

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Understanding Global Issues



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International Relations: Understanding Global Issues

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**For my students:
past, present, and future
*P.A.T.***

**To the memory of
Thomas Hovet, Jr.,
colleague, friend, scholar, and global citizen
*R.F.G.***



About the Authors

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Preface

In recent years, writers of international relations textbooks have tended to choose a particularly attractive theme or appealing paradigm as a means of taming a field that at times seems beyond domestication. Equally so, users of international relations texts—teachers and students alike—expect to find an overarching organizational principle that conveniently encompasses the wide interdisciplinary subject matter. Popular texts have been organized around power as the central driving force of international relations; around interdependence as a challenge to traditional power politics analysis; around perception and misperception as fundamental to the fashioning and interaction of foreign policies; around conflict and cooperation as constant, if alternative, explanations of state behavior; and around geopolitical and environmental determinism. Some authors trust to history as the primary basis for understanding the behavior of nations; others insist that a rigorous statistical approach to the study of interstate behavior is the only way to achieve a scientific explanation.

Too often, texts that represent a singular approach warp the subject matter to fit the organizing theory. We believe in an eclectic and issue-oriented approach to the study of international relations. No theory or theme holds a monopoly on truth, although many are powerfully attractive and worthy of study. We thus develop several themes as the book progresses, including the notions that the contemporary world is struggling through a transitional period where conflicting forces of continuity and change are at work; that conflict and cooperation coexist as tools of statecraft; that politics and economics interact to fashion the policies of nations; that old and new actors vie for influence on the international scene; that perception and misperception inform the direction of global politics; and that the study of international relations is rent by debates about whether realists, neo-realists, structuralists, pluralists, traditionalists, or behaviorists best understand the underlying dynamics of international relations.

Understanding international relations, then, requires some consideration of *competing* theories and themes. Our issue-oriented approach allows readers to explore and evaluate different theories about the functions and processes of international relations. In each chapter we provide essential history, basic concepts, and supporting empirical studies to illuminate the subject in general and in detail. Readings at the end of each chapter elaborate further on a particular theory or approach, to deepen the reader's understanding of relevant issues. A list of key terms and study questions in each chapter further helps students master the material. As an additional learning aid, the key terms are defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

Organization

This book consists of five basic parts. In Part I we establish a framework for understanding international relations, review its historical development, and discuss various ways of studying the subject. In Part II we examine the foreign policy-making process, first by reviewing the roles played by numerous international actors, and then by analyzing how decision-making processes work. In Part III we examine the instruments nations use in conducting their interrelations: diplomacy, psychological war, propaganda, terrorism, international organization, international law, and war. In Part IV we explore the basic issues that lead either to tension and conflict or to potential cooperation. In Part V we speculate upon the future of international relations.

In Part I we introduce a recurring theme: We live in an ever more interdependent world. In chapter 1 we use the example of the changing U.S. role in the international system, and explain three predominant schools of thought about how world society is structured and which aspects of it are most relevant to our discipline. In chapter 2 we develop a related theme: The growing interdependence of world communities challenges the traditional state system. We review the historic roots of the state system, discuss key concepts of tradition and change, and consider whether standard assumptions about the state, power, and the national interest can withstand the many forces of contemporary change. In chapter 3 we consider the ways in which international relations may be studied, taking a look at the role of theory building.

In Part II we explore the foreign policy making process. In chapter 4 we assess the relative capabilities of such actors as states, international organizations, nongovernmental agencies, corporations, churches, and individuals. In chapter 5 we further this examination by analyzing the decision-making processes nations use as they draw on their economic, military, political, and social capabilities to protect and advance their interests.

