The UN Security Council in an early 2020 meeting
What issue could the countries represented here be discussing?

Spencer Platt/Getty Images

1 World Politics

Seeking Security, Prosperity, and Quality of Life in a Complicated and Connected World

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to . . .

- **1-1** Summarize the complex arena of world politics.
- **1-2** Identify the nature and challenges of security, prosperity, and quality of life in international relations.
- **1-3** Define the levels of analysis in the study of international relations.
- **1-4** Describe the challenges of cooperation among the actors of international relations.
- **1-5** Assess the dilemmas of cooperation illustrated by the prisoner's dilemma and stag hunt scenarios.

Chapter Outline

The Challenge of Security, Prosperity, and Quality of Life in World Politics

Let's begin with a brainstorming exercise. Considering what you know right now about world politics and the interactions that make up international relations, *what does it mean to be secure*? Jot down some ideas, perhaps drawing on current events, previous classes you have taken, and even your own experiences. Now, think about the kinds of things that threaten security as you have just characterized it, and make a list of some of the most important factors, forces, situations, and so on that reduce or diminish security. Finally, consider the kinds of things that improve or enhance security as you have defined it and draw up another list of the most important factors, forces, and situations that make countries and their citizens more secure in world politics.

INTRODUCTION: MAKING SENSE OF WORLD POLITICS

Your brainstorming probably produced a relatively complicated collection of ideas. This is no surprise. In fact, it is to be expected. Making sense of world politics can be a daunting task. Although the study of **world politics** once concentrated almost exclusively on the political relationships between the countries of the world, today it involves a much broader range of activities and interactions—political, economic, and social—among these states and a wide variety of non-state actors, such as international organizations, non-state national and ethnic groups, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals. As time has passed, world politics has evolved to include an increasingly diverse set of states from the developed and developing worlds; a rich array of cultural perspectives and values held by states, nations, and individuals; and a great variety of non-state actors. Important resources have changed, as have the nature and characteristics of power, while the traditional issues of world politics have expanded to include a more complex variety of international and transnational matters.

1-1 A COMPLEX WORLD CONNECTED TO YOU

>> 1-1 Summarize the complex arena of world politics.

Today there is simply no end to the stream of events and activities that constitute international relations, and, at first blush, there often seems to be no rhyme or reason to them, either. Consider, for example, a few select items from just one 90-day period in 2020:

world politics: political, economic, and social activities and interactions among states and a wide variety of non-state actors, such as international organizations, non-state national and ethnic groups, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals.

- The United Arab Emirates and Israel negotiated normalized relations in the Abraham Accord.
- Fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan risked regional stability, with Turkey supporting Azerbaijan and Russia supporting Armenia.
- The United States imposed new sanctions against Iran for its nuclear programs but failed to persuade the UN Security Council to vote to do the same.
- International piracy increased, spurred by the global pandemic and its economic repercussions.
- Russian president Vladimir Putin engineered constitutional changes and a national referendum to allow him to stay in power until 2036.
- A World Trade Organization report condemned US imposition of sanctions against China as a violation of WTO and free trade rules, despite the US argument that China was engaging in the theft of US technology and intellectual property.
- The UN Security Council condemned the Islamic State for acts it labeled as possible war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Iraq.
- In Rome, Pope Francis i"sued his third encyclical— "Brothers All"—calling for love to transcend geography and distance. The Pope articulated opposition to tribalism and xenophobia in global society and highlighted the dangers posed by social media.
- The global pandemic caused by the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) continued to expand around the world, with more than 45 million cases and over a million deaths. The US led the way, with nearly 9 million cases—including the US President—and 225,000 deaths.
- All the while, thousands around the globe continued to die from malnutrition and disease because they did not have access to potable water, food, and basic medicine.

As this brief list suggests, the range of issues and events extends across many areas and in many directions—from conflict to cooperation, and from traditional security issues to concerns about wealth and prosperity, quality of life, and even basic human survival. Detecting the patterns and forces at work and explaining their causes and consequences appear overwhelming and impossible. What, if any, underlying factors or forces drive such a disparate set of events?

1-1a World Politics and You

At the same time, it can be difficult to connect the dots between events and developments on the world stage and our lives. Students frequently wonder what impact developments such as those we have just introduced have on them personally. World politics can seem like an abstract, far-off realm of movie-like events that appear to have little bearing on our lives. Textbooks such as these frequently go to some lengths to connect students in classrooms to events on the world stage. Frankly, although it can appear distant, international relations affects our daily lives in many ways, from the trivial to the profound. Let's consider a few examples:

- More than 150 million deaths have occurred because of war over the past five centuries, with the vast majority happening in the 20th and 21st centuries (e.g., Beer 1974; Levy 1983; Pettersson and Öberg 2020). Have you, a family member, or a friend served in the armed forces? Do you live near a military base of some kind? What characteristics and issues of world politics lead countries like the United States to maintain sizable military

Workers in the clothing industry from around the world

Where are your clothes from, and what does this suggest to you about international relations?

