ONE THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

On the morning of August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb dropped inconspicuously from an American B-29 high over Hiroshima. Minutes later it exploded in an awesome fireball of light and energy that in seconds completely leveled 90 percent of the city, killed or seriously injured over 120,000 of its people, and left thousands more to die later of radiation sickness and disease. Three days later a second atomic bomb exploded over Nagasaki. These two terrifying explosions effectively crushed the remaining hopes of the Japanese leadership for avoiding unconditional surrender and brought to a humiliating end their ambitious plans for the greater glory and prestige of the Japanese Empire.

Less than three months earlier, the Third Reich, that was to have lasted 1000 years and elevated Germany into the dominant position in the world, collapsed in the rubble of total defeat, but not before Hitler's dream of conquering all Europe came perilously close to fulfillment.

In six short days in June 1967, the Israelis overwhelmed the Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians, who only the week before had been so confident of their military capabilities that they had ordered United Nations forces out of buffer zones and initiated plans for at least limited military action against Israel.

In Vietnam, the United States gradually, but confidently, increased its military involvement in an attempt to stave off a victory by the communist forces. As time passed, however, Vietnam seemed increasingly to be an inescapable quagmire, a frustrating and seemingly endless war against relatively poorly armed peasants. But the United States was unable either to win or to withdraw without in either case both seriously endangering its international position and risking the gravest civil strife at home in over 100 years.

All of these are extreme examples of the failure of foreign policy decision-makers to predict correctly the long-range consequences of their actions. If they had known in advance the certainty of their country's defeat, or the costs of their involvement, it is highly unlikely that the decision-makers in Japan, Germany, Egypt, or the United States would have gotten themselves involved in these wars in the first place.

In fact, few wars actually begin as a result of a conscious plan on the part of the parties involved. Particularly in modern times, wars are too bloody and costly to attract many advocates of war for the sake of war itself. On the other hand, nearly every state has objectives that can be achieved only with the agreement of other states; and it is not always easy to get other states to agree, because the first state's desires often conflict with their own objectives. The problem faced by states is to find a way of attaining their objectives, without having to pay the cost of war. There are a wide variety of potential means available short of war—bargaining and compromise, offering trade advantages or economic aid, making threats of economic and military sanctions—but when objectives are considered very important, decision-makers are more tempted to take greater risks and to use threats of increasingly serious sanctions to try to achieve their objectives. The decision-makers of the other involved states, feeling threatened in turn, must make some decision about how to respond. They may decide to capitulate, especially if they are economically and militarily weaker than their opponent and if the object of the conflict is relatively unimportant to them. On the other hand, they may respond by building up their defenses, making counter offers or threats, or even by a preventive

military strike against the other side, as in the case of Israel against the Arabs in 1967. In other cases the parties to the conflict, being unable to compromise, may both gradually escalate the conflict to the point that a full-scale war begins unintentionally: As one side feels in danger of being defeated, it escalates, thereby threatening the other side and encouraging it, in turn, to escalate in order to avoid defeat. In the absence of norms considered binding by both sides or of intervention by third parties or an international police force, it becomes increasingly difficult to stop the escalation. The two sides become more and more involved in the conflict and commit more and more of their resources to the struggle.

In the case of the United States in Vietnam, probably only the fear of nuclear retaliation by the Soviet Union or involvement in a major land war with China kept the United States from further escalating its commitment for such a long period of time. In any case, the Americans did not really want war, nor, it should be noted, did the Viet Cong. The United States by its presence in Vietnam would have liked to persuade North Vietnam and the Viet Cong to abandon their efforts to bring South Vietnam under communist control. The communists clearly would have preferred victory without war by persuading the Americans in advance, through threats of inevitable victory, that intervention would in the long run prove too costly even for the richest state in the world. Similarly, the Japanese, the Germans, and the Arabs would have preferred victory without war, though they, like the United States and the Viet Cong were prepared to pay the price of war if necessary. Nevertheless, it is clear that none of these parties anticipated the cost of their actions; and it is doubtful that most of the population of these countries would have acted in the same way if they had known clearly in advance the price they were doomed to pay.

Yet the problem is that it is very difficult to predict in advance the consequences of one's actions. This is obviously true not only in international politics, but in almost every area of life. The world is extremely complex and difficult to understand. Not only do we have an inadequate theoretical understanding of how individuals, groups, and states behave, but even if we know in theory how

something behaves, we do not necessarily have access to all the data we need in time to predict the consequences of the alternative courses of action we contemplate.

This is the sort of problem that constantly plagues foreign policy decision-makers—not only when questions of war and peace are at stake, but also across the whole range and multitude of smaller decisions that are made each day in the foreign offices of every major state in the world. Greater understanding of the world and greater predictability are highly prized, if elusive, goals of every decision-maker.

Social scientists, too, are interested in increasing their understanding and ability to predict. This is true in part because most social scientists are interested in contributing something of value to their country and/or to the world. Few things today concern social scientists more than the danger of nuclear war and the need to find new ways of increasing the probability of maintaining peace. But social scientists also want to increase their understanding of the world because they are scientists—professionals who in some sense find the quest for new knowledge an exciting and valuable pursuit in itself. Let us turn now to a brief discussion of the problem of taking a scientific approach to the study of international politics—the ways in which social scientists might increase our understanding of international political problems and the limits of such understanding.

SCIENCE AND
THE STUDY OF POLITICS

Political scientists—in fact all scientists—are interested in studying phenomena within their area of concern with the ultimate objective of complete understanding. For the scientist, a description of the superficial and obvious characteristics of an object or phenomenon is not sufficient for understanding. It is also necessary to know more precisely just how the phenomenon behaves and what causes it to behave the way it does.

By complete understanding we mean the development of an empirically verified deductive theory that explains not only how a phenomenon behaves but also why (i.e., the immediate causes of

the given behavior). A scientist, in other words, ultimately seeks the development of a deductive theory consisting of a set of logically interrelated propositions about the behavior of the phenomena being studied. Each proposition must eventually be derived from (or explained by) the fundamental assumptions (postulates, theorems, axioms) on which the theory is ultimately based. Such a process of deductive reasoning must result in an explanation of why each given hypothesis would be valid when tested in the real world—and, after the hypothesis is validated, provide an explanation of why the phenomena behave the way they do.