In Part III we examine the instruments that states use to influence other states. In chapter 6 we consider the role of nation-states in the world arena, and question why some states exert more influence than others, through diplomacy, negotiations, and bargaining. We weigh the relative advantages of secret and open diplomacy and of tacit and formal diplomacy, and discuss variations of bargaining and summitry; we relate each of these aspects to the larger issue of why some states are more inclined than others to use diplomacy instead of force in settling disputes. In chapter 7 we characterize the kinds of international actors that would be likely to use either psychological warfare, propaganda, or terrorism. We also assess the impact of variables on the exercise of influence. Here and in chapter 8 we note that technological advances have pushed the capacity for violence to new extremes. Our study of the causes of violence stresses human nature, the nature and organization of the state, and the nature of the international system. We find that in some instances violent outbreaks result from diminished prosperity, but there is no single cause-and-effect relationship that could be improved in order to achieve peace. The key issue is still whether existing treaties, conventions, and laws can prevent the increase of international terrorism. In chapter 9 we consider the fact that some nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations have more power than some nation-states. In chapter 10, on international law and world order, the key question is whether the existing system can adequately handle the many transnational problems that individual nation-states either cannot or will not manage. In chapter 11 we examine monetary problems and their regional and bilateral solutions, looking at the disparity in trade relations, currency exchange, and capital investment between developed and less-developed countries.

As we see in Part IV, the issues of conflict in international relations are as numerous and complex as the cooperative efforts to resolve them. In chapter 12 we describe significant

regional and bilateral issues, focusing on two that produce particular tension: the unequal development in rich and poor countries, and the global arms race. In chapter 13, we consider the fine line between cooperation and conflict, suggesting that when actors have mutual interests that can be furthered by cooperation, when the gains outweigh the losses, and when the number of players is small, then cooperation is not only possible but desirable.

In Part V, chapter 14, we reexamine economic, security, and ecological issues in terms of the perceptions that prevailed in the late 1980s, and anticipate the attitudes of the 1990s and beyond. Throughout the text we seek to understand the human phenomena that permeate all aspects of international relations. The issues we focus on are determined not by personal preference but by the latest scholarly literature.

We expect that our approach will lead to a broader understanding of world politics. We hope that it will stretch and broaden perspectives, rather than narrow them. In a world as diverse in its nations and cultures as our own, it is no surprise that there are so many different and competing perspectives on how they interact. Our issues orientation has allowed us to leave the richness and diversity of international relations, and the study of it, intact. Readers can only benefit.

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Contents



Part I

Understanding International Relations: Basic Concepts and Applications

1

One

The Study of International Relations: A Thematic Introduction 2

Is the United States Still Number One? 3

Why Study International Relations? 9

What Is International Relations? 12

Harlan Cleveland, “The Future of International Governance:
Managing a Nobody-in-Charge World” 17

Study Questions 20

Key Terms 21

Notes 21

Two

Sources of Continuity and Change in International Relations 23

Sources of Continuity 24

The Westphalian System 24

The Nation, the State, and the Nation-State 27

Ordering the State System: Balancing Power 28

Sources of Change 30

The Transition to the Modern International System 30

From Multipolarity to Bipolarity and Back Again 32

Interdependence 36

Basic Issues of Continuity and Change 40

Summary 42

Marvin S. Soroos, "Global Interdependence and the Responsibilities of States:
Learning from the Japanese Experience" 43

Study Questions 46

Key Terms 47

Notes 47

Three

Theories and Approaches in the Study of International Relations 50

What Is Theory? 50

The Building Blocks of Theory 51

Facts 51

Values, Beliefs, and Cognitions 51

The U.S.-Libyan Dispute: Facts and Perceptions 52

Approaches to Building Theory 56

Hypotheses 56

Traditionalism, Behavioralism, and the Scientific Method 57

Contending Paradigms or Pretheories in Contemporary International Relations 59

Realism 59

Structuralism 59

Pluralism 60

Comparing the Paradigms 60

Normative Approaches to the Study of International Relations 61

The Historical Approach 61

The Legal Approach 62

The Cosmopolitan Approach 62

Nonnormative Approaches to the Study of International Relations 62

The Power Approach 63

The Balance of Power Approach 64

The Geopolitical Approach 65

The Systems Approach 66

The Functionalist Approach 68

The Communications Approach 68
The Decision-Making Approach 69

Summary 70

Paul K. Huth, “Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War” 71

Study Questions 81

Key Terms 82

Notes 82



Part II
Elements of Foreign Policy Making
89

Four
The Actors and Their Capabilities 90

Background and Basic Concepts 90
The Actors: Some Initial Considerations 90
Assessing the Capability of States 92
Assessing the Capabilities of Nonstate Actors 98