Universal Images Group via Getty Images

and security establishments and send their soldiers into harm's way?

- Have you been frustrated by long lines and security delays at airports in recent years? What about having to remove your shoes and belt, take your laptop out of your carry-on bag, and so on? What world politics issues and events do you suppose are behind such inconveniences?
- Take a look at the clothing you are wearing today. How many countries do you represent in your wardrobe alone? Which ones are represented? What impact and issues do you think this list indicates?
- You did some things in 2020 that you never seriously considered before—staying at home, maintaining at least six feet from other people, and wearing a mask in public. How did the global COVID-19 pandemic, which began in China and rapidly spread throughout the world, affect you?

The world is increasingly interconnected, which means events that might appear relatively obscure can have dramatic effects on the lives of individuals far away. For example, think about how the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and the rise of the Islamic State have affected those countries, the region, and countries all over the world through violent conflict, humanitarian crises generated by the displacement of refugees and civilian deaths, and terrorist actions in places such as Paris, Brussels, Manchester, London, San Bernardino, and elsewhere. Or consider how events in a relatively obscure area of China have affected the entire world, including your own hometown.

What about the examples of several of the economic crises of the past 20 years or so? In 1997, economic problems in the relatively tiny economy of Thailand exploded into a global financial crisis that seriously affected countries all over the world, including the United States. About a decade later, in 2008, a similar dynamic occurred in the United States, stemming from ballooning real estate prices coupled with risky—and ultimately failed—gambles on complicated debt instruments. The ensuing global financial crisis, the so-called Great Recession of 2008–2010, put more than 10% of the US labor force out of work and heavily affected the lives of citizens around the world. About a decade after that, the economic consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic shook the world, causing economic downturns and pushing hundreds of millions of people out of work in every country of the world. As these examples suggest, the interconnections between countries often mean that problems in one place can quickly become problems for many places!

A family fleeing the violence in Mosul

What would it be like to live in the middle of a civil war?

Gail Orenstein/NurPhoto via Getty Images

1-1b Geography and the Small-World Phenomenon

It also helps to understand how spatially connected states are in the contemporary international system. Consider basic geography for a moment. In the Western Hemisphere, we typically see the world as shown in Map 1-1 (see "The Revenge of Geography: The Shrinking World"). Starting from this view, let's take the example of two large countries—Russia and the United States. It is easy to think of these two countries as far apart, but doesn't that really depend on how we look at things? Based on a Pacific-centered perspective, as in Map 1-2, the two states look closer together. They look even closer together from the perspective of the North Pole, as shown in Map 1-3. Now consider that modern technology means you can visit the Russian Federation's official website in a matter of seconds and travel between New York and Moscow by airplane in less than 11 hours. An intercontinental ballistic missile can make the trip in 30 minutes—a primary concern during the Cold War, but now Russian hackers can attack the computer and information systems of Western democracies almost instantaneously, without leaving the comfort of their own offices. Finally, have a look at Map 1-4, which presents the world from a perspective that, though not as familiar to most of us, more accurately represents the size and location of most countries. How does this alter your view of the relationship between countries?

Increasingly, what happens around the world and in the relations between countries and other important players has real-life and significant consequences for ordinary citizens going on about their lives. So understanding and explaining the patterns and forces

The Shrinking World

As world politics has evolved, and the technologies of information, communication, and transportation have developed, the geographic landscape of the world has taken on new meaning. One way to begin to understand the changing nature, opportunities, and constraints of geography for world politics is to reflect on the meaning and implications of different perspectives.

Consider Map 1-1, a common image of the world that shows the vast distances between countries such as Russia and the United States, while also illustrating the close proximity of other countries to each other. Now consider Map 1-2: How does this image change your perspective on the possibilities of conflict, cooperation, and interaction between countries?

