

STUDY QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Bearing the concept of cognitive frameworks in mind, watch a story on the news or read a story in the newspaper. Consider how someone with different cognitive frameworks might interpret the story differently. Try this approach for both national and international news items.
2. Think of an example of how a politician has framed a news story so that the public reached a conclusion that the politician desired. What skills are necessary to be a critical consumer of the news? Do you have these skills?
3. Considering that most news outlets are commercial enterprises, what makes one news story preferable to another?
4. How can the journalistic norm of objectivity and the dramatic imperative lead to distortions of the news?
5. What is the mutual exploitation model, and how do economic forces and self-interest drive the media and elites to choose to cater to each other's needs?

WEBSITES TO EXPLORE

<http://mediamatters.org>. Media Matters for America is a Web site devoted to exposing conservative bias in the news.

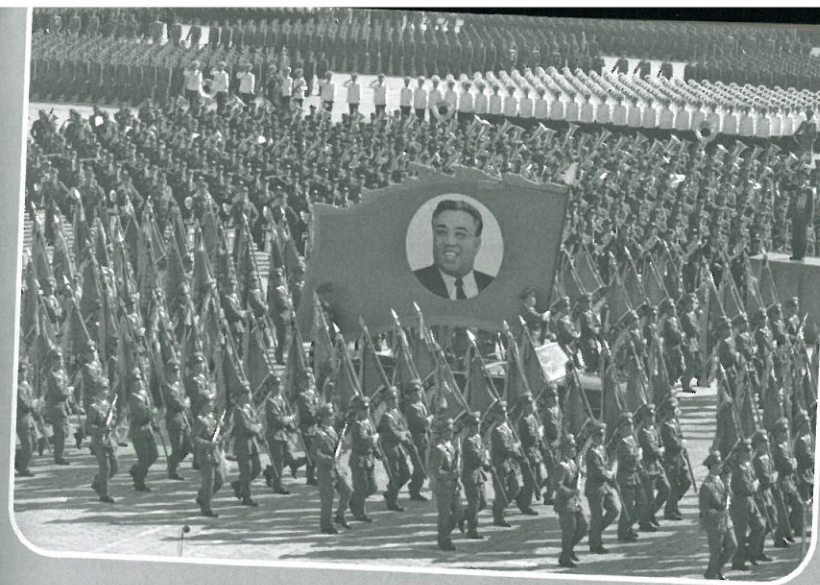
www.americanpressinstitute.org. The American Press Institute is a Web site created by newspaper publishers for the training and development of journalists and news outlets.

www.comedycentral.com/shows/the_daily_show/index.jhtml. This is the Web site for "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," a parody of the day's political news.

www.comedycentral.com/shows/the_colbert_report/index.jhtml. This is the Web site for "The Colbert Report," a parody of political news pundits.

www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/psnews.html. "Political Science Resources: News Media" is the University of Michigan Library Document Center's list of links related to the news media.

www.mediaresearch.org. Media Research Center is a Web site devoted to exposing liberal bias in the news.



If one guy trips, would it be like a bunch of dominoes?

CHAPTER 12

International Politics

Apocalypse Now and Then

As everyone knows, the best way to conquer the world is to start with all your armies on Madagascar and then take Africa. You hold Africa for a while and save up all the extra armies for holding a continent, then you bust out, jump over to Brazil and take South America. Once you have both Africa and South America, then it's just a matter of time before you get the rest of the world in your greedy little hands. That is the way world politics works, as every kid learns early in his or her Risk™ career. Of course, the simple fact that none of the leaders of Madagascar have ever managed to conquer the world throws some doubt on the Risk model of international politics, but then again, the fact that we have global conquest games designed for ten-year-olds says something about war and politics.

International politics is about far more than war, but war is the part we notice. That should not be surprising. War is, by its very nature, the quintessential example of the newsworthiness concept we discussed in chapter 11. War is conflict with a tremendous human impact. It deviates from our normal lives in both its scope and its violence. It embodies the dramatic story structure of Us versus Them and creates a context for both extreme heroics and extreme villainy. Most of history you will read is the story of war and it is impossible to count or categorize the number of novels, films, television miniseries, and children's cartoons that are about war. Quick, name a John Wayne movie that is not about war. For our less gifted readers, quick, name John Wayne. Even Disney makes cartoons about war. *Mulan*¹ was pretty lame for a Disney flick, but it was about a very real war.

Checkers, chess, Stratego, Risk, Go, Barbie Dream Date—even before we get to the bloodthirsty first-person computer games or all the contact sports played by big hairy guys running around in a stadium, it sometimes seems as if every game is about war. And many people say we should take these games seriously. Playing war warps the minds of the vulnerable, like children, the mentally incompetent, and professors. Some even believe we should run around and panic before these insidious games bring society crashing down around our ears. We will leave it up to you, though, to choose which threat to the foundations of society you wish to panic over.

Aside from training kids for all those career paths that are dependent on frantically pushing buttons with your thumbs, these combat and conflict games can provide valuable insights into the politics of interna-

tional relations. The board game Diplomacy provides a near-perfect representation of the realist theoretical perspective on international relations and has been used by political scientists to test theories on balances of power, stability in the international system, the effects of leadership change, and the possibility that human innovation will prevent effective forecasting of international politics. The ICONNS simulation at the University of Maryland and the decision board at Texas A&M University have been used to explore the dynamics of decision making regarding war, peace, and foreign policy. Online gaming environments are now used to study everything from the nature of personal identity to the formation of communities around conflicts.

So maybe there is some value in all those war games.

Yes or No?