Basic Issues 106

Summary 107

J. D. B. Miller, “The Sovereign State and Its Future” 109
Seyom Brown, “The World Polity and the Nation-State” 112

Study Questions 115

Key Terms 116

Notes 116

Five
The Determinants and Processes of Foreign Policy Behavior 120

Determinants of Nation-State Behavior 121
Systemic Factors 121
National Attribute Factors 124
Idiosyncratic Factors 129

The Foreign Policy-Making Process	131
Types of Foreign Policy Decisions	133
Types of Decision-Making Processes	135

Summary 140

Paul A. Anderson, “Normal Failures in the Foreign Policy Advisory Process”	142
--	-----

Study Questions 150

Key Terms 151

Notes 151



Part III

**Instruments of Foreign Policy and State Behavior
157**

Six

Diplomacy, Negotiation, and Bargaining 158

The Role of the Embassy and the Ambassador 159

Reporting 162

The Ambassador 162

Characteristics of New Diplomacy 164

Summit and Shuttle Diplomacy 164

Secret Versus Open Diplomacy 165

Bilateral Versus Multilateral Diplomacy 166

Negotiation and Bargaining 166

The Bargaining Process 168

Instruments of International Bargaining 171

Summary 174

Charles Maechling, Jr., “The Future of Diplomacy and Diplomats”	175
Elmer Plischke, “American Ambassadors—An Obsolete Species? Some Alternatives to Traditional Diplomatic Representation”	180

Study Questions 186

Key Terms 186

Notes 187

Seven
Psychological Warfare, Propaganda, and Terrorism 190

Psychological Warfare 190

Propaganda 193

Terrorism 197

Who Are the Terrorists? 198

The Impact of International Terrorism on the United States 201

To Negotiate or Not to Negotiate? 206

Summary 207

L. Paul Bremer III, "Terrorism: Its Evolving Nature" 210

Alfred Balk, "Terrorism, Inflation, and Debt Threaten Democracy in Peru" 216

Study Questions 218

Key Terms 220

Notes 220

Eight
War and Intervention 223

Types of Warfare 224

International Versus Civil War 224

Intervention 224

Total Versus Limited War 224

Conventional Versus Nuclear War 225

Guerrilla War 225

Problems with Defining and Quantifying Wars 225

Theories on the Causes of War 226

War and Human Nature 227

War and the Nature and Organization of the State 228

War and the Nature of the International System 233

The Role of Misperception as a Cause of War 236

War and International Relations: The Basic Issues 238

Summary 239

Jack S. Levy, "Historical Trends in Great Power War, 1495–1975" 240

Study Questions	244
Key Terms	245
Notes	246

Nine

International Organization 249

Background and Basic Concepts	249
Historical Development of International Organizations	249
Defining International Organizations	250
Conceptual Bases of Intergovernmental Organizations	251
Types of Intergovernmental Organizations	254
The United Nations System	257
Problems with the League of Nations	257
Genesis of the United Nations	258
Collective Security Innovations	259
Eradication of the Underlying Causes of Conflict	262
The Political Dimension of Intergovernmental Organizations	265
Intergovernmental Organizations as Foreign Policy Tools	265
Bloc Politics	266
Public Diplomacy	267
Assessing the Value of Intergovernmental Organizations	267
Basic Issues in Contemporary Intergovernmental Organization Literature	268
The United Nations and the Management of Conflict	268
Reforms for the Functional Agencies?	269
Regionalism	270
Final Observations	271
John G. Ruggie, "The United States and the United Nations: Toward a New Realism"	273
John R. Bolton, "The Concept of the 'Unitary UN' "	276
Study Questions	277
Key Terms	278
Notes	278