One of the major purposes of understanding, of course, is prediction. If one knows how a given phenomenon behaves and has sufficient data about the variables that are known to affect its behavior, prediction of behavior is possible. Furthermore, if one understands how a phenomenon behaves, then behavior can also be controlled if the relevant variables can be manipulated (i.e., if they are not beyond the control of the scientist).

Even complete understanding of a phenomenon, of course, may not necessarily enable one to make accurate predictions (or to control). One may know the theoretical reasons why a given object of inquiry responds to any given set of conditions; but if one cannot obtain adequate information in time about what the relevant conditions are, then it is clearly not possible to make the prediction (or to control).

Prediction is often stated as the goal of science, but the ability to predict itself does not guarantee the same degree of understanding as the potential to control. Understanding plus data always enable one to predict; but this does not necessarily guarantee understanding or the ability to control. For example, given adequate data about meteorological conditions, men were able to predict the weather with a high degree of accuracy long before they understood why their predictions came true. On the basis of experience, men learned that certain kinds of weather usually followed certain meteorological conditions; and from existing data about past weather, it was possible to arrive at a set of predictions about the weather through inductive reasoning. Such an inductive model of the real world, however, does not require any real understanding

of what produces different kinds of weather. A falling barometer (y) under certain conditions may be an adequate indicator for the prediction of rain (z), but (y) itself does not cause (z), but rather is itself a consequence of one of the variables (x) that is in turn one of the more fundamental causes of (z). In other words, (x) causes both (y) and (z); and manipulating the barometer (y) does not affect whether it rains (z). Explanations may be offered for inductive models, but for accurate prediction they need be no more accurate than the notion that thunder follows lightning because the clouds are bumping their heads together while chasing after the lightning bolts. Such hypothetical constructs (or others such as Freud's id, superego, and ego), of course, may be useful in trying to relate a variety of data or even in suggesting other hypotheses for testing; but they do not necessarily contribute to a real understanding of the phenomena in question. The test of their validity and/or utility lies in their ability to generate new deductive hypotheses that can be tested and empirically supported.

Many scientists have argued that inductive models are a sufficient end in themselves. The strongest advocates of such an approach, however, are often involved in the study of phenomena whose specific operations are difficult or impossible to observe (such as what goes on in the mind), but that can nevertheless be studied by correlating changes in environmental conditions or stimuli (inputs) with changes in behavior (outputs). Indeed, for most purposes such inductive models are sufficient; and a scientist counts himself lucky if he can come up with a model that enables him to predict, even if he has no idea why the phenomena in question behave the way they do. Nevertheless, such inductive models fall short of the goal of complete understanding and have many limitations.

In practice, most hypotheses are probably arrived at inductively; but there is always the danger that such hypotheses are valid only under the conditions under which the observed phenomena occurred. Having only an inductive hypothesis, one has no idea of the limiting conditions under which the hypothesis will hold true. Moreover, one's experience can provide no strong support for the validity of the hypothesis, because one is only generalizing from

what one has observed in a few cases. A hypothesis that has been arrived at deductively and then successfully tested empirically has the additional support of the logical system of assumptions from which it was derived. In practice, of course, inductively derived hypotheses are eventually explained by putting them in a theoretical context. In the long run they are indistinguishable from deductively derived hypotheses. The significant strength of a deductively derived hypothesis is that it initially has a theory (or causal model) to support it. This enables the scientist to search for yet unobserved relationships in the real world. Moreover, the observation of the predicted relationship provides immediate support for the hypothesis without the need for additional testing in other situations to guard against tautological conclusions. This is particularly important when relatively few cases are available for testing the hypothesis.

A good theory or causal model, in addition to providing an explanation for what one has already observed and suggesting new hypotheses or relationships that one has not observed, may also enable one to predict how entirely new conditions never before observed may affect the behavior of the phenomena in question. Such predictive abilities are particularly important in human behavior where so many variables are involved and changes take place so rapidly that entirely new conditions frequently come into being.

The goal of complete understanding should not be confused with the procedures that are usually associated with the scientific approach and very much necessary to its success: such as, clear definitions and precise terminology, systematic empirical observation, accurate measurement and description, formulation of typologies and hypotheses, and careful empirical testing.

There is, of course, room for debate about just how scientific the study of politics, or international politics, can be, given the complex nature of the phenomena and the difficulty of gathering the basic data required for prediction. However, it is important not to confuse the question of the validity of the scientific approach with the problem of accurate predictions. Science is an *approach* to the study of phenomena—a method designed to insure an awareness

of the uncertain or tentative nature of our knowledge—not a set of accurate descriptions and predictions. If a scientific approach to the study of politics cannot provide really accurate predictions, the fault may not lie with the approach, which may be the best available, but with the complexity of the phenomena themselves. When it is argued that political science cannot be scientific or that politics cannot be studied scientifically, what is really suggested is that politics and the political system are so complicated and changeable that even the most scientific and systematic approach cannot provide a completely accurate way of measuring the phenomena or of predicting the outcomes of political activity.

One other characteristic of the scientific approach needs to be emphasized at this point. By a scientific approach to the study of politics, we mean not only careful and systematic observation, accuracy and precision in the description of political phenomena, and the development of empirically verified theory, but also an approach that is as objective and value-free as possible.

This study of politics will stress the development of value-free theory, that is, generalizations about how people individually and collectively do in fact behave and why. We will try to avoid normative theory, that is, generalizations about what is good and bad and about how people should behave. We will also try to avoid assertions falling into the category of applied theory, that is, statements about what people must do (or how they should behave) in order to attain given goals.

It is not that normative theory and applied theory are unimportant. The problem with normative theory is that questions of what is ultimately good and bad cannot be answered by scientific inquiry alone. Questions of applied science, or social engineering, while depending on empirical theory about behavior (the realm of science) must also make assumptions about what is ultimately good and bad. In other words, in order to say what a person should do, it must be both assumed that the end sought is good (the realm of normative theory) and known that the proposed course of action will indeed result in the end desired (the realm of empirical or scientific theory). If the normative assumptions are given, applied questions can be studied scientifically; but a more important consideration here is that most applied questions are very specific in

nature and require a great deal of information about the case in question. Such questions also require the development and testing of very specific and specialized models that are beyond the scope of this book, which is limited to a discussion of rather general models. In other words we are operating at too high a level of generalization to deal with most applied questions.