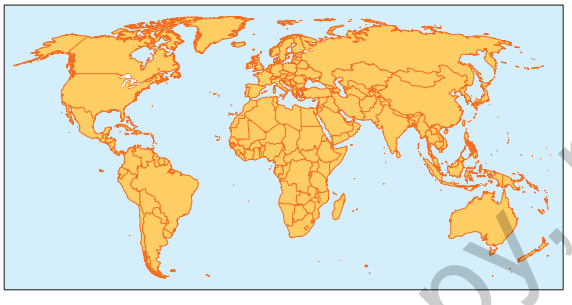
What if we adopted the perspective shown in Map 1-3? Which countries are neighbors now? What difference, if any, would this perspective make to your sense of which countries are most likely to interact with each other?

Now, look at Map 1-4, which presents roughly the same perspective as Map 1-1 but with the perspective corrected to more accurately reflect the relative geographic size and location of the continents and countries of the world. What does this image suggest to you about world politics and the relationships among its major players?

How do these different perspectives change the way you understand the relationships between countries? ●

MAP 1-1

Political Map of the World



Source: WikiCommons.

MAP 1-2

An Alternative Perspective of the Political World

MAP 1-3

Polar Projection Map

MAP 1-4

The Peters Projection of the World

Source: WikiCommons.

at work in world politics is increasingly important. In this textbook, we try to bring some order and focus to the complex arena of world politics and help you develop a better understanding of its dynamics. We blend descriptive content with a conceptual toolbox and practical applications as a foundation for understanding and explaining international interactions.

1-2 THE CHALLENGE OF SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN WORLD POLITICS

>> 1-2 Identify the nature and challenges of security, prosperity, and quality of life in international relations.

Because world politics is such a complex arena, there are many approaches to its study. In this textbook, we approach world politics as a search for security, but we define security very broadly to include traditional, economic, and human dimensions that give us insight into the traditional security, global economic, and quality-of-life matters of international relations. This overarching theme helps provide focus and coherence to our efforts to make sense of the subject. In our perspective, the key to understanding events, such as those we listed at the start of the chapter, is to consider the broad meaning of security in its traditional, economic, and quality-of-life—or human—dimensions and its pursuit by both states and non-state actors in world politics. We hope that by the time you have worked through this text, you will be able to return to those examples—and a wide range of other current events—and provide context and explanation for what drives them.

1-2a The Nature of Security

At its core, **security** is a relatively simple concept: It refers to survival and safety. As one political scientist has characterized it, seeking security involves the "pursuit of freedom from threat" (Buzan 1991: 18). To achieve this, states and other actors in world politics try to maintain their independent identity and functional integrity, while addressing a substantial range of concerns about the conditions of existence (Buzan 1991: 18–19). However, in our perspective, the idea of security has a much broader meaning than it is often given, and understanding its broad scope is critical for understanding world politics.

Traditionally, in world politics, the term *security* has referred principally to the military, intelligence, and law enforcement arenas, with special emphasis on conflict, violence, and war. These are clearly central issues in world politics, but we define security more broadly. In most social interactions, humans seek order and predictability, and those goals cannot be reached without adequate security. One way or another, most of what the players in world politics—states, international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and other transnational actors—seek in their interactions with one another involves the desire to be safe and to survive and thrive, broadly speaking.

We prefer to think about international relations as the search for security, prosperity, and quality of life by using a broad conception of security as encompassing three arenas or dimensions. The first—*national and international security*—is the most common and what people usually think of when discussing security. This dimension involves issues related to national defense, conflict and war, and arms control and disarmament. So, for example, when countries build up their armed forces, deploy military forces to defend themselves or to disrupt terrorist networks, place restrictions on visits by citizens of other countries, and negotiate arms control agreements with other countries, they are seeking national and international security. Recently, we have seen this aspect of security reflected in uses of force in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflict in Ukraine, the escalation of violence in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, efforts to counter the Islamic State insurgency in Syria and Iraq, and actions to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to countries such as Iran and North Korea.

The second arena or dimension is *economic security*. When countries, corporations, and others seek wealth and prosperity through profitable economic relations and exchanges, they are ultimately seeking economic security. In the current context, we observe this aspect of security reflected in trade and trade competition among countries, cooperation to ensure economic recovery in the wake of the global recession of recent years, efforts to deal with debt crises for both developed and developing countries, and the ways countries are grappling with the challenges of globalization.

