of illustrating how context helps us understand the complex dynamics of world politics policy problems. The regional approach allows us to bring together insights from comparative politics and international relations so that we might better understand which aspects of a problem are unique and which are shared.

Challenge Questions

1. Pick a current issue in international relations. Search newspapers for stories on this subject today, 20 years ago, and 50 years ago. How is the problem different? How is the problem the same? Can you think of reasons why this is so?
2. Pick a current foreign policy problem involving the use of force. What analogies from the past might policy makers draw on in searching for solutions? Which do you think is most appropriate?
3. Construct an imaginary dialogue between realists and idealists over how to deal with a contemporary foreign policy problem.
4. Which of the post–Cold War challenges to realism is most convincing? Justify your position.
5. Are we closer to hope or despair in developing a true understanding of contemporary problems in international relations?

Suggested Websites

Council on Foreign Relations

www.cfr.org

The Council on Foreign Relations is a research center and the publisher of the journal *Foreign Affairs*. Clicking the Theory link under Topics reveals summaries of *Foreign Affairs* articles and book reviews relevant to international relations theory.

Newspaper and News Magazine Archives

www.washingtonpost.com

www.nytimes.com

www.msnbc.com/news/NW-front_Front.asp

Major newspaper and news magazine websites contain archives that can be searched for more information on events in recent history.

Key Terms

Rational policy making 14
 Munich analogy 14
 Vietnam analogy 16
 Traditionalist approach 18
 Scientific method 18
 Behavioralism 18
 Independent variable 18
 Dependent variable 18

Hypothesis 19
 Model 19
 Levels of analysis 19
 Postmodernism 20
 Theory 20
 Balance of power system 21
 Collective security 22
 Idealism 22

Realism 23
 Neorealism 23
 Globalism 23
 Dependency theory 24
 Neo-idealism 25
 Feminist theory 25
 Constructivism 28

To Learn More, Begin Here

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