It is important to emphasize that most normative and applied questions are really empirical questions in disguise. They can be translated into empirical questions: "Is foreign aid a good thing?" (A normative question) or "Should the United States give foreign aid?" (an applied question) may be the equivalent to "Does giving foreign aid increase American popularity?" with the goal of increasing American popularity an unstated assumption behind the questions. The question of the desirability of America's being popular is itself a normative question. Given the goal of increasing American popularity, however, it is possible to determine empirically whether giving foreign aid in general increases American popularity or whether some kinds of foreign aid are more likely to have that result than other kinds of aid. This question, in turn, is a more specific variant of the more general question of under what conditions any state (not just the United States) is likely to increase its popularity (or achieve any other end) as a result of giving foreign aid. The applied question then becomes, "Given the goal of increasing our popularity and the knowledge we have about the general consequences of giving aid for a state's popularity, what kind of a foreign aid policy is rational for the United States?" In other words the applied question requires only that one draw conclusions from normative assumptions and existing empirical theory and data.

As already noted, the normative assumption in our example is that it is good to increase American popularity. Even this normative assumption, however, may in turn be broken down and subjected to empirical inquiry. For most people the increase in American popularity in itself is not an ultimate goal but merely a means to the end of American security. The question of whether popularity contributes to security then can in turn be examined empirically.

It is essential to remember that all "scientific" or empirical ques-

tions are not necessarily answerable. A satisfactory answer to a scientific question, even though it does not depend on making normative judgments, may depend on information that is not available. An answer under such circumstances is not normative but only subjective or intuitive. In short, it is a guess. In other words, empirical questions have to be divided into two major groups: (1) those that can be answered with a certain degree of probable accuracy given the availability of data and the current level of development of empirical theory and (2) those that cannot yet be answered.

It is also important to remember that the purpose of a scientific approach is not to prove that one's own theories are right, but rather to discover new knowledge, including the knowledge that what we once wished or thought to be true is in fact false. The purpose of theory is not to impose it on reality, but rather to use it as a guide to questions about the phenomena under scrutiny. Thinking scientifically, rather than encouraging rigid answers and certainty, demands the opposite. A habit of tolerance for uncertainty and an expectation of deviation from the model, with the consequent necessity of revising the model is what is required. A scientific approach, in short, puts the emphasis and the reward on discovery, not on proving the correctness of one's original ideas. A scientific approach to the study of any phenomenon, rather than proving the correctness of a theory as originally formulated is probably more likely to illuminate the degree of uncertainty of the theory or the need for additional qualifications. A scientific approach, in other words, may only increase the accuracy of our statements about the phenomena studied by helping us guard against oversimplification and overgeneralization; it does not necessarily enable us to achieve 100 percent predictability. It is the complexity or uniqueness of the phenomena being studied, or the lack of essential data, rather than any weakness of the scientific approach that prevents greater accuracy of prediction. No other known approach could consistently do better.

Our study of politics is theory-oriented. It aims at the development of a systematic theory to describe how and why people (and nations) interact politically and how political systems emerge and

operate the way they do. (The term "model" is often used in science instead of "theory," though a theory is a broader concept of which a model is only a type. Unlike a model, a theory may include an explanation of the relationships postulated.) It is important to remember that theories or models are attempts to represent real phenomena in an abstract and usually oversimplified form. They specify essential variables and the relationships between them that are presumably involved in the behavior of phenomena in the real world. A model or theory is always oversimplified when it describes human behavior, particularly at the social level. Such human constructs should never be reified, that is, confused with the real world. It is only a model, an abstraction, not reality itself. Moreover, a theory or model is usually not only oversimplified, but it is a tentative and often untested representation of real world behavior. Finally, a model or theory is an oversimplification, not only in the sense that it leaves out many important variables which may affect the operation of the phenomena in the real world, but it is also an attempt to represent a wide variety of phenomena which may, in fact, be similar but not identical.

Theories or models in science almost always are generalizations about some class of phenomena. While some models may be used to describe unique phenomena, to make science useful it is necessary to construct theories that have the widest possible application. The problem with generalizations about complicated phenomena is, of course, the number of variables involved. Our oversimplified theories, and predictions made from them, do not take into account all of the factors that affect all of the phenomena in our general categories. Practically speaking, most models or theories predict not absolutely, but only with a certain degree of probability. One way of qualifying generalizations, then, is to introduce the notion of probability. This emphasizes that the theories are not absolute laws but only descriptive of probable behavior. Unknown or uncontrollable variables not taken into account by the theory may upset the prediction. The statement of the probability with which something will occur is really an estimate based on empirical evidence in other cases, or simply guesswork, of the rate at which these uncontrollable and hopefully random variables will occur.

Another way in which generalizations may be qualified is by rigorously stating the conditions under which the predicted phenomenon will occur—that is, by limiting the range of phenomena to which the model can be applied. This simply means a detailed specification of the variables thought to influence the behavior for which an explanation is sought. Such a rigorous control of the variables will ordinarily increase the probability of the occurrence of the predicted phenomenon, if the theory is sound. This method has the great disadvantage that only a limited number of events in the real world will fit the rigorous limitations of the model.

In practice, both methods of qualifying generalizations are used. The goal, however, is to arrive at generalizations (theories) that are applicable to the broadest possible category of phenomena with the fewest limiting conditions and at the same time to be able to make predictions with a high degree of probability.

One of the major tasks of a political scientist, then, is to construct models or theories that provide both useful and accurate generalizations about the behavior of individuals and groups in any political context, whether domestic or international, whether inside or outside a well-developed political system with superior social institutions and widely accepted norms of behavior.

Theory alone, of course, is worth little unless it is verified empirically; and this is always difficult. It is difficult, first of all, because no theory can ever be proven absolutely; at best it can be supported tentatively with empirical evidence. The more evidence that can be marshaled in support of a theory, the stronger the theory is. In short, the greater the probability that the theory is correct. If one wants to be scientific, however, it is not enough to hunt only for evidence in support of a theory. Instead, an examination must be made of all the examples of the class of phenomena referred to by the theory. Preferably each would be examined, but in practice it is sufficient to take a random sample as most classes of phenomena are far too numerous to investigate individually. An accurate sample reduces to a tolerable level the probability of overlooking any contrary cases. After this search for contrary examples as well as for support, the theory either gains in strength or requires modification or rejection.