Still, despite all the attention it gets, war is rare. If you consider all of the combinations of countries in the world that could be shooting at each other on any given day, the number that are actually dropping bombs and launching missiles is almost zero. War is so rare that the political scientists trying to find out what factors are associated with war actually had to develop, borrow, and steal new statistical techniques to try to distinguish the characteristics of that tiny fraction of countries that are fighting from the vast pool of countries that are at peace. Most of international politics is actually about cooperation; trade, travel, mail delivery, telephone service, environmental regulation, and the brutal suppression of guys inventing cars that run on switch grass.* These cooperative aspects of international politics are all far more common than war. We all know someone like that guy, Larry, who lives down the street. One day he is filling his Hummer's gas tank with lawn mower clippings and the next day Exxon's international commandos are flying the UN's black Stealth helicopters into town. They haul Larry off to an asylum in Tonga and his vehicle has to be towed away because it "doesn't run" anymore. We all have, or had, neighbors like that. It happens all the time. While it may be extreme to claim that impossible international conspiracies are far more common than war, it is difficult to emphasize how rare war actually is in the international scheme of things. Still, when it comes to international politics, most of the history, news, movies, books, and computer games are about war, so war seems like a good place to start the discussion of international politics. Remember, however, war is only the starting place.

*What exactly is switch grass anyway?

CAUSES OF WAR

With all the film and fiction about war, you would think that the fiction examples in this chapter would rain down on you like beer cans after a tornado hits a NASCAR race. The problem is, the fiction about war seldom addresses the international politics related to war. The novels and films are usually about the people caught up in the war, or about the strategy of war. *Saving Private Ryan*² tells us about the personal struggles of some of the men caught up in and ultimately killed in the Allied invasion of Normandy but it says almost nothing about the decades of political dynamics that drove the Allies to choose a costly invasion over a negotiated end to World War II. Consider *Full Metal Jacket*,³ *Catch-22*,⁴ *The Forever War*,⁵ *Tora! Tora! Tora!*,⁶ *All Quiet on the Western Front*,⁷ *Apocalypse Now*,⁸ *M.A.S.H.*,⁹ and *The Guns of Navarone*¹⁰; the stories are either about the people caught up in the conflict or they are about the interplay of opposing military strategies. While combinations of these two themes make for much better stories than the politics that led to the war, they do not help much in our effort to get at the how and why of war.

In fact, when fiction does address the causes of war, it does more harm than good to our understanding of international politics. The only consistent theme you are likely to find in fiction about the causes of war is that war is largely accidental. In *Dr. Strangelove*,¹¹ a comedy of errors and insanity causes world-ending nuclear war when an insane general and a string of accidents prevent the leaders of the United States from stopping Slim Pickens from riding a nuke down into Moscow. In *War Games*¹² a military computer is accidentally set loose in what it thinks is a game scenario and that mistake threatens the same nuclear end of the world. In Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, a centuries-long war with the alien Taurans is flippantly dismissed at the conclusion of the book as a misunderstanding. Similarly, the *Ender*¹³ series by Orson Scott Card pins the cause of a war that eliminates an entire species on a misunderstanding between cultures that not only triggered the fight, but also prevented them from finding an end short of genocide. The impression you might reasonably glean from fiction is that war is so horrible that only an accident or misunderstanding could explain it. The obvious solution is to understand each other better, communicate more effectively, and send folk dancers on world tours.

The problem with the whole wars-are-accidents theory is that it is about as plausible as the Dallas Cowboys winning the World Series. Seriously, it only takes a quick look at the reality of politics to argue that it is ridiculous to think that wars are all accidents. After George W. Bush spent well over a year campaigning for support for his invasion of Iraq, no one could seriously argue that the Second Gulf War was an accident or a cultural misunderstanding. More generally, wars usually occur between neighboring countries, countries that know each other quite well and have more in common than they have differences. And even if the causes of war were all just a matter of cultural differences, will cultural understanding and exchanges actually help? After an hour

of Bulgarian folk disco, most of the audience will be screaming for a tank or a bomb, anything to make it stop. Soccer, which many Europeans consider to be the pinnacle of modern cultural exchange, actually triggered a war in Central America.¹⁴ Wars as a clash of cultures may be a catchy thing to say and an easy thing to believe—after all, Canadians are just so, well, Canadian—but ultimately the idea is like connecting increased outbreaks of insanity with the full moon. When there is a war, cultural differences are the noticeable things that our minds latch on to and we fail to notice all the cultural differences that exist between countries that do not go to war. And while the fear of an accidental nuclear war was—and to some degree still is—very real, war is no accident.

The choice to go to war is consciously and rationally made by at least one of the participants and even when a war appears to be an accidental cascade of events triggered by a minor incident or a gross miscalculation, those appearances are usually deceiving. To say that the assassination of a minor archduke from a fading imperial power explains why World War I started is like saying that the second cigarette on June 5, 1998, caused Aunt Lulu's lung cancer. Even if you could pin down the moment that that first one of Lulu's lung cells became cancerous, even if you could figure out which puff of smoke did it, was that single thing really the cause? What about all the cartons of cigarettes before that one drag, or the countless Virginia Slims that followed that one puff? What about all those asbestos sculptures she made for the local grade school art fairs? The causes of cancer are complex, often subtle, and often the result of things that accumulate over time.

War is often the same way. We can often spot a visible, often dramatic, initial event. Wars start with the blitzkrieg of Poland, a declaration of independence, or John Wayne saying something like "to hell with the border, they stole my beer," but are any of those the actual reasons why the war occurred? The dynamics that actually cause the war are far more intricate and complex than the event that sparked the conflagration.