The third arena or dimension is *human security*. This dimension fundamentally concerns the quality of life that people experience. So when the players of world politics grapple with issues of health and disease, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, or environmental threats, such as climate change, pollution, and deforestation, or when they try to promote and protect human rights, they are seeking human security. In recent years, this aspect of security has been

security: survival and safety, typically referring to the military, intelligence, and law enforcement arenas but also including economic and human dimensions.

seen as countries wrestle with appropriate responses to public health crises and their extensive implications, in the growing problem of climate change, as people throughout the world rebel against their governments in pursuit of greater participation and protection for human rights, and as some states and organizations, such as the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), use force to intervene in Libya to support rebels seeking the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi or in Syria in response to alleged uses of chemical weapons by the Assad regime against its citizens. Thus, as we stress the general pursuit of security—freedom from threat—that underlies world politics, we direct our attention to national and international security, economic security, and human security, as depicted in Figure 1-1. As you will see, we have organized our text to address these dimensions of security into Part II (international security), Part III (economic security), and Part IV (human security).

1-2b Fundamental Challenges: Anarchy, Diversity, and Complexity

In world politics, the search for security is quite complicated (see "Foreign Policy in Perspective: Shifting Ways of Seeking Security"). As we devote our attention to the players of world politics and their interactions in pursuit of this multifaceted objective, we focus on three fundamental challenges that influence world politics: anarchy, diversity, and complexity. As we will see throughout our text, these challenges are linked together as well (Figure 1-2).

- *The anarchy of the international system.* There is no central, authoritative government over the players of world politics, both states and non-states. This absence of central authority has pervasive effects on the nature of world politics across almost every issue, from international conflict to the prospects and forms of international cooperation. Formal anarchy does not mean chaos or disorder, or that there are no **norms**, that is, regular patterns of behavior in world politics. Neither does it necessarily mean that there is always conflict and war. It means, simply, that *there is no central government*. Unlike established countries, world politics does not have authoritative central bodies to make, enforce, and adjudicate laws. The international institutions that do exist—such as the United Nations and the World Court—are dependent on their member states and have only the very limited authority those states willingly give them. Formally, there is no authority above the nation-state, and this structural fact has enormous implications for conflict, economic relations, and efforts to meet transnational problems and challenges, such as human rights and the environment.

- *The diversity in the international system.* World politics is characterized by myriad players. About 200 states and many thousands of

norms: commonly held standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

FIGURE 1-1

The Pursuit of Security in Three Arenas

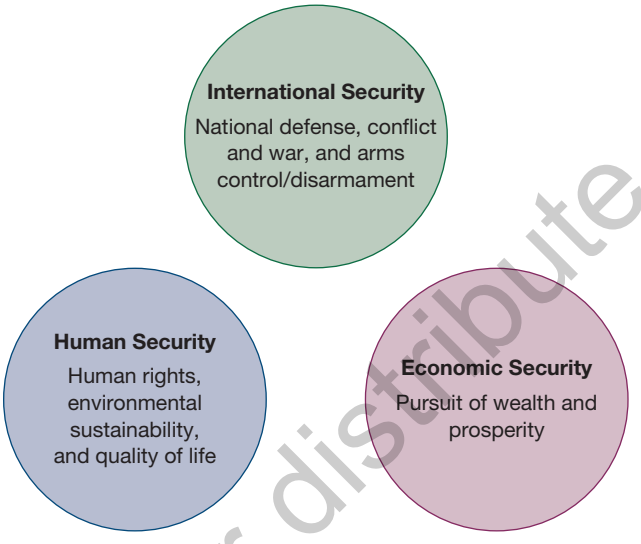
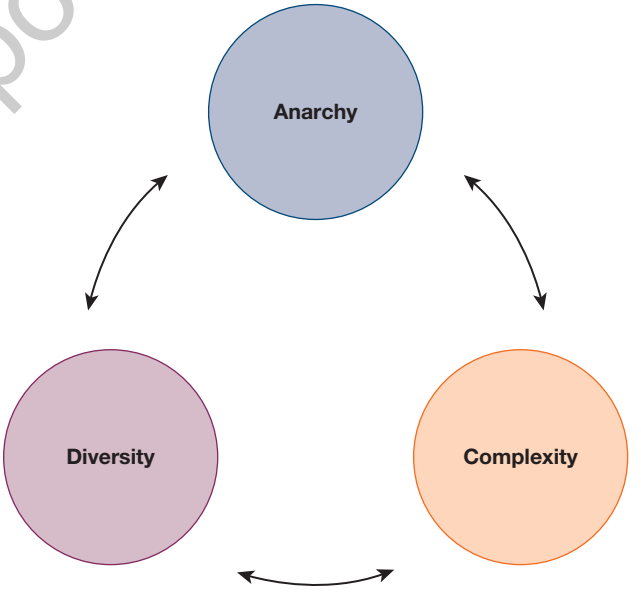


FIGURE 1-2

The Fundamental Challenges of World Politics



FOREIGN POLICY IN PERSPECTIVE

Shifting Ways of Seeking Security

During presidential campaigns, and quite often after being elected, US presidents talk about how to achieve national security—how to make the country safe from harm. They want to both reassure US residents and warn others not to trifle with US national security interests. These national security interests rarely change when a new president enters office, but presidents often differ in how they want to approach attaining their national security goals. They also often like to differentiate themselves from their predecessors.