There are many other difficulties in the verification of theory. Sufficient examples of the class of phenomena studied must be found to support the theory. Accurate and measurable indicators of often rather abstract phenomena, such as consensus or a sense of community, must be devised. There is the problem of access to the data necessary to support the theory; this can require access to state secrets, the knowledge of personal lives and private thoughts of key decision-makers, or a knowledge of objects and events never recorded, or if recorded, done so in a form that is too general to meet the more rigorous requirements of scientific theory.

There have been a number of interesting responses to these problems of verification by scientists dealing with international politics. In particular, the problem of too few examples of rather extensively qualified political phenomena has had a number of proposed solutions. A current example is the phenomenon of voluntary integration or instances where previously independent political units have voluntarily merged to form larger political units. This phenomenon is a more highly qualified version of any merger between political units, voluntarily or by coercion. It is difficult to find a sufficient number of contemporary examples on the international level. The first response to this problem has been a rediscovery of history; historical cases, often from the distant past, are utilized to serve as examples. A second response has been to use examples of similar phenomena on different levels of analysis; for example, the merging of political units on the local or national level. A third response has been simulation, or artifically created games—either the re-creation of past events or the creation of possible situations, with live participants playing the roles required by the model. All of these responses have their limitations; but without such methods, verification of many theories is impossible.

The theory developed in political science in general, or international politics in particular, thus far, is at best spotty and inadequate. Most writers settle for the development of a so-called conceptual framework or a typology of categories. These devices are largely limited to a listing of variables presumed to be useful for the eventual development of a theory, but do not themselves actually constitute the development of a theory. There is a growing

body of empirically tested hypotheses (and an even larger number of untested ones), but the field still suffers from inadequate development of middle range theory, i.e., theory that relates a large number of empirically tested hypotheses and suggests other specific hypotheses that can be derived from the premises of the theory.

Politics, and more particularly international politics, as a field of study has not reached the stage of development where inclusive theories can be offered with any degree of reliability. It remains at a stage characterized by the suggestion of concepts and categories for organizing data; the problem of relating these concepts has been only partially successful. We do not pretend to be able to present a complete theory of politics or international politics in this book, but we will present a framework of concepts or variables that we believe will prove useful.

One universal problem in theory construction is that one does not really know in advance just what concepts will prove most useful. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have some categories or variables to use in gathering the data that will be necessary to verify initial hypotheses or that can serve as the stimulus for constructing hypotheses by inductive reasoning. A scientist can never really know for certain, in advance of hypotheses testing and verification, just which categories or variables will prove most useful, yet a beginning must be made. We will outline the more important general concepts and more specific variables currently used by contemporary students of international politics which have to be taken into account in the development of any framework or theory of politics at the international level.

    I. Levels of analysis
       A. Individual level
       B. State level
       C. International level
          1. Regional (international subsystem)
          2. World-wide (international system)
   II. Units of analysis
       A. Individual actors
          1. Values and goals
          2. Memories
          3. Perceptions

   a. of the world and how it operates
   b. of the actions and intentions of other individuals and groups
   c. of himself and his roles
4. Personality
5. Habits
6. Strategy and tactics for achieving goals
7. Roles and positions in society
8. Strength, intelligence, and abilities
9. Education and skills

B. State actors
1. Size and resources
2. Population
3. Key individuals, groups, classes, organizations, and the social structure
4. Economic system
5. Culture
   a. patterns of values and goals—and cleavages
   b. patterns of beliefs and memories
   c. norms and rules of the game
6. Pattern of capabilities in society (nature and distribution)
7. State political and decision-making system
8. Specialized foreign policy decision-making system
   a. theories of how the world and its individual, state, and international actors behave—their goals, strategy —and of the international norms limiting the state's action
   b. goals of the state
   c. strategy and tactics
   d. willingness to run risks
   e. expectations of success and failure and perceived costs
   f. intelligence-gathering systems
   g. decision-making and communications systems
   h. capabilities
   i. feedback and reevaluation
   j. instruments of foreign policy
      (1) diplomacy, persuasion, negotiation or bargaining, and alliance or coalition building
      (2) propaganda
      (3) economic and military aid

        (4) trade
        (5) political payoffs (support in United Nations, in negotiations, etc.)
        (6) political sanctions or threat or sanctions (e.g., nonrecognition, political intervention)
        (7) economic sanctions or threat of sanctions
        (8) clandestine military action or threat of clandestine military action
        (9) limited military action or threat of limited military action
        (10) full-scale war or threat of full-scale war

  C. International level actors
    1. International organization actors
      a. regional
      b. world-wide
    2. International individual actors
      a. regional
      b. world-wide

III. International patterns, processes, and relationships
  A. Authority structures
  B. Patterns of goals and cleavages
  C. Patterns of capability and power
  D. International norms and rules of the game (international law and custom)
  E. Interaction processes (e.g., negotiation or bargaining, communication, coalition formation, and war)

A list of concepts is not enough. It is also necessary to indicate the significant questions in international politics that any theory constructed of these concepts should be able to answer. Some of these questions can be answered, or at least tentative hypotheses can be provided, using partial theories currently available and utilizing evidence uncovered by other scholars. The answers to all of these questions would provide the basic theories or generalizations necessary for any theory of international politics.

For anyone concerned with contemporary events, whether it is the Vietnam War, Arab-Israeli relations, or American involvement in Latin America, a knowledge of general questions and tentative answers that are thought to apply to any state in any setting is valuable.

If a student wants to know what United States policy should be on disarmament he must first address himself to a whole host of underlying questions about the general causes of war and peace, the specifics of the given international system, and the specific parties involved in the controversy. Further, the objectives, strategies, and tactics of each participant will have to be examined. Estimates must be made of the effect of any given change, either internally in the participants or in the international political system itself, on the individual participant and its perception of the world and the behavior of the other units.

Some of the more important questions about international political systems include the following:

What determines whether an international system is stable or unstable?
What factors increase or decrease stability?
> More specifically,
>> Why did the nineteenth-century balance of power system remain so stable for so long? And why did it eventually collapse?

What are the determinants of war and peace?
> More specifically,
>> What were the causes of World War I? World War II? The Korean War? Vietnam? The dispute between Pakistan and India? The Israeli-Arab War? Are there any factors in common?
>> Why do some wars escalate and others not?
>> Why have relations between the United States and Canada been so peaceful for so long?
>> Why are some disputes settled nonviolently and others violently?

What are international norms? and
How do international norms emerge? How are they enforced?
>> What international norms limit United States behavior? How effective is world public opinion in enforcing international norms?
>> Are strong countries as subject to the operation of international norms as weak ones? Or is it the other way around (e.g., the Pueblo incident)?

