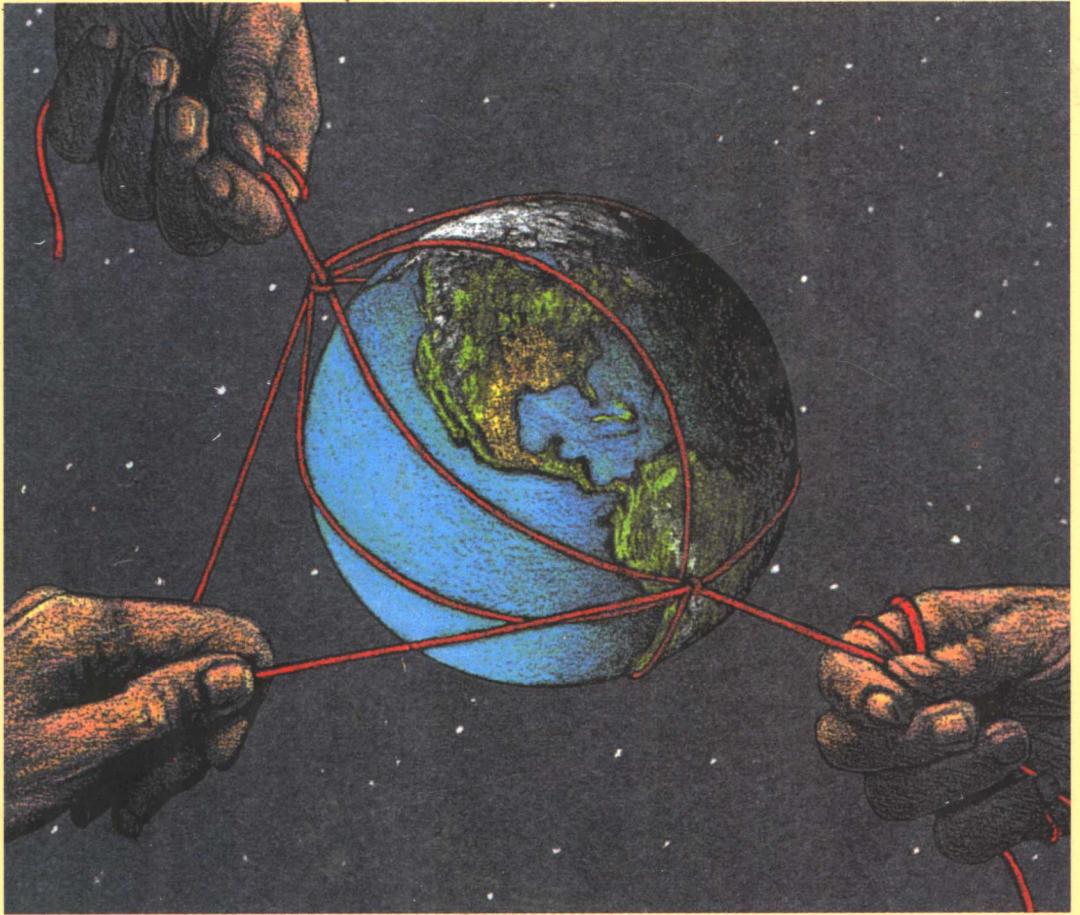


**Fourth Edition**

# **World Politics**

**THE MENU FOR CHOICE**



**Bruce Russett**

**Harvey Starr**

# WORLD POLITICS

## THE MENU FOR CHOICE

*Fourth Edition*

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## *PREFACE*

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In the three years since we prepared the third edition of this book we have witnessed a revolution in world politics, with Eastern Europe free of Soviet domination, the Soviet Union itself undergoing dissolution, and the end of cold war bipolarity. All analysts have had their basic assumptions challenged, their theories devastated, and their policy recommendations superseded. The authors of this book are no exceptions, though we think earlier editions did provide readers with some important tools for thinking about these matters. From its first edition, for example, we anticipated the debate about whether the spread of democracy might lead to a more peaceful world and wrote at length about the challenges of promoting greater international cooperation to deal with collective problems, emphasizing the environmental issues that now are moving to the top of the global agenda.