BACK TO ANARCHY

With all the killing and primitive, savage brutality we see in battle, it is easy to think of war in terms of cavemen crushing each other's skulls with clubs. To the relief of everyone who has to study this chapter for a test, the easy way of approaching the subject is also the best way. The predominant theoretical framework that underlies most studies of war and international politics is essentially the academic version of the caveman stories we used back in chapter 3 to talk about anarchy and the reasons for government. The effects of an anarchical environment on behavior, the security dilemma, alliances, the tragedy of the commons—remember all those concepts? We could almost build this section by repeating the beginning of the book and referring to a few good flicks: Take *Mad Max*¹⁵ and *The Road Warrior*¹⁶—replace the barbarian motorcycle gang with the Visigoths sacking the corpse of the Roman Empire and you could be in a his-



tory class.* Take *Lord of the Flies* replace Ralph, Piggy, and Jack with Britain, France, and Germany, and we could be talking about any number of wars in European history. There are several alternative conceptual frameworks for looking at international politics, some of which we will discuss, but to state it simply, humans have never managed to establish a formal, hierarchical political structure that encompasses enough of the world to create a global governed environment. As a result, anarchy is most commonly assumed to be the underlying dynamic of international politics. The theoretical construct of realism[†] provides the best example of how international politics operates in an anarchical environment. Interestingly enough, even though realism refers to a specific theory of international politics and is distinct from our "real versus ideal" theme in this text, the realist theoretical perspective was developed in reaction to what is often called a period of idealism in the study of international politics.

WORLD WAR I WAS UNPLEASANT

If we look into the archaeology of the study of war, we can see that the wars-are-accidents theme found in literature has a parallel in the early study of international politics and, further, we can explain why. As is the case for just about everything—other than the horrible grade you got on the last exam—there is a reason.[‡] In short, the whole idea that war must be an accident arose from the fact that World War I was unpleasant.

The Horror, the Horror

In fact, we can blame World War I for a lot. The concerted academic effort to come to grips with international politics and part of the reason the study of international politics is so focused on war were both initiated by the horrific experiences that the soldiers and societies suffered in World War I. It probably is not possible to overstate the impact that "the war to end all wars" had on the societies involved, particularly in how it affected the scholars who studied conflict and politics. The war was such a hellish experience that it is nearly impossible to fully describe it. However, to set the proper mood, we will crank up the surround sound and try to paint a gruesome picture for you.

Imagine you are fighting in a war. Now, wars are bad enough. People are getting killed and wounded in the most unsettling ways; blood, guts, and gore are flying everywhere; heads are getting blown off and so forth, but the carnage in World War I was exceedingly gruesome. For this, you can blame the machine gun. Unlike previous wars where the battles were brief and the dynamics of the fronts and lines shifted rapidly, war in the age of the machine gun was a static slaughterhouse. In battle, soldiers used

*The clothes are even the same.

†Realism is a specific theory of international politics and is different from a common-language understanding of the word.

‡We all understand that your horrible grade must have had something to do with the random whims that churn through what is left of your professor's alien brain.

rational people wouldn't choose

to be able to march towards each other, fight in the open, have some hope of winning when they attacked and then retreat back to a camp after a day or, at most, a few days of fighting. War used to consist primarily of lots of marching and camping, with a few frantic moments of blood and death mixed in, but in World War I, the battle became constant. Machine guns were so effective at defending territory that generals dared not give up any ground on the battlefield. If they let the troops retreat out of machine-gun range even just for the night, they might never recover that lost acreage. As a result, the commanders had to keep their men out on the field, defending the front line all the time. The battle became constant. The war devolved into a defensive stalemate where the armies fought, pretty much around the clock, for years on end.

The technological advance of the machine gun was key, but there were several other factors that, when combined with the new guns, made World War I the most hellish war ever fought. Machine guns killed at an astounding rate. They poured out ammunition so fast that the only way soldiers could even hope to survive in battle was to dig in, and to stay down in a trench. So the soldiers fought around the clock from huge trenches. These trenches were twenty feet or more deep and after the first couple months of the war they zigzagged their way across a good chunk of Europe. Now, as any wino can tell you, living in a ditch is miserable enough, but the climate of Western Europe made life in the trenches absolutely unbearable. It was bitterly cold and wet, and that was in the summer. It does not take much thought to figure out what happens when you live in deep trenches exposed to constant, cold rain. You are knee deep in icy mud. Your leather boots rot from your feet and your feet themselves are rotting. Further, it is hard to control sewage. Those horrible conditions and the infections they foster, combined with primitive medical treatments, meant that the slightest wound was likely to be fatal. In fact, more soldiers died from disease and infection than were killed directly from enemy fire, and that statistic is made all the more remarkable by the sheer number of men killed by bullets.

Still, as miserable as a cold, muddy, sewage-filled ditch sounds, if you are a soldier, down in that trench is where you want to be and where you want to stay. The enemy's machine guns are always waiting, waiting for your leaders to issue that order to climb over the top and attack. Compounding the lethality of the machine gun was the lack of any kind of tactical understanding of how the new weapon had changed the very nature of battle. In World War I, what little understanding of war the leaders of either side had dated from an earlier era, where guns were slow to fire and, as often as not, the guns were most deadly when the pointy bayonet on the end was used like a spear. The commanders, particularly the British generals, used nineteenth-century tactics, repeatedly ordering their troops to charge into the meat-grinding maw of those machine guns. Soldiers were sent climbing over barbed wire and dead bodies, running at the enemy while the machine guns just fired away. If a soldier was lucky enough to survive the charge, then he got to jump into the enemy's trench and fight hand-to-hand. Most his-

stories of World War I will emphasize how many soldiers died because their commanders simply did not appreciate that the nature of war had changed.