Ten

International Law 281

Background and Basic Concepts	281
Comparing International Law to Domestic Legal Systems	281
Compliance to International Law: Executive Functions	282

Judicial Functions in International Law	285
The Legislative Function in International Law	287
The Sources of International Law	287
Principles of Continuity and Change in International Law	290
Is International Law Really Law?	291

Basic Issues in the Literature on International Law 293

Contemporary Challenges to International Law	293
Coping with the Challenges	295
Some Additional Issues	296

Future Prospects 299

Friedrich Kratochwil, "On the Relevance of Norms and the Study of Law for International Relations"	301
Richard Falk, "The Role of the International Court of Justice"	304

Study Questions 307

Key Terms 308

Notes 308

Eleven

International Economics 311

Historical Aspects of the International Economy 311

Realities of the International Political Economy 312

Imports and Exports	312
Protectionism	315
Balancing Trade and Balancing Payments	316
The Role of Currencies	317
Increasing Economic Interdependence	319
Foreign Aid	319
Wealth and Poverty	321
Persistent Change	323

The Contemporary International Economic System 323

Post-World War II Dilemmas	323
The Bretton Woods System	324
Erosion of the Bretton Woods System	326

Basic Issues 329

The Global Debt Situation	329
Commodity Cartels	331
Trade Wars	331
Economic Sanctions	335

Summary 336

Susan Strange, "Protectionism and World Politics" 337
John A. C. Conybeare, "Managing International Trade Conflicts:
Explanations and Prescriptions" 341

Study Questions 344

Key Terms 345

Notes 345



Part IV

**Tension and Harmony in the International System: The Issues
349**

Twelve

**Issues of Potential Conflict: Regional Conflict, Disparity of Development,
and the Global Arms Race 350**

Patterns of Conflict 350

East-West and North-South Tensions 350

Intraworld Tensions 351

Regional Conflict and Civil War 352

Disparities of Development 356

Scope of the Problem 356

The Role of Population 358

Overcoming Disparities 360

Alternative Paths to Development 360

The Global Arms Race 362

The Security Dilemma 362

Arms Control and Disarmament 362

The U.S.-Soviet Arms Race 365

The Evolution of the Strategic Defense Initiative 370

Alternative Views on the Strategic Defense Initiative 370

Arms Races and the Disparity of Development: The Link 372

Summary 374

Mohammed Ayoob, "The Third World in the System of States:
Acute Schizophrenia or Growing Pains?" 375

Study Questions 380

Key Terms 381

Notes 381

Thirteen

Issues of Potential Cooperation: Humanitarian Policy, the Global Environment, and Regional Integration 384

Cooperation in International Relations 384

Tools of Cooperation 384

Motives for Cooperation 385

Dealing with Externalities 386

Cooperation in Pursuit of Humanitarian Goals 386

Refugees as an Externality 386

Mechanisms for Coping with Refugees and Displaced Persons 387

Cooperation in Pursuit of a Healthy Environment 390

Historical Behavior of States Toward the Environment 390

The Tragedy of the Commons 391

The Politics of Ozone 392

The Politics of Acid Rain 393

Deforestation 394

Economic Dimensions of Ecological Policy 395

Malthusian Dilemmas 395

Economic Integration and International Cooperation 396

Sectors of Integration 397

Why Integration Occurs 398

Factors in Successful Integration 399

Contemporary Regional Integration Efforts 401

Prospects for International Cooperation 403

Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy:
Strategies and Institutions" 406

Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique
of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism" 408

Study Questions 409

Key Terms 410

Notes 410