Why don't states violate treaties more often?

Why has the Soviet Union in effect reversed its position on international law since 1920 and in practice followed most international norms?

Why do international organizations emerge?

How do they attain legitimacy and authority?

Under what conditions are they effective in settling disputes?

Why did the United Nations come into being? What were its antecedents and how did they affect the form which it took?

What is the significance of the veto in the United Nations?

How has the United Nations changed its role in the world since 1945?

How has it enlarged its authority?

Why have the smaller nations become more important in the United Nations? Is the United Nations a multiplier of their strength?

Why do coalitions emerge? Why do they disintegrate?

Why did COMECON, EFTA, and the EEC arise?

Why did NATO and the Warsaw Pact come into being? Why are they distintegrating?

What determines the transformation of an international system into a different kind of system?

Why did the medieval system break down and the balance of power system eventually emerge?

Is the present international system changing from a bipolar system to another kind of system? Why?

What is the impact of an increase in the number of states on the international system?

What is the impact of changing technology? Does proliferation of nuclear weapons affect the international system?

What is power?

How do states influence each other?

Some of the more important questions about the behavior of individual state units include the following:

What is a state and how does it come into being?

What is the decision-making structure and process within individual states? How is a state's foreign policy determined? What is the relative importance of internal and external factors? To what extent do individual personalities play an important role? How are people recruited into top decision-making posts?

What are the foreign policy objectives or goals of states? What determines them?

What are the perceptions of other states and their goals?

How do states perceive the obstacles to the attainment of their goals?

What are the capabilities of states? What determines the capabilities of a state—political, economic, military, etc.?

What is the strategy (and tactics) of states in trying to attain their objectives? What determines their strategy?
>   What are the foreign policy instruments at their disposal?
>   What determines the choice of instruments?

What are the restrains on their actions?

How do external threats affect the operation of the state, its objectives and strategy, its unity, etc.?

Some of the more important questions about the behavior of individual decision-makers in nation-states include the following:

What is the social class background of the decision-makers? Does anything set them apart from the rest of the population of their state that would affect their decisions?

How are the decision-makers recruited? Socialized into the values and norms of the decision-making system? Technically trained?

How do the values and personalities of decision-makers affect the decisions they make? Which personality traits are most significant?

How much variation is there in the values and personalities of decision-makers within individual nation-states and between states?

What are the sources of these differences? The cultures of the nation-states? The recruitment systems? The socialization systems?

How do decision-makers differ with regard to the way in which

they perceive the world, their own decision-making role, and the roles of others?

How do differences in perceptions affect decision-making behavior?

What factors do decision-makers take into account in making foreign policy decisions? What is the relative importance of their own values, personalities, and perceptions? Of domestic factors, such as the capabilities of their states, pressures from the public or from other government agencies, the norms of their state? Of external influences, such as the number, capabilities, and interrelationships of other states, and the existence of international organizations and norms?

These questions are posed at a high level of generalization; considerable qualification of the answer to any one would be necessary in the examination of individual states. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that because the answers for all states are not identical that this does not mean that states have nothing in common. A political scientist, like any scientist, should always aim at the discovery of the most general propositions possible within the limitations of accuracy.

Unfortunately, almost all university students and laymen have a tendency to ask questions with far too narrow a scope; they fail to relate these questions to the much broader questions of which they are intrinsically a part. Immediate concerns with normative and applied questions mask the necessity of knowing the answer to the basic underlying questions.

Before we go on to the next chapter, a few terms that will be used throughout this book should be examined briefly. First of all, the concept of actor.

INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Students of international politics refer to a variety of actors in the international system and to the various socially defined roles that they play. In addition to the great multitude of individual nation-state actors, there are international actors of several types at the international level: regional international actors including military alliances (such as NATO, SEATO and the Warsaw Pact), common markets (such as the Western European Common Market, the

European Free Trade Area, or COMECON), and universal international actors (such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies).

Most often we assume that nation-states are the only participants in international politics. The concept of international actor is useful because it permits a broader definition of participants. First some individuals in special roles such as the papacy or the United Nations secretary-general are international actors. Second, various private associations, the Red Cross, for example, or large-scale business organizations can also be categorized this way. More obvious is the use of the term to include groups of nation-states acting together for specified purposes.

Moreover, revolutionary and nationalist movements can also be accommodated using this concept. Another advantage to this terminology is the implication that a single actor may be involved in many international roles simultaneously.

SYSTEMS

The concept of system has been one of the most widely adopted innovations in the field of international politics. For the most part, the use of the term "system" reflects little more than a change in vocabulary. For more serious advocates of the systems approach, however, much more than a change in terminology is involved. The systems approach is a special way of looking at the world and visualizing the relationships between separate parts of society or some other social organization. It is a broad, general framework for the study of social phenomena at all levels of analysis. Although there are several theorists writing in the field of international politics who are concerned primarily with the system as a general approach, notably Morton Kaplan, Karl Deutsch, and Kenneth Boulding, nearly all of the other scientific approaches can be accommodated to this framework. Its strengths and weaknesses derive from this general character.

What do we mean by a system? Although definitions vary and are often technical (e.g., "a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes"), basically a system is any two or more phenomena (or objects) that interact

over time. Political scientists, of course, are usually interested only in social systems; but the concept is broad enough to refer to many other kinds of systems as well. The system concept was, in fact, first used in the natural sciences.

Though most people have a difficult time defining it, nearly everyone is familiar with the concept of system. The term is used almost every day. We speak of the solar system, the ignition systems in our automobiles, the state highway system or the more inclusive transportation system, the nervous system or the circulation system in our bodies, the electrical system in our houses, and so forth. Even in the area of social relations we are not totally unfamiliar with the term. We use it to refer to the educational system, the postal system, the economic system; and people refer increasingly to the political system.

There are, of course, many other systems all around us that we do not usually refer to as systems, although they clearly fall into the category of "two or more phenomena (objects) interacting over time." A clock, for example, is clearly a system, as is an engine, an automobile, an animal or human being, a factory, an office, a business firm, a legislature, a university, a church, a family, a football game, a group of men sitting around playing cards, or even a set of ideas (a belief system, a system of analysis).