No one can hope fully to absorb or to keep pace with the changes. A broad and self-conscious theoretical perspective remains the best resource for comprehending and coping with change. Nevertheless we have incorporated many revisions in this first "post-cold war edition" to take account of the changes

that had manifested themselves by late 1991:

- We have provided more extensive coverage of the nature and consequences of change in the world system, highlighting the relationship among economic growth, democracy, and peace in an increasingly interdependent world.
- We give stronger emphasis to the politics of a nonbipolar world, reflecting the end of the cold war and the paradox of the United States as the only power with a global military reach but an ever more vulnerable economy.
- We provide more historical background, especially on the nature of the state and the Westphalian state system—a system built on a bargain of sovereignty at the cost of anarchy, a bargain that looks increasingly tenuous.
- We have expanded the discussion of transnational relations and of nonstate actors such as the newly strengthened and relevant United Nations.
- We have clarified important concepts and provided additional examples of international policy to illustrate important theories in action.
- We have maintained and strengthened the contrast among realist, transnationalist, and radical perspectives, showing both the value of the largely dominant realist paradigm and its increasingly evident limitations.

During the longer-run changes of recent decades we have also witnessed a revolution in the discipline itself. We have changed the ways we think about the subject: standards of concept formation, of logic, and of evidence are markedly different from what they were. Our progress in research, however, has not been matched by equal progress in communicating new knowledge, either to students or to the public. We wrote this book to convey to beginning and intermediate students of world politics some common core of the theory, method, and substance of our field.

If there has been a revolution in the study of world politics, it can be consolidated only when we have the pedagogical skill and tools to educate the next generation; otherwise, the revolution will experience a well-deserved reaction. The consolidation we have tried for in *World Politics* is inclusive rather than exclusive: we have sought to synthesize the best of the older tradition with newer approaches.

First, we have provided a substantial component of theory, from older and newer sources. Students must learn something about how theory is constructed and tested, and we therefore deal in some degree with scientific method, providing some “how-to-do-it” material to give the student standards for recognizing well-executed research. Students need to develop a respect for evidence and learn to recognize a statement for which no evidence can be relevant. Perhaps more important, we provide a perspective on “how-to-think-about-it.” To survive in a rapidly changing world as active citizens rather than passive objects of historical forces, people must develop a good set of basic concepts and questions, a taste

for analysis, a certain degree of skepticism for the “revealed wisdom” of authority, and some tolerance for ambiguity on a subject—the behavior of large human organizations coping with very complex problems—for which the extent of our understanding is, at best, barely adequate.

Second, we have provided a substantial amount of historical and contemporary factual material about the world. One kind of fact is the evidence needed to support or refute major theoretical statements. We have tried to give the student some sense of the volume and quality of evidence relevant to various statements. When we know the evidence to be reasonably solid, we have tried to document it. When we consider the evidence sparse or ambiguous, we have tried to indicate that fact. We have given some references to empirical research, so that students—or instructors—will not have to take our statements on faith, but we have tried not to overburden readers with scientific detail or pedantry.

Another kind of essential fact is, simply, information about what it is, and has been, like “out there.” History and information about the contemporary system are essential. Therefore, we have also provided material on the characteristics of the major national and nonnational participants in world politics and on the scope and function of major institutions. We have frequently introduced or punctuated our theoretical discussions with detail on how the world works or has worked. The reader will see examples of this not only in the text but also in endpaper maps and the two appendixes: a chronology and a set of comparative data on the characteristics of modern states. In this we have tried to walk a path that will have some appeal to traditionalists as well as to “hard-nosed” scientists.

Any consolidation demands a concern with questions of value: what the world “should” be like as well as what it is like. Sometimes all parties can gain; sometimes one’s security is another’s insecurity. At times we must choose between equity and security or between peace and justice. Students need guidance on how choices can be made or perhaps avoided—guidance that attends to both the ethical and the empirical dimensions of choice.

Finally, the substance of what is taught today is very different from the substance of courses taught a decade or two ago. In *World Politics* we have tried to combine discussion of security issues with discussion of international political economy and to suggest how the two are related; for example, in the causes and consequences of arms races and in world environmental problems. At the end of the book we show how the needs for growth, equity, political liberty, and peace are inextricably linked.