There is yet another aspect of World War I that should drive home just how gruesome the experience was for the soldier. Even hunkered down in the sewage-filled trench, out of sight of the machine guns, you were not safe. There was the constant barrage from long-range mortars, which at any time could drop an explosive shell into your trench. But troops could build sandbag shelters to deal with the explosives. The absolute worst aspect of fighting in World War I was when those mortar shells were filled with mustard gas instead of explosives. Mustard gas, not actually poisonous, is highly caustic. It is heavier than air and when it settled down into the trenches it was essentially like inhaling drain cleaner. It killed by eating away the lining of your lungs, slowly drowning you as the fluid from your blood seeped into your lungs. It would often take hours to slowly suffocate, as you writhed in agony from the chemical burns inside your chest. Even if you managed to get your gas mask on in time, imagine sitting in one of those trenches next to someone who did not. Imagine sitting through the night while a friend of yours died like that.

All Quiet on the Western Front?

There is little doubt that World War I was a horrible experience for the soldiers, but it was also socially traumatic. Few events in history have had so profound an effect on the social and political structures of the world. The primary reason the war had such an impact on the modern study of war and international politics was its effect on the British, the predominant academics of the time. The officers in the British army—particularly the field officers down in the trenches—were elites who had been drafted into the war. These men were the educated sons of wealthy or otherwise important people, and after the war, those who survived became professors, politicians, and artists. They also had what may have been the most traumatic of experiences.

For the field officers, the hell of the World War I battlefield was so close to the normalcy of London omnibuses and afternoon tea that it was unbearable. An officer could get a four-day pass—often as frequently as every month—and hitch a ride from the front to the coast, ride a ferry across the English Channel, catch the train from Dover, and be in London for supper. In a matter of hours, you could leave the mustard gas and the sewage-filled ditches behind and be back home where everyone was carrying on like normal. A few days later you were back on the train to that cold, wet, deadly hell on the continent. If you were one of the lucky few who managed to survive through the next month, you might get another four-day pass, but even while you were sipping tea with Mum, you knew that it was probably the last time you would see her. Surviving in the trenches for more than a few months was not at all likely. It was not unheard of for a single day's battle to slaughter tens of thousands of soldiers. It was not unusual to have to climb over the bodies of the people you had just been standing next to in the

trenches. It was commonplace for entire regiments to be wiped out when charging at the enemy trenches. Yet with a four-day pass, you could all of the sudden be back home. This cycling back and forth between normalcy and what was perhaps the most miserable wartime experience ever. It was almost worse than being thrown into the trenches for the duration. Humans have the ability to hunker down and endure misery. Prisoners of war, concentration camps, and slavery all offer examples of people's ability to become numb to horrendous circumstances and adjust to endure the worst of conditions. The problem for the British officers was that right about the time their minds and spirits managed to grow numb to the horrors of war, a four-day pass and a quick trip home brought back for them what was supposed to be normal and reminded them all over again just how horrific the trenches were before throwing them back in. Then, next month, just as they were getting numb to the horrors, they went home again, if they were still alive.

This trauma influenced English literature between the wars. From about 1920 through the start of World War II, these experiences permeate most British novels. World War I traumatized British society as a whole. The officers came back to their positions in the elite social circles of British society. They became authors and scholars. They researched social phenomena and political history and the experience of the war gave them a mission. With an almost religious conviction, they were determined that such a hellish war would never happen again. They attacked the disease of war with evangelical determination. The modern study of international politics was born during the interwar period and the scholars, even the diplomats of this period, were obsessed with the quest to find a peaceful world. This quest shaped the study of international politics to this very day.

One result of the obsession with preventing another world war was a body of academic study and theory that is often referred to as idealism. Beyond the quest for peace, there are two clear aspects to this experience and obsession that show up in the early study of international politics. The first is the belief that conflict of any sort is bad. Conflict is treated as you would treat a disease, and this is part of what sociologist Lewis Coser was reacting to when he wrote *Functions of Social Conflict*.¹⁷ The second is the belief that no rational leader would choose to endure the massive destruction caused by war. Thus, war must result from an accident, insanity, or a gross miscalculation of some kind. You see an antiwar strain in much of the fiction about war, but you can also still see the idealist drive to end war in the titles of the two most prominent academic journals specifically focused on the study of war—*The Journal of Peace Research* and *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

REALISM AND WAR

The big problem with idealism and the obsessive quest for peace was that it did not work. Two decades worth of theorizing about perfect worlds and the countless political

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actions taken to create a world free of conflict all failed, and failed miserably. Some of the effort to find peace at any cost may

have even helped bring about World War II, a world war that was bigger than the first. European leaders wanted peace so badly that they were unwilling even to contemplate using force against Hitler as he rose to power, broke agreements, rearmed Germany, annexed Austria, and took over Czechoslovakia. Just before German tanks rolled across the Polish border, E. H. Carr, a British scholar studying international politics and war, published a small, but radical book that changed the study of world politics. *The Twenty-Years' Crisis*¹⁸ examined why the Nazis were able to take power in Germany and why they were able to grow so quickly into an international threat. Most notably this book was built upon the explicit premise that international politics could only be understood if we set aside the idealistic perspective and looked at the reality of politics. Carr argued that the reality of international politics was all about rational choices made in the pursuit of power in an anarchical international environment. Later, the theoretical approach built from this argument would be called realism, a term most often associated with another classic scholar, Hans J. Morganthau.¹⁹

Essentially, realism gets us back to the Risk model of international politics, or war as a strategy game. There is a great deal of diversity in realist theories and conceptual perspectives that build on a realist foundation, but they all are based upon three key assumptions.