When President Barack Obama entered office, he wanted to differentiate his approach from that of his predecessor—George W. Bush. Obama found Bush's approach too unilateralist. President Bush often said he was going to do what he thought was right to make the US safe, even if other states or organizations such as the UN disagreed. Bush's decision to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein by invading Iraq in 2003 was one example of a "go it virtually alone" approach that Obama rejected. For his part, Obama sought to engage other world leaders often and become part of a more multilateral, cooperative effort to achieve shared international goals. While involving others makes any resulting decisions have more international legitimacy and potential significance, it also slows the process and can lead to outcomes that fall short of one's desires. Critics of Obama's approach accused him of indecisiveness and of abandoning the leadership role long played by the US in the Western world.

Just as presidential candidate Obama sought to differentiate his approach from that of President Bush, presidential candidate Donald Trump sought to differentiate his approach from that of Obama. Trump saw an international system rife with dire threats to US security interests, threats that had increased on Obama's watch. His approach was to emphasize an independent United States, reducing multilateral commitments while increasing military power, and regularly threatening to use it, to deter others from taking actions that jeopardized US interests. Trump said that by doing so, he would put "America first" and "make America great again." By acting decisively and swiftly, he said he would make other countries both respect and fear US power. Based on these examples, consider the following questions:

1. How do the assumptions about security vary in each approach?
2. What interests does each of these approaches best achieve, and what problems might each cause?
3. What effects do these changes in US security approaches have on other relevant international actors? ●

nationalities are involved, as are hundreds of international organizations and thousands of nongovernmental organizations. Businesses of various shapes and sizes—including transnational corporations whose production facilities and reach extend across borders and regions—interact with each other, with the governments of countries, with international organizations, and with groups and individuals all over the world. The diversity of these players is staggering. States come in different shapes and sizes and are differentiated by size (geographic and population), wealth (from the very rich to the very poor), type of economy, and regime type (from the many flavors of both democratic and non-democratic systems). But widely differing ideas, religions, cultures, and subcultures divide the players in world politics as well. Such diversity has important consequences for international interactions.

- *The complexity of international interactions.* In part due to the many different players and values just described, world politics is an extraordinarily complex arena. The players of world politics are increasingly connected and interdependent, with many linkages stretching across and between them. World politics involves multidimensional issues, state and non-state actors, national, international, and transnational processes, and many other factors, all connected in ways that can confound the players as they seek international, economic, and human security. Imagine playing a game of chess but on a system of boards arranged in multiple levels, so that players make their moves in multiple channels with multiple linkages (see Nye 2005). This is what the "game board" of world politics approaches. These connections and linkages may create problems and complications, but they also often reduce the impact of anarchy by enabling—and sometimes forcing—the players of world politics to work together.

These three challenges permeate our examination of world politics in the chapters that follow. For

example, the anarchic structure of the international system is a foundational element for understanding and managing conflict and war, and it affects global economic interactions, the pursuit of wealth, the prospects for protecting human rights, and environmental cooperation. Diversity of identity, values, and culture is a critical issue for human rights and human security, while also having a great impact on conflict and economic relations. The complexity of the global political system often forces the players of world politics together, sometimes leading to cooperation on problems that transcend borders, and sometimes leading to conflict. Complexity can facilitate global economic interactions and coordination to address such problems as the economic and financial crises of the past 20 years or so, but it can also trigger clashes among players with different preferences or values and make it difficult to pursue international security, economic security, and human security at the same time.

1-3 THE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

>> 1-3 Define the levels of analysis in the study of international relations.

By now you have almost certainly gained some appreciation for how complicated it is to make sense of world politics. The search for security across international, economic, and human dimensions and the three central challenges (anarchy, diversity, and complexity) of world politics involve a dizzying array of actors and events, but they can still be understood if we have the right tools. For analytical purposes, these things can be organized into **levels of analysis** that help us comprehend the interactions, causes, and consequences of world politics.

The broadest of these levels is the **systemic or international level**, where attention is directed to the broad patterns and interactions among the players of world politics, and emphasis is placed on the impact of the structural characteristics of the international system itself—including anarchy, the distribution of power, interdependence, globalization, and others—on those interactions.