We have organized the book into two major parts. Part I introduces the student to the modern study of world politics and sets out the six levels of analysis we find useful: the global system, relations between states, the societal level, the governmental level, roles, and the individual actor. The book’s subtitle, *The Menu for Choice*, illustrates our perspective that decision makers are in fact limited in their selections by the rather constrained set of options presented by

global conditions. (The menu analogy appropriately evokes images of both restaurants and computers.) We discuss and illustrate how influences at various levels affect the process or act of choice.

In Part II we apply these analytical perspectives to particular issues. Topics we consider include arms races, deterrence, and arms control; theories about the dependence of poor countries on rich ones and possible alternatives to dependence; the implications of interdependence among industrialized countries (we try to understand why these countries are, almost without precedent or parallel, at peace among themselves); the problems of achieving collective goods in the context of global environmental problems; and, finally, an evaluation of demands for continued economic growth in a world of scarce resources and population pressures. We try to communicate a sense that rigorous theory is essential to any comprehension of these very pressing contemporary issues.

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We owe thanks to innumerable colleagues and students over the years we have been working toward the production of this book. Rather than single out some for expressions of gratitude here, we will pass over those who in the past contributed to the formation of our thinking. Many of them, though not all, will find themselves footnoted. We wish to thank all those who have read and commented on parts or all of this book in its journey from the first to the third edition. The following individuals provided extensive and valuable comments used specifically in the preparation of the fourth edition: Andrew Bennett, David Clinton, F. Gregory Gause, Guy Gosselin, Roger Hamburg, Robert Harkavy, Robert Mandel, Randolph Siverson, Richard Stoll, and Herbert Tillema. Parts of the book represent research done with the aid of grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the United States Institute of Peace, and the World Society Foundation (Switzerland). Bruce Russett also held a Fulbright award for research at Tel Aviv University. Over the course of four editions our home universities—Yale, Indiana, and South Carolina—have provided truly fine environments for research and reflection. We hope that all these people and institutions will in some degree be pleased with the outcome; any embarrassment with it must be ours alone.

Bruce Russett  
Harvey Starr  
December 1991

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*p a r t o n e*

# ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

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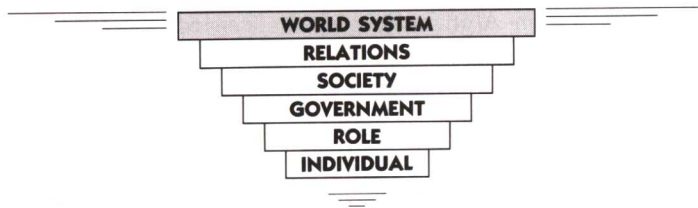
*I would rather understand a single cause  
than be king of Persia.*

DEMOCRITUS OF ABDERA

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# Analyzing World Politics: Levels of Analysis and Constraint



## THREE FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS

### *Ending the Cold War*

In November 1988 Margaret Thatcher, then British prime minister, proclaimed, "The cold war is over." Events since then have dramatically confirmed her judgment. The cold war, which dominated world politics for more than 40 years, enforcing political domination on hundreds of millions of people and threatening to bring war on billions, is over. The basic values of the West (democratic government and free-market economics) have triumphed—and the end of the cold war was confirmed, even initiated, by the leader of the "losing" state, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The events came in a cascade. First, Gorbachev made limited political and economic reforms in the Soviet Union. Then free elections ousted the communist governments in most of Eastern Europe, and Gorbachev made no move to intervene in their support. In November 1989 the Berlin Wall was breached, and by October 1990 East and West Germany were united. Gorbachev took no military or political action to save what had been the Soviet Union's most