1. **States are rational unitary actors.** Thus, we can talk about countries as if they were people making choices in their own best interests. Botswana makes a decision. Indonesia takes a certain position in international negotiations. China takes advantage of a trade relationship. Or, the United States is annoyed with France, again. While the early realist scholars were careful to point out that the different political and social structures within governments are important, the constraints and imperatives of the international system are predominant and those forces act the same on all states. This line of thinking limits the effect that domestic politics can have on international relations to the point where most phenomena can be explained entirely by dynamics external to the state.
2. **These unitary rational states interact in an anarchical environment.** Thus, the dynamics we talked about with individuals in an anarchic situation, such as the security dilemma, can be applied to states in international politics as well. States seek security in a world where there is no overarching authority to which to turn for protection. There are no courts or police to enforce agreements. It is a self-help environment, *Lord of the Flies* but with tanks and guns. Realism is often described as a systemic theory because the nature of the anarchical system defines the dynamics of how international politics will work. Everything builds from

Chamberlain
Appeasement

No
Democracy

the dynamics of anarchy. Every realist theory of why things happen starts with "we have an anarchical environment, therefore. . ."

3. Power is the fundamental resource to be pursued. While we are treating the pursuit of power as a separate assumption of realist theory, you could also argue that it is a result of the anarchy assumption. In the anarchical environment, power, or the ability to do something, is all that is required to do whatever it is that the unitary rational state thinks needs doing. All other needs, wants, or desires, particularly the most important and primary concern of security, can then be attained with power.

The result is a simplified image of international politics that is remarkably similar to teenage kids at a card table moving plastic armies around a cardboard map. Each individual player is a country and the goal is always to gain more power, usually represented by more territory, for which you need more armies. Within the rules of how armies move and conquer, there is no referee to force the players to keep agreements they make with one another. If you have the power to take out someone and grab all of his stuff, there is nothing to stop you even if you double-promised you would not annihilate him. Thus, Nazi Germany can sign a statement of eternal peace and promise to have a sleepover with fuzzy slippers with the Soviet Union, and then turn around and attack them a few months later without any referee stepping in. The only repercussions are those the Soviet Union can find the power to inflict on Germany. Hitler had the tanks to attack, and in the end, the only thing that stopped German troops short of the Urals was the fact that Stalin had enough men with guns to stop the Panzers.

As an example of how something this simple can explain a great deal about international politics, let's look at how realism gives us two motives and two strategies for forming alliances that help understand how the choice to go to war might be rational.

Opportunity

If you think back to our stories about the bullies and geeks fighting over fish on the deserted isle, there is one obvious reason why someone in an anarchical environment would choose to go berserk and take out someone else—opportunity. The bully beats up the geek because the half-evolved brute has the opportunity to use his power and take the fish. The third assumption of realism, the assumption that power is the primary resource to be pursued includes this idea of going after gains when the opportunity arises. You can repeatedly see this in both the explanations offered for the start of wars and in the way they play out. Take for example the whole idea of *lebensraum*, which translated from German literally means "living space." The expansion of Nazi Germany was often discussed or justified by the Germans as the need to find this living space for their growing population and they used their military power to take advantage of opportunities to accomplish it. Czechoslovakia, which had almost no army in

comparison to the Nazis, was bullied into ceding territory—the Sudetenland—without a fight, then that territory was used as a staging ground to take the rest of the country by force of arms. Poland was still fielding horse-mounted cavalry when Germany took advantage of their weakness and the Panzers rolled over the border in the first example of the tactic now known as blitzkrieg or "lightning war." Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and then France—Germany's conquest of Europe is a story of a huge military power taking advantage of its strong and well-equipped army to take what it wanted.

Whether it is the United States seizing the customs house of a small banana republic to assure that the United Fruit Company gets the money it claims it is owed, or it is Iraq rolling over the border of Kuwait, we can point to any number of wars and talk about them in terms of a powerful country seizing an opportunity to use its power to get something it wants. Countries can do this because it is an anarchical environment out there and there is no world government to stop them or punish them. There are, however, several wars that cannot be explained this way.

Fear This

In 1967, a single week of fighting defined one of the most stunning wars in modern history. Outgunned and outnumbered, Israel used better training, better equipment, and a masterful combination of tactics to simultaneously attack Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, defeating the whole lot in six days. The truly curious thing about the war is the simple fact that Israel attacked. Israel initiated the fighting even though any measure of power would have put them at a massive disadvantage. Further, the Israelis knew they were massively outgunned, and that was a big part of why they chose to attack.

Why on earth would a weaker power attack several larger powers?

The simple answer is fear. Israel feared an attack. Its leaders were convinced that war would come and every additional day the Arab powers would have to maneuver and prepare just made the odds worse. Beyond the usual threats and bombastic statements that have been elevated to an art form in Middle Eastern politics, the actions of the countries around Israel—Egypt in particular—gave the Israelis good reason to believe that they were about to be attacked, whether they liked it or not. Egypt asked United Nations peacekeepers to leave the border area between Egypt and Israel and moved substantial firepower toward that border. Jordan stationed a significant number of tanks at the outskirts of Jerusalem, just a few miles from cutting Israel in two with an attack. Syria reinforced their ability to strike from the Golan Heights and all of the Arab countries stepped up the level of threats. Israel feared an attack and had no real way to defend itself against the combined might of those three countries.