At the **state or national level**, attention is directed to the states—or units—themselves, and emphasis is placed on the attributes of countries and nations, such as the type and processes of government or the economy, culture, or other national attributes, and how these factors shape policy goals and behavior and the interactions among the players.

At the **individual level**, attention is directed to people—policymakers, business CEOs, and other influential persons. This level of analysis emphasizes the personalities, perceptions, and preferences of individual decision makers and their effects on policy and interactions. This includes leaders, such as Donald Trump (United States), Angela Merkel (Germany), Vladimir Putin (Russia), Hassan Rouhani (Iran), Xi Jinping (China), and Pope Francis (Vatican), and other individuals from the non-state actor arena, such as investors and philanthropists George Soros and Warren Buffett, U2 singer and African aid activist Bono, actress and Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Angelina Jolie, Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Jody Williams, Microsoft founder and foundation head Bill Gates, and Aga Khan of the Aga Khan Development Network.

Thinking in terms of levels of analysis points us to certain kinds of issues and events but also prompts different kinds of questions and explanations. Table 1-1 summarizes these levels of analysis and identifies some explanations at those levels that you will find in upcoming chapters. As you review the table, note the last column, which includes some very simple explanations at each level of analysis for the case of Russia's interventions into Ukraine. At the system level, the emphasis for explanation might be on the challenge posed by Russia as a rising power seeking to regain lost power and influence in the areas around its border. The state level might stress the impact of alleged threats by Ukrainian nationalists against ethnic Russians living in Ukraine and the impact that had on the Russian public back home, whereas the individual level might emphasize the worldview of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who saw the breakup of the Soviet Union as one of the greatest catastrophes of the 20th century. Each of these perspectives may help explain the interventions, even if they differ in their focus.

These levels of analysis serve at least two important purposes in the study of world politics. First, they offer useful guides for organizing information, events, and the factors that shape them so that we can make distinctions between them. Second, they guide explanation, helping us organize cause-and-effect relationships, ask different kinds of questions, and be aware

levels of analysis: different perspectives from which international relations may be examined.

systemic or international level: locating the causes of behavior and outcomes in the nature and characteristics of the international system.

state or national level: locating the causes of behavior and outcome in the nature and characteristics of states and nations.

individual level: locating the causes of behavior and outcomes in the nature and characteristics of people.

TABLE 1-1

Levels of Analysis and World Politics

LEVEL	FOCUS	KEY VARIABLES	SAMPLE EXPLANATIONS FOUND IN UPCOMING CHAPTERS	EXAMPLE: RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONS IN UKRAINE
System	Structural characteristics of the international system are central to explaining patterns of behavior in world politics.	Anarchy Distribution of power Interdependence Globalization	Balance of power Power transition theory	Rising power Russia seeks greater power and influence in the region and challenges declining Western powers (the US and NATO).
State	Characteristics of countries (national attributes) are central to explaining patterns of and variations in behavior in world politics.	Regime type Nationalism Subnational groups	Democratic peace Group identity Fascism	Authoritarian Russia behaves aggressively, alleges threats to Russian-speaking Ukrainians by non-Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and alleges fascist threat to Russian speakers, invoking memories of World War II.
Individual	Characteristics of individuals are central to explaining the foreign policy behavior of states and other players in world politics.	Personality Psychology Individual worldviews and preferences Perceptions and misperceptions	Aggressive versus nonaggressive leaders Leadership style and worldviews Cognitive processes	President Vladimir Putin says the demise of the Soviet Union was the most catastrophic event of the 20th century, feels threatened by Western encroachment in Russia's traditional sphere of interest, and acts quickly before the West can react.

of interactions and explanations that link up across the levels of analysis.

One simple and recognizable illustration may help clarify these contributions. Consider a serious traffic jam in a heavily populated area. Observing and explaining its causes and effects might take place from the perspective of the helicopter that sees the jam from above and can describe and explain its broad pattern and consequences. This is similar to the system level of analysis focusing on the broad structure that affects behavior (in this case, road networks and traffic patterns). But one might also focus on two cars that collided and examine their unique characteristics, actions, and role in the traffic jam, which would be similar to focusing on state-level factors in world politics. Finally, one can consider the individual drivers and their decisions, such as the person texting a friend instead of paying attention to driving, and explain things at that level, which is similar to the individual level of analysis. One thing to note is that the kinds of questions that can be asked and the kinds of explanations that can be offered from each perspective are different, but all of them shed light on the phenomenon to be explained (in this case, the traffic jam). Look again at Table 1-1 and examine it carefully to be sure you are comfortable with the level of analysis concept before you move on.