Most complex systems are composed of several distinct subsystems. An automobile, for example, is composed not only of its body and frame, but also of an engine system (which in turn is composed of a cooling system, an ignition system, a fuel supply system, an exhaust system, etc.), a power transmission system, a steering system, a ventilation system, a heating system, an electrical system (only part of which is an engine subsystem), and so forth. A driver or operator must also be considered a part of the automobile system.

Most systems are also simultaneously part of other larger systems —that is, they are subsystems of other systems. We have already referred to the automobile engine as a part of the automobile system. Automobiles, in turn, form a part of the general transportation system of the community in which they are operated. Our solar system is a part of the larger system formed by our galaxy. A legis-

lature is a part of the larger political system, which in turn is a part of the still more encompassing social system.

It is also important to note that a system can be a part of more than one larger system at the same time. The ignition system of an automobile, for example, is at the same time a part of the engine system and of the electrical system of the automobile. The cooling system of the automobile is also a part of the heating system for the passenger compartment. An individual may be simultaneously a part of many other systems: a family; a church; a place of work; and local, state, and national economic and political systems. Even though most systems are also subsystems, we will refer to them as systems unless it is necessary to distinguish them from the larger system(s) of which they are a part.

The concept of system, in short, is only an analytical concept. It refers less to concrete objects than it does to their abstract relationships. It is important not to reify the idea of a system, particularly when referring to social or cultural systems. The concept of a system is usually used in the social sciences in the sense of an abstract, analytical model rather than to refer to a concrete object. A system in the sense of a model, then, may or may not accurately reflect reality. As a model it is usually an oversimplification of reality.

A word should also be added at this point to make clear that there are a variety of ways to divide a subject for analysis with the systems approach. Each one may give different insights about the behavior of the subject of study. A social system, for example, can be broken down along separate geographical or territorial unit boundaries; and the relationships between the units (unit subsystems) can then be analyzed. Or one may look for boundaries between social groupings (e.g., social classes, churches, the Boy Scouts, veterans' organizations, stamp collectors), whose boundaries may not correspond to specific geographical boundaries, and analyze the interaction among such groups. Still another approach is to look for broad functional systems in the society, identify the elements involved in the system, and analyze the interaction between them. Examples of this are the economic system, the educational system (or the broader socialization system), the transportation system, the communications system, the political system, and

the incentive system. In other words, there are many ways to dissect reality using different system conceptualizations.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that a system may involve highly complex relationships between quite different kinds of units. We have already suggested that an automobile system, if complete, implies that an operator be included. Likewise, an educational system includes not only physical components, such as school buildings, books, pencils, playgrounds, and school bells, but also a human component—teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians, students, and bus drivers. Each of these sets of human components has its own function to perform and each individual has his own place in the structure of the educational system (and a corresponding functional role to perform). Conceptualized in this way, a different level of abstraction is introduced, a level where people are conceptualized not as concrete flesh and blood but rather as abstract roles; a level where groups of people are not viewed as concrete human beings interacting, but rather as sets of general interacting roles. Such a social system is an abstract model of patterns of behavior derived from the way in which people do in fact behave, but nevertheless an abstract version of this behavior.

There is also a third and higher level of abstraction which should be mentioned here: namely, the cultural level, or the level at which the general ideas, memories, beliefs, and norms prescribing proper behavior for a society are treated. We speak of the belief system or the cultural system. This corresponds very closely with the social system level of analysis and, in fact, the norms held by people in a society presumably are what determine in large part their actual pattern of behavior.

This cultural level of abstraction is also derived from the way in which people actually behave. While the social system conceptualization is derived from people's overt physical behavior, the cultural system conceptualization is derived from people's cognitive behavior—the way they perceive the world and think about it. At either the concrete human level of behavior or in the more abstract conceptualizations, there is a clear interaction between ideas, perceptions, and beliefs on the one hand and physical behavior on the other. On the abstract level there is likewise an interrelationship

between the cultural system of a society and its social system. In other words, it is important to keep in mind that complex systems may include not only interactions between quite different kinds of concrete phenomena (e.g., humans and automobiles), but also interactions between systems of thought and systems of overt physical behavior (at either the concrete human level or at the more abstract level of cultural and social systems.)

If the concept is so broad that almost everything is included, one might legitimately ask, What utility does it have at all? Doesn't it just confuse matters without clarifying anything? Indeed, one of the weaknesses of the term is that it is so all-inclusive; systems must be subdivided into many less inclusive categories for meaningful analysis.

Nevertheless, the advocates of systems theory point to several advantages of thinking in terms of systems, particularly when discussion is limited to social systems. First of all, a systems approach continually emphasizes that everything is related to everything else. When one part of a system changes, there is a likelihood of changes in other parts of the system or in other larger systems of which the system is a part. Although this in itself does not tell us much—and though it in some ways makes the world look hopelessly confusing—it nevertheless suggests an important guide for understanding. If nothing else, the limitations of narrow analysis, which may lead to overconfidence, become clearer. When the relationships between systems are broken down and clarified, however, a systems approach may lead an experienced scholar to very important variables more quickly. The systems approach suggests that points of interaction between systems are particularly important. This directs attention to influences from other apparently unrelated systems (e.g., the impact on a person's work on changes in the family system of which he is a part).

Second, the systems approach (particularly the organic systems approach of biology from which sociologists and political scientists borrowed the term) also suggests that systems are complex, changing, and flexible, rather than static and mechanistic. At the same time, because of the emphasis of the interrelatedness of the parts of systems, it also suggests how changes in one part of the system

(or at points of contact with other systems) trigger changes in the rest of the system—perhaps even altering the nature of the system itself (i.e., forcing the adaptation of the system to new conditions).

Third, advocates of the systems approach argue that despite the great differences between different kinds of systems, there are still important similarities between them (e.g., certain functions which they must perform if the system is to be maintained). Consequently, it is possible to learn something about less well-known systems by studying more familiar or more easily accessible ones. A systems approach at least suggests important questions to ask, important avenues of inquiry, and important things to examine when approaching a new system. A systems approach, in other words, is also a set of questions to ask; when answered, these questions automatically give one a certain fundamental understanding of the system and its behavior.[1]

In taking a systems approach there are a number of questions which one wants to ask about a given system under study:

1. What is the *general nature* of the system? Is it a mathematical system, a mechanical system, a biological system, a social system, or a system of concepts and ideas—or some combination of these? In our study of international politics we will be primarily concerned, of course, with social systems and with systems of ideas, though we will sometimes also be considering the interaction between social systems and their physical environment (either natural or man made).