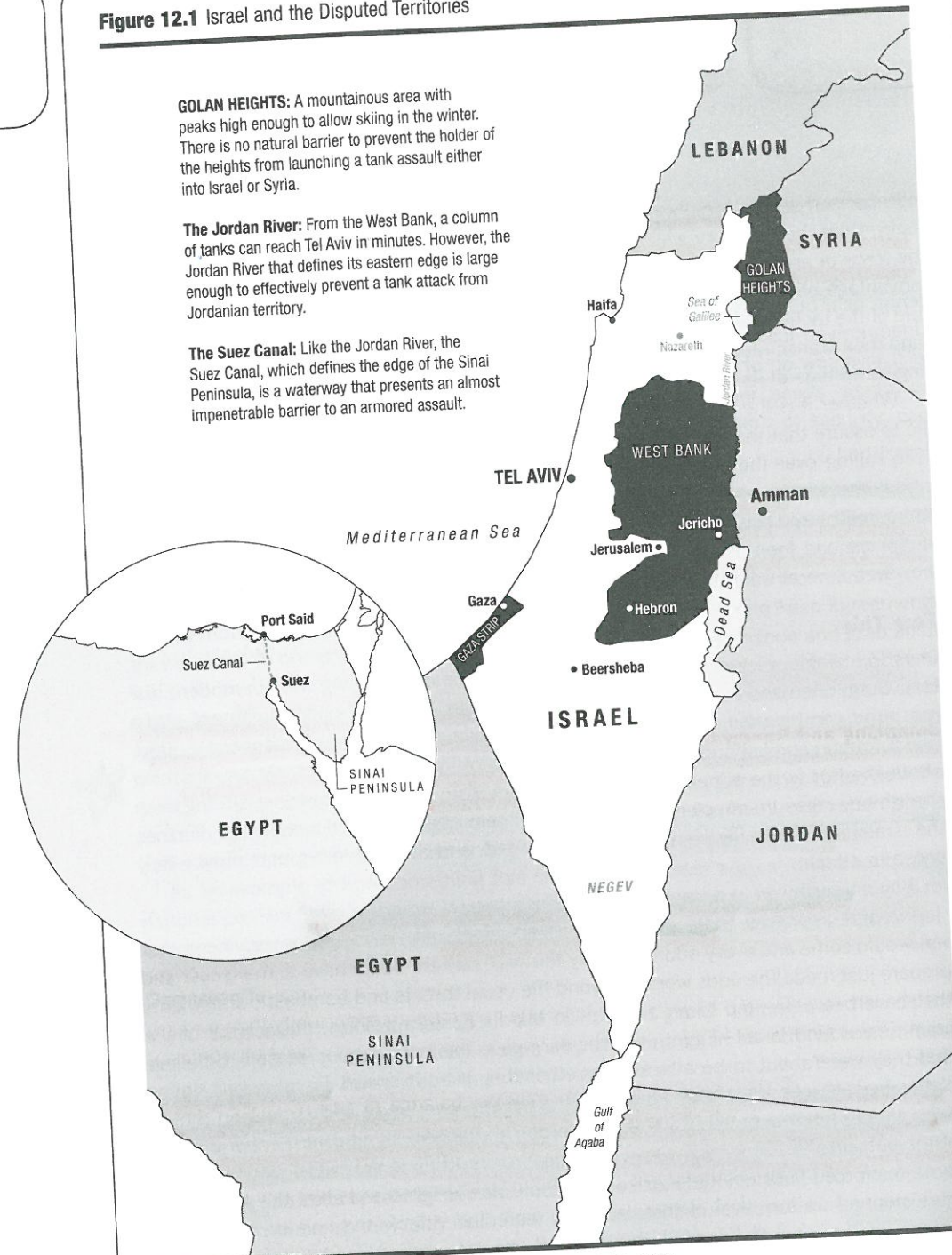
Given the disadvantage in terms of power, the rational response to that fear was to attack. Still doesn't make sense? Think of the Six Day War as the international version of surprising the big bully with a swift kick to the groin. The Israeli air force timed the

Figure 12.1 Israel and the Disputed Territories

GOLAN HEIGHTS: A mountainous area with peaks high enough to allow skiing in the winter. There is no natural barrier to prevent the holder of the heights from launching a tank assault either into Israel or Syria.

The Jordan River: From the West Bank, a column of tanks can reach Tel Aviv in minutes. However, the Jordan River that defines its eastern edge is large enough to effectively prevent a tank attack from Jordanian territory.

The Suez Canal: Like the Jordan River, the Suez Canal, which defines the edge of the Sinai Peninsula, is a waterway that presents an almost impenetrable barrier to an armored assault.



The defensible borders Israel secured with the territories occupied in 1967.

Source: Stephen W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 17th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007), 259

initial attack so the first bomb dropped ten minutes after the Arab officers—a classification that included all of the pilots—started their breakfast. At that time of the morning, none of the Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi, Lebanese, or Iraqi planes were in the air and none of the pilots were anywhere close to the planes. In a single, perfectly timed and executed attack, Israel destroyed almost everything that the Arab forces could fly while the machines were still on the ground. By gaining control of the air, Israel effectively reversed the relative balance of power, and by the end of the day, any of the Arab tanks that had not been destroyed from the air were retreating from the similarly well-executed attacks made by the Israeli armored units. A few days later, Israel had conquered three geo-strategically critical territories: the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the Jordan River, and the Sinai Peninsula. Holding those territories gave Israel borders that it could reasonably hope to defend against an attack. That is a big part of why Israel still holds parts of those territories.