1-4 EXPLAINING THE PATTERNS OF WORLD POLITICS

>> 1-4 Describe the challenges of cooperation among the actors of international relations.

As we work together to build a better understanding of the dynamics of world politics, focusing on the pursuit of security in the face of the three fundamental challenges described previously, we want to improve our ability to explain the patterns of world politics that we encounter and identify. In such a complex arena, this requires the use of theoretical and conceptual shortcuts that focus attention on critical cause-and-effect relationships. **Theories** are essential tools for the explanation of complex realities, and they help

theories: tools for explaining cause-and-effect relationships among often complex phenomena.

us strategically simplify the world to bring important features into clearer relief. One way to understand theories of world politics is to think of them as lenses, such as those you might find in a good pair of sunglasses. Such lenses might come in a variety of colors, and each shade filters out some portion of the light in order to improve vision. Theory is like that: A good theory simplifies reality to reduce the white noise and sharpen the clarity of key factors, which aids in the explanation of patterns and the prediction of likely developments.

As we discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, the pursuit of security in world politics can be interpreted in a variety of sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory ways. In these chapters, we present a number of theoretical paradigms or frameworks with which to examine world politics to make sense of how the world works:

- *Realism*, which revolves around the issues of conflict and power and stresses the role of states pursuing their self-interests
- *Liberalism*, which tends to emphasize cooperative approaches and includes the role and influence of non-state actors
- *Constructivism*, which builds on the social construction of reality and stresses the role of the identity, ideas, culture, norms, and interactions of people
- *Foreign policy analysis*, which emphasizes the individuals and groups who make decisions and the processes and policies that they produce
- *Marxism*, which stresses class-based economic interests and the role of wealth and who controls it as the key to behavior
- *Feminism*, which focuses on gender issues and approaches and asks what the world would be like if it were not historically dominated by men

Each of these broad paradigms grapples with the meaning and consequences of anarchy, diversity, and complexity differently and, therefore, presents different versions of the nature and dynamics of world politics. After we present these theories and concepts clearly and thoroughly in Chapters 3 and 4, we then (a) apply the theoretical lenses throughout the remainder of the book and (b) explicitly include in each chapter discussions and "Theory in Action" boxes considering how theories and concepts influence real-world behavior and policy.

In the context of these theories, we also draw attention to what we believe are two of the most important current trends in world politics. First, the current world is experiencing great uncertainty because of the changing power and roles of key states. The US, which has enjoyed dominance in the international system for at least several decades, is struggling with the costs of leadership, while other countries such as China and Russia are increasingly asserting themselves and challenging the US. As realist theorists and others suggest, such potential power transitions are moments of great importance in world politics. Second, the current world is greatly affected by the forces of globalization, which generates integration and connections across borders but also prompts tension and conflict within and between states because of its impact on international, economic, and human security. We highlight the nature and impact of these two critical developments in each part and chapter, calling attention to the opportunities and challenges they pose and applying the theoretical lenses to understand their causes and consequences.

1-5 DILEMMAS OF COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA AND THE STAG HUNT

>> 1-5 Assess the dilemmas of cooperation illustrated by the prisoner's dilemma and stag hunt scenarios.

Let's bring this first chapter to a conclusion by considering two ideal-type situations often introduced to highlight some of the patterns and challenges of world politics.

1-5a The Prisoner's Dilemma

The first situation is known as the **prisoner's dilemma**. Imagine two individuals who are suspected (for good reason) of being involved in a crime, say, a major theft. The authorities isolate the two suspects in separate rooms so that they cannot communicate. Both suspects know that if they remain silent, they will be charged for lesser violations and receive minor punishment and very short jail time, due to lack of evidence for their more serious offense. However, in their separate rooms, each

prisoner's dilemma: a situation in which two prisoners must decide whether to collaborate with each other or not.

TABLE 1-2

The Prisoner's Dilemma

		SUSPECT B	
		CONFESS	REMAIN SILENT
Suspect A	Confess	Suspect A—10 years Suspect B—10 years	Suspect A—free Suspect B—20 years
	Remain Silent	Suspect A—20 years Suspect B—free	Suspect A—1 year Suspect B—1 year

is informed that if they confess and betray the other suspect, the one who confesses will receive immunity for cooperating with law enforcement and go free, while their partner will be prosecuted and punished for the crime. If both confess, they both go to jail (with somewhat reduced terms for cooperating with the authorities). Realize that even if both thieves do not want to rat out their partner and are willing to split the loot evenly, they must think defensively. It's not just what one suspect might gain from confessing but what they would lose if they keep quiet and their accomplice confesses. What do you think will happen? What would you do? This situation is represented in Table 1-2.