2. What are the *boundaries* of the system, those that distinguish the system from its environment and those that separate the subsystems of the larger system? What determines the boundaries of the system, of course, depends in large part on the focus of the

[1] A word is in order here about two adjectives that are often confused: systemic and systematic. Systemic is an adjective used to refer to a system or its properties (e.g., one speaks of the systemic character of a relationship, systemic interaction, a systemic approach to analysis, etc.). Systematic, on the other hand, refers to a thorough, orderly, methodical, or regular procedure in doing something (e.g., someone reads a book or searches a house systematically). Although used quite differently the two terms are not completely unrelated—a systems approach suggests the need for systematic inquiry and analysis. Moreover, a systematic procedure in and of itself forms a system of sorts. Nevertheless, the two terms should not be confused.

particular study. We have already noted that an automobile can be analyzed either as a separate system or as one unit in a larger system of community transportation. Likewise a nation-state such as the United States or China can be analyzed as a system in and of itself or as one unit in an international system of states. Some systems, of course, are completely isolated from other systems. The Chinese political system for example, was almost completely isolated from the European political systems until several centuries ago. The Aztec and Mayan systems were similarly isolated from both the European and Chinese systems.

Even systems that do interact with others, however, differ considerably in the extent to which the boundaries between the systems are open or closed; easily penetrated, or difficult to penetrate. There are also related differences in the points of contact between systems. Some systems allow contact with other systems only at carefully selected points (e.g., between political representatives or trade representatives of a state), while other systems allow a full range of points of contact (e.g., free trade between all individuals and organizations, free tourist travel, etc.). Boundaries, in other words, may be actual physical or legal barriers that, through chance or design, prevent contact between systems; or they may only form an arbitrary analytical division between two interacting subsystems both of which are part of a larger system.

3. What are the *components* and the *structure* of the system? First, how many and what kind of separate units are there in the system? In the case of international systems, we are interested in knowing how many states are involved, how many regional organizations exist, and how many significant factors there are below the state level (e.g., how many significant revolutionary movements with international political impact). In other words we want to know not only how many units there are, but also how they are differentiated. We want to know the extent to which they are specialized. This is a more significant question in the study of nation-state systems than it is in the study of international systems, because states are not usually differentiated from one another according to some division of labor.

This is a significant question, however, when studying interna-

tional organizations. For example, there are great differences between them, not only in terms of their functional specialization but also in terms of their authority and jurisdiction. The patterns of goals and cleavages formed by the separate units of an international system, and the patterns of capabilities, (i.e., how many and what kind of capabilities does each state and supra-state unit have) are also important for distinguishing international systems.

We want to know how the various units are coordinated. In this connection, to what extent they have specialized decision-making and conflict-resolving institutions? To what degree is there a separate coordinating mechanism (a suprastate organization), and to what extent is coordination achieved only through mutual consultation and negotiation? In addition there is the question of the extent to which central control depends on coercion and the extent to which it is legitimate (i.e., voluntary or based on the authority of the centralized agency). There is also the separate, but related, question of the extent to which centralization of authority and/or control exists. Can individual units or some percentage of the units (e.g., 50 percent) veto a decision of the central authority? For example, we are familiar with the American federal system—here some governmental functions belong to the central government, others to the states or constituent units, and some are shared. Under the Articles of Confederation, the central government had considerably less ability to make binding decisions for constituent states. On the other hand, in a unitary state system such as France, the central government is entrusted with almost all decision-making power. In the United States today, although the individual states are bound by decisions of the central government in far more areas than states were under the Articles of Confederation, there is still substantial scope for the modification, if not the veto, of decisions made in Washington. In some subject areas, the state can decide to opt out of programs; and perhaps more often, the state can influence the impact of the central government. Most important, the individual state, through its representation in the Congress, can work to change the decisions.

4. What are the *areas of interaction* between the units of the system and what is the *form of the interaction?* Is interaction lim-

ited to the economic area (trade and aid)? Or are other kinds of interaction, such as the movement of people (migration, tourists, cultural exchanges), an exchange of communications (radio, TV, books, magazines, newspapers, letters, telephone calls, etc.), political interaction (negotiations, threats, alliance formation, etc.), or military interaction (war, etc.) also present? Is the interaction unidirectional (between givers and receivers), or is two way movement involved? Are the transactions of mutual benefit to both sides, or does one side have a disproportionate share of the costs and benefits? Is the interaction voluntary, or are one or more of the parties coerced into interacting?

5. To what degree has there been a development of *system-wide norms for the regulation of conflict?* What areas of life are covered? What is not covered? How much consensus is there over these norms? The extent to which system-wide norms for the regulation of conflict exist as well as the areas of life covered by the norms and the degree of consensus over them are crucial points of distinction. Related to this would be questions about the existence of a system-wide culture with common values, symbols, and objectives as well as the extent to which a sense of community existed within the system.

6. To what extent is there *system stability?* Can changes at various points within the system and changes in the system environment be accommodated by the system? This is one of the most fundamental questions, for it raises the problem of the survival of the system itself. It is not only the nature of the change which will determine the survival of the system, but also the flexibility of the system's mechanisms for adaptation. Here the political system is particularly important, both as a set of institutions and norms regulating conflict, and as a set of institutions that carry out nonpolitical, general decision-making functions for the entire system. Change within the system usually results in some sort of conflict between the units of a system. The effectiveness of the conflict-resolving mechanisms will be crucial in determining system stability and survival. In the case of external threats, such as war or economic competition, the effectiveness of the central decision-making institutions will be of fundamental importance.

The problem of system stability and endurance, of course, is only relative. The Roman Empire lasted a thousand years, yet in the long run could not accommodate change. The Roman Catholic church has survived even longer, although it has lost much of its former authority and has had to give up much of its temporal jurisdiction. Most systems have not fared so well. Over time, external and internal changes were not accommodated, and the systems were overwhelmed after only a few centuries or even decades of existence.

Questions of stability or change (peaceful or revolutionary) can be understood in terms of the adaptive or maintenance capabilities of the system. If the system is able to accommodate change, regardless of how it occurs (i.e., either because of an altered environment or through changes generated internally) stability is likely to result and the system's chances of survival are increased. If the system is unable to accommodate change, dissolution and system breakdown can result.