important and loyal ally. In response to demands from the new anticommunist governments, Gorbachev withdrew all Soviet military forces from Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1991 and concluded a major arms reduction agreement with the West. Nearly all the formerly antagonistic NATO and Warsaw Pact countries agreed to reduce their military forces, the Soviets accepting disproportionately deep cuts. Soviet forces assumed a defensive posture, unable to mount any threat of invading Western Europe. Even the Warsaw Pact between the USSR and its former East European satellites—the linchpin of Soviet security and control—was disbanded in 1991, as was the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), which had regulated trade among these countries for over 40 years. Gorbachev announced that Soviet troops would come home, without victory, from the war in Afghanistan, and he insisted that Soviet-dependent governments like that in Nicaragua face the consequences of elections. At home, open dissent and secessionist movements emerged in many Soviet republics; free elections chose anticommunist governments in several and brought the end of the communist monopoly on power everywhere. Even the name of the country changed, from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics (and subsequently the “Union” itself began to come apart). Gorbachev twisted and turned like an adroit slalom skier, but the slope he was on seemed to be leading ever nearer to drastic economic and political changes. After a reactionary coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 failed, Boris Yeltsin forced even more radical changes, and in December the USSR dissolved.

The end of the cold war, as initiated by Gorbachev’s actions, was as surprising as it was swift. Almost no one imagined that it was possible. It was one of those world-shaking turns that few theories either anticipate or explain well after the fact. Nevertheless, we have to grope toward an understanding, and in doing so we can at least offer some possible explanations even if we can prove little.

In one clear sense, Gorbachev’s own personal characteristics deserve much of the credit. After a series of aging leaders in ill health (his predecessors, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko, all died within a three-year period), Gorbachev was only 53 when he came to power. He was vigorous, a skilled politician, and committed to reforming (but not necessarily to revolutionizing) the Soviet system. His fresh perspectives, energy, drive, and intelligence were essential to the task. Previous leaders might have seen the need for some reforms but were unable or unwilling to make dramatic changes.

Exclusive attention to Gorbachev’s personal qualities, however, leaves much out. He changed Soviet domestic and foreign policies because they hadn’t worked even by standards widely accepted among communist leaders. The Soviet economy was stagnant, per capita income showing essentially no growth since the late 1970s, and the life expectancy of Soviet citizens was dropping. The insular and centrally planned Soviet economy, dependent on heavy industry and collective farms, was increasingly unable to compete in a world market based on



innovation driven by high technology and the free flow of goods, capital, and information within and between states. The burden of military spending bore down ever more painfully on Soviet living standards, as did Soviet expenditures to prop up allies in Africa, Asia, and Central America. The USSR had overreached itself globally, acquiring weak clients and eroding its security. Something had to give—why did it give then, rather than later, or sooner?

Another element was surely the increasingly assertive political and military competition the Soviet Union faced from the United States, which intensified in the decade or so before Gorbachev made his big changes. In the last years of the Carter administration and more dramatically in the Reagan years, the United States and its allies began a spurt of addition to NATO military capabilities, especially by the development and deployment of high-tech weapons that exploited Western scientific advances. American military assistance to opponents of Soviet-backed regimes in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and elsewhere raised the costs to the USSR of supporting those governments. Again—the Soviet Union had always been technologically behind the West and had long borne heavy costs; why could it have not maintained itself longer? Too, the United States also was feeling the burdens of the cold war and by 1986 was no longer increasing its own military expenditures. American willingness to respond carefully to Soviet overtures, not exploiting Soviet weakness so as to risk “enraging a cornered bear,” played an important part in allowing Soviet liberalization to continue.

Yet another influence was the spread of information across international borders, and especially in both directions across what had been known as the Iron Curtain. Citizens of communist countries could know more and more about the prosperity and political liberties enjoyed by their counterparts in the West. By the 1980s most East Germans could regularly watch West German television, and informal personal contacts between Western and Eastern peoples were increasingly difficult to regulate. Under pressure of the human-rights provisions of the wide-ranging Helsinki accords of 1975, communist governments had more and more to tolerate dissident movements. Western news agencies regularly operated in East European and Soviet cities; any violent crackdown on dissent would have been shown immediately on hundreds of millions of television screens around the globe. Technological and cultural changes in the world were making communist efforts to insulate their people from world developments ever more anachronistic, ineffective, and costly. Furthermore, relaxation of the Soviet grip in Eastern Europe interacted with relaxation at home.

All these factors—the nature of the Soviet leadership, domestic political and economic decay, international political competition, global information flows—suggest reasons why the cold war ended. But no single explanation completely dominates the others, nor does it explain why the end came just when it did. If Gorbachev himself was essential to the changes, that still begs the question of