Instances when a country attacks out of fear are rarely this obvious and they seldom work out very well. After all, if you fear the greater power of another that means you are the weakling and already at a disadvantage, but we can take a quick look at other responses to fear to see how power and the anarchical system shape the fundamentals of international politics.

Balancing and Bandwagoning

Chances are you have heard the term *balance of power* somewhere along the line. Chances are also pretty good that you do not really know what it means. Do not feel bad; most professors do not either. Some will talk about it as a verb, something countries do. Some will talk about it as a situation, something that does or does not exist. Some will talk about it as a specific historical period where Britain was a dominant world power. Some scholars studying what are known as “power-transition wars” will say that the existence of a balance of power makes it more likely that a challenger will go to war with a dominant power while some will argue that a balance of power will prevent war by keeping countries from believing they have an opportunity to make easy gains off a weakling. In short, it is not that unreasonable for you to be a bit confused about the term.

As confused as the usage of the term may be, *balance of power* might be best described as the way in which the distribution of power across the international system influences the pattern of alliances that tend to form in an anarchical environment. In fact, we have already discussed this understanding of balance of power in the scenario of bullies and geeky kids catching fish. The international version of the story is a little more violent, but it is the same idea of forming an alliance to counter, or balance against the power of others and protect what you consider to be valuable.

The one notable difference between balancing against power in the international-relations version of the story and the bullies-on-the-beach version is that the primary

motivation in international politics is presumed to be fear rather than opportunity. When we speak of balance of power we are usually talking about a situation where alliances are formed or alliances shift in response to the perception of threat, or where small countries ally together to protect themselves from the big bully. In what was often referred to as the Balance of Power era, England used a balance of power strategy explicitly in the effort to maintain peace in Europe. As disputes arose and threatened to escalate to war, England would lend support to the weaker side in order to balance the power on both sides and prevent either side from believing it had an opportunity to make gains by war against a weaker opponent. This is also part of the reason why the term is so confused. Balance of power defines an era in international politics, it describes an action and strategy that England used in international relations, and it also signifies a condition that can exist when the power on both sides of a dispute is roughly equal.

Balancing can be thought of as alliance formation driven by the fear that the more powerful side might be pursuing gains, but we can also talk about international alliance dynamics in terms of an opportunistic motive. Instead of siding with the weakling to thwart the bully, you could ally with the bully in order to carve out your own slice of the spoils. You could talk about the Second Gulf War in terms of bandwagoning.*

A reasonable argument can be made that the countries that allied with the United States to topple Saddam Hussein were hoping for spoils such as rebuilding contracts and U.S. support in other areas of international politics in return for lending a few troops to the war effort. They pursued opportunity rather than acting out of fear of the United States.

Why?

Before you rush off into claims of the United States' noble motives and moral superiority, or the corporate conspiracies of oil companies as reasons why these countries would join with the United States, think about the question of why in terms of realism, in terms of power. Did any of these bandwagoners have enough power to do anything else? The overwhelming power of the United States compared to Iraq is a significant consideration when it comes to the question of bandwagoning in the Second Gulf War. It is notable that none of the U.S. allies could have thwarted the United States by allying with Iraq. This seems to be relatively typical of instances where you could call alliance formation an act of bandwagoning. One side is so much stronger than the other that victory is all but assured and joining in the alliance is opportunistic or desperate, either currying favor of the stronger power or seeking a share of the spoils from a conflict that they cannot do anything to stop. With so much opposition to the war around the world, it is interesting to consider what would have happened if there had been a country in the world that was powerful enough to protect Iraq with an alliance.

*This phenomenon also explains why there are an inordinate number of Yankees fans.

Notice that in both balancing and bandwagoning, the key is power. You balance against a greater, threatening power. You bandwagon against a weaker power to gain part of the spoils. In realism, power and anarchy act to define international politics.

CHALLENGING THE REALIST PARADIGM

In spite of the surprisingly good explanations realism provides for some things, particularly those related to war, there are problems with its simplified image of international politics. Realism, it seems, is, in a number of ways, just not that realistic. At the very least, it has a tough time explaining all of the cooperative international behavior that, by any reasonable measure, is far more common than war.

A tremendous number of refinements or alternate theories can be offered to address the shortcomings and failings of realism. Judging by the latest offerings in introductory international relations textbooks, liberalism and constructivism are the two most popular counterpoints to realism for the classroom. However, how well the demands of the current textbook market accurately reflect the subject is an interesting question. Marxism has fallen almost completely out of introductory international relations texts, yet the vast majority of research presented at the last five of the International Studies Association* annual conventions examines international political economy, economic development, the political effects of poverty, sanctions, trade, or foreign aid. While many of these studies do not explicitly work from a Marxist intellectual foundation, almost all presume the Marxist conceit that wealth is the primary factor driving international politics. Yet Marxism, which used to be a mandatory counterpart to realism in any course on international relations, has vanished along with the communist bloc. In addition to running counter to the trends in research, this is particularly ironic when you consider how much Karl Marx would have despised those brutal totalitarian regimes.

Liberalism might reasonably be considered an equal to Marxism as a challenge to realism. It is the primary theoretical construct underlying many significant areas of research, including the idea of the democratic peace, which is highlighted below. However, an examination of the current state of the discipline makes it difficult to make the claim that constructivism is equal to either liberalism or Marxism, and it is impossible to argue that it should displace Marxism from introductory international relations textbooks. That said, there must be a reason why constructivism is so popular in the classroom. Professors do not make those sorts of decisions lightly.† And even though we focus on the reasons for a cautious approach to making bold claims about constructivism,

*The ISA is the largest organization of scholars studying international relations in the world, and it publishes the top five (in terms of circulation) international relations research journals.