Some systems theorists have introduced organic or equilibrium models to help analyze the problem of change and stability. Such models assume that there is a "normal" state of a system and that change which affects this normal state (i.e., change which upsets the equilibrium) introduces responses that will tend to return the system to the normal or (equilibrium) state. The equilibrium may be at a different level as a result of the accommodation of change. According to the equilibrium theorists, only systems that are capable of such a response survive, and a process of natural selection operates. All systems are limited in the extent to which they can adjust to change, and some changes are simply too great for any system to handle. In such instances equilibrium is never regained and the system disintegrates. Just what a "normal" or equilibrium state is depends on the nature of the system. It presumably involves balance or harmony in relationships. One of the weaknesses of this type of model, which was borrowed from biology, is that a notion of "normal" states does not always make sense when analyzing social systems. The differences between them are too great, their functions too diverse, their organization too haphazard, and their announced purposes too temporary to make possible the identification of a "normal" state.

A wide variety of approaches have been taken by systems theorists to the study of social phenomena. The variety of models is enormous, ranging from simple input-output models to highly complicated functional models. Systems theorists disagree about just what functions are necessary for system survival, and there are almost endless ways of defining and dividing these functions. Nevertheless, systems theorists are in agreement that such "essential" functions do exist and that much can be assumed about the behavior of a system from an understanding of its basic functions. Talcott Parsons, for example, suggests that there are four functions that all systems must fulfill in order to maintain their stability and survive: goal attainment, pattern maintenance, integration, and adaptation.

Some political systems theorists have followed this general organic systems theory orientation (popularized in the social sciences by Marion Levy and Talcott Parsons). Gabriel Almond in comparative politics and Karl Deutsch in international politics are in this tradition. Other political systems theorists, such as Morton Kaplan, have taken a much more mechanistic approach to the study of systems.

It is important to emphasize again that the concept of system is not new. Only the vocabulary and the systematic attempt to interrelate all variables in a clear and logical way are in any sense new. Nor did the systems theorists discover international political systems. Long before people began to call themselves systems theorists, students of international politics were analyzing the nineteenth-century European balance of power system and the post-World War I international political system. These older interpretations of international political systems, however, tended to be inspired by mechanistic models. They lacked much of the sophistication and produced fewer insights than the models of the contemporary systems theorists.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Finally, at this point some attention must be given to the distinction between the terms *international relations, international politics,*

and *foreign policy.* The meanings of these terms are related, but they are by no means identical.

International politics refers to the process by which conflicts arise and are resolved at the international level. The study of international politics is the study of conflicts, how they originate, how the parties to the conflict behave in an attempt to deal with the conflict, and how they are resolved. This study also involves an examination of the political system context—the institutions and norms—within which the conflict takes place. Broadly speaking, international organization and law cover these categories.

International relations, on the other hand, is a considerably broader concept and refers to a much wider variety of both public and private interactions at the international level, both those involving conflict and those that are conflict free. The entire range of communications, economic transactions, movements of people (e.g., tourism, migration, cultural exchange), then are included along with political or military activity in the subject matter of international relations. Relations among supranational organizations, business firms, or individuals as well as nation-states can be considered a part of international relations. (While these levels are analytically distinct, it is important to remember that in practice interactions take place not only among entities on one level but also between entities at different levels, e.g., citizens or business firms of one country may have interactions with other states or supra-national organizations.) The common element in all these international relationships is that they involve some sort of interaction between separate entities across national boundaries, even when no conflict is involved.

It is important to keep in mind that the mere existence of separate units does not require interaction. The Aztecs did not have interaction with their contemporaries, the Romans or Chinese; indeed, none even knew of the others' existence. Even today, there are some states that do not have interaction with other states even though they are aware of each others' existence. The interaction between Paraguay and Luxembourg, for example, is almost nonexistent. Relations or interaction begins when there are economic or political reasons for such interaction, not simply because the states exist.

It is also important to note once again that every international relationship does not necessarily involve politics. Politics is involved only when there is conflict between separate entities. Politics involves the origins of conflict and attempts to resolve it. Tensions leading to conflict, open conflict in the form of violence, as well as attempts to find a substitute for violent conflict are all part of the ingredients of international politics. The nonpolitical relationships between states can be significant for the study of international politics, but they are generally of concern only as peripheral variables. Relationships involving such matters as the international flow of mail, common navigational signals, or ships' registry and cargo manifests would fall into this category.

A *foreign policy* is the set of objectives that a state has with regard to the desired behavior of other states or international organizations and a set of strategies and tactics designed to obtain these goals. International politics and international relations are to a large extent the products of the foreign policies of the individual states of the international system, though the nature of the international political system and developments in the international political process in turn affect the foreign policies of individual states. There is a continual interaction between these two levels of analysis.

International relations, as we have seen, is more inclusive than international politics, for it includes all interactions between states and their citizens and organizations in economic, cultural, or other spheres of activity. The foreign policy of a state is likely to be aimed at a wide variety of objectives and involve many spheres of interaction. It is possible for a state to have separate policies relating to international interaction in the economic, cultural, or any other sphere. These policies may or may not result in conflict. Thus they may or may not be within the scope of international politics. On the other hand, interaction between individuals and organizations (especially economic organizations) across international boundaries may come to involve conflict between the parties to the interaction. In some cases the conflict may be resolved through action at the individual or organizational level, but often the governments of their respective states are asked to intervene, or intervene of their own accord, thereby transferring the conflict to the

intergovernmental level. At the same time there may be other instances where interaction below the level of governments may serve to increase the probability of reducing conflict at the intergovernmental level.

It should be noted that states can have many separate and not necessarily coordinated foreign policies toward particular states or groups of states. In one instance conflict may arise, in another it may not. A state has no single foreign policy; instead policies can be distinguished in terms of subject area and in terms of other participants in the international system.

As noted, foreign policy is not normally made with only domestic needs in mind, but is usually in large part a response to the foreign policy and behavior of other states. In any case, rational foreign policy formation has to take into account the realities of the international environment, the international political system, and the other component states of the system, their needs, policies, and relative capabilities. It is thus the conflicting interaction of the foreign policies of individual states and groups of states within the context of the international political system and its physical and social environment that constitutes international politics.

There are a great many other terms that have been used by students in the field of international politics and relations—world politics, world affairs, international affairs, international studies, foreign affairs—but none of these terms accurately reflects the subject matter of either international politics or international relations. They include the study of governments and societies in different countries, regardless of whether either interaction between units or conflict is involved.

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