†Regardless of the arguments made about alternatives to realism, there is one thing that is clear: they are alternatives to realism. Whether the field is examined from a historical perspective or a survey of its current state, it would be difficult to dismiss realism as the central conceptual perspective on international relations. Thus, for this chapter we work from that foundation, taking small steps away from realism as we try to describe the study of international politics and the specific theories and research programs we discuss are chosen to help students make those small conceptual steps.

that should not be taken as a slight on its value as an approach to international relations.* Rather, it reflects an uncertainty over how it fits into the constellation of theories and hypotheses in international relations.

The Not So Black Box

One of the most obvious ways that the simplifications of realism run afoul of the real world is in the presumption that states behave as if they are rational unitary actors. In essence, from a strict realist perspective, the internal workings of a state do not matter. The leaders, governments, processes, economies, societies, religions, and all the other goings-on inside the state can be put in a black box. Not a real black box—you would never be able to build one that was big enough—but a figurative black box where what goes on inside can be ignored. The idea is that for a given input from the international system, the output of all domestic governments and societies must be the same regardless of how things are done inside. That strict interpretation of realism, however, is a bit troubling because it seems pretty obvious that process, structure, and particularly leaders make a big difference. Would the cold war have ended peacefully if Gorbachev were replaced with a hard-line militant Stalinist? If Gore, not Bush were in the White House, would the Second Gulf War have happened? Replace Hitler, Tojo, Qaddafi, Stalin, Roosevelt, any of England's King Edwards, Genghis Khan, or Millard Fillmore and the politics of the world would probably be radically changed. If leaders do not matter, how is that we can have great or horrible leaders?

One of the theoretical perspectives that directly challenges the realist presumption of the state as a unitary rational actor is Foreign Policy Analysis.¹ In short, Foreign Policy Analysis argues that states do not make decisions, individuals make decisions and understanding how those decisions are made within the structure, process, and context of domestic politics is essential for understanding international politics. From the effects of bureaucracies to the psychological profiles of leaders, Foreign Policy Analysis is all about what goes on inside the black box and how that defines or alters the interactions of states. Most Foreign Policy Analysis theories and studies do not challenge the idea of an anarchical international system, but they do place less emphasis on the influence of anarchy, structure, the international system, or power. Rather than determining specific actions and events, Foreign Policy Analysis scholars argue that the system defines or limits the menu of choices available to leaders. After all, there are plenty of countries the United States has the power to invade, but which ones get an olive green calling card, now that is the question. Another way to think of this is

*It should be noted that one of the authors of this text studies the effect of news media on international politics and almost all of his work relies on, and can be fit within a broad conceptualization of constructivism. Clearly, the approach to constructivism used in this chapter does not reflect any kind of disregard for its intellectual value: just the questionable claim that it should displace Marxism.

¹Do note that while we do not capitalize realism, we capitalize Foreign Policy Analysis in order to differentiate the theoretical approach from the research activity the words could also denote. It also annoys realist theorists, which is fun.

the idea of foreign policy substitutability. Roughly put, for any one input from the anarchical international system, there is usually a whole set of options that might reasonably be chosen in response. From the context of an anarchic international system the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the First Gulf War, is particularly interesting. The U.S. response to Saddam Hussein's 1991 invasion of Kuwait could have reasonably stretched from ignoring it entirely to launching an all-out war. Those extreme options and all the options in between have advantages and disadvantages, costs and benefits, risks and rewards, short-term and long-term consequences. All of those factors have both domestic components and international components. How all those nonsystemic factors sort themselves out into a decision and an action is a function of the processes and structures that, from a realist perspective, supposedly do not matter—all of the things in the black box of domestic government.

While this makes sense, the difficulty with looking inside the black box is that it makes a complicated mess of things. No two governments are the same, no two leaders are the same, and with any kind of study you quickly run into difficulties separating the more theoretically interesting general reasons why things happen from the unique aspects within the country or countries in question. When a scholar chooses to open the black box, getting buried by the details is always a danger. There are rewards, but they are coupled with difficulties. One reward that we want to highlight might be a hint at how to get closer to the elusive peace that idealists dreamt about in the aftermath of World War I.

Why Kant Democracies Fight?*

Opening the black box of government has made possible the simple discovery that the basic type of government structure can have a significant effect on the choice to go to war. Long, long ago, in a university far, far away, Immanuel Kant argued that democracies, such as the fledgling United States, would be less prone to go to war than the kingdoms and empires of Europe.²⁰ Kant's logic was simple: Wars placed tremendous burdens on the average person—the taxpayer and the soldier—and since the leaders of democracies were held accountable by those average people, democratic leaders would only choose to go to war if they could justify the loss of life and money to the people who vote. This need for accountability would eliminate many of the frivolous wars entered into by kings and princes, and thus make democracies more peaceful.

The logic makes sense, but a couple of centuries later, when political scientists had gathered the data needed to check and see if democracies were indeed more peaceful, Kant's prediction did not exactly prove to be true. Democracies did not seem to be any less prone to go to war than other forms of government. As a bit of a curious aside, however, one of the studies noted that democracies did not seem to fight one another.

*We apologize to Cliff Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell for stealing the title from one of their research articles, but it is catchy and makes for a great section title. T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell, "Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War—So Why Kant Democracies Fight?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35 (1991): 187–211.