1-5b The Stag Hunt

The second situation is known as the **stag hunt** and was described by the political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century. Imagine a village, a hunting society, organizing a hunt to bring down a great stag that will feed the whole village and provide other benefits, such as its hide. To bring down this stag, the hunters plan an approach that depends on each hunter collaborating with the rest by covering a specific area, so that the stag will be trapped and killed. However, while the hunt is proceeding, one of the hunters flushes a rabbit. The hunter immediately recognizes that pursuing and killing the rabbit means that he or she will be fed. But the rest of the hunters will end up losing the stag because it will escape through the area vacated by the hunter who is abandoning the hunt and chasing the rabbit. What do you suppose happens? Put yourself in the place of the hunter who sees the rabbit. What would you think? What would you do?

1-5c Considering the Implications of the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Stag Hunt

Together these two stories highlight several key issues about the nature of world politics. Both of them suggest there are important structural obstacles to cooperation between states, and other players, in world politics. In particular, these scenarios illustrate the tension between pursuing self-interest and broader collective interests. They also suggest that the conditions of the game provide powerful incentives for the players to see things through the lens of self-interest rather than more broadly. In the prisoner's dilemma, for example, it is logical for the suspects to confess, even though they each could derive greater mutual benefits through cooperation. By confessing, they give up the best mutual outcome, but they avoid the worst outcome—being held solely responsible and serving a long jail term. The opposite is true in the stag hunt, where it is easier to cooperate and bring down the stag rather than grab the rabbit.

In world politics, a similar result can be seen in arms races, where two countries give up the best outcome (mutual cooperation to avoid them and control armament), instead choosing to build up their weaponry so that they are not victimized if the other country cheats and builds up its own while the first does not. Perhaps neither really wants to continue to arm itself (best outcome), but both choose to do so (less desired) to avoid being vulnerable if the other one does (worst outcome). Even if we all want our leaders to be honest and not break the promises they make in international treaties, the prisoner's dilemma suggests otherwise. Imagine if all the states with nuclear weapons agreed to eliminate all those weapons. Might the world be considered a safer place? Let's say that the United States went along with this agreement, but the Russians did not. Instead, they kept a secret stockpile of nuclear weapons but only for defensive purposes. Would that make you feel safe? What if other countries cheated on the agreement? Do you think that, just in case, it would be a good idea for the United States to cheat as well—just for defensive purposes? Do you think the United States would be irresponsible if it didn't cheat? Notice how something as simple and good as maintaining the defense of one's country can make cooperation so difficult.

The prisoner's dilemma isn't just about conflict, however. For example, few people would dispute that pollution is a bad thing, or that cars significantly contribute to the world's pollution. If everyone agreed to cut back driving by simply riding a bike for any trip

stag hunt: a situation in which hunters must decide whether to collaborate with each other or act on their own.

THEORY IN ACTION

Defeating the Prisoner's Dilemma and Getting a Stag, Not a Rabbit

The paradox of the prisoner's dilemma (PD) is that what is mutually best for the two people or states involved is not best for the individual person or state. If more than two people or states are involved in a PD-type situation, it is referred to as a **collective action problem.** Whether 2 or 20 actors are involved, individually reasonable choices lead to bad outcomes for all. But not all PD situations end in the default outcome; sometimes the involved states cooperate with each other so that they attain the mutually beneficial outcome (in the PD story, cooperation means that neither prisoner confesses). For example, during the Cold War, the US and the Soviets came to several nuclear arms control agreements that limited the number of nuclear weapons in the world, and as discussed in Chapter 8, states have generally not engaged in trade wars after World War II. So how can the prisoner's dilemma be overcome?

The first solution is an actor that has the power to force other countries to follow the rules. In the PD story, this would be the case if both suspects worked for an organized crime syndicate, such as that headed by the fictional Vito Corleone of the *Godfather* film trilogy. If the prisoners ratted each other out, they would face serious consequences from the mob boss, such as "sleeping with the fishes," as the saying goes. In the international arena, this solution is difficult because only a few times in history has one state been powerful enough to enforce cooperation. That is one of the keys to anarchy—there is no world government or police to keep states from misbehaving.

The second solution is referred to as a tit-for-tat strategy. The idea behind this strategy is to begin by trusting the other actor, but if the other actor betrays you, then punish it by not cooperating. Of course, this strategy works only if the PD situation is one that repeats over and over. In that situation, you can switch between cooperating and not cooperating, depending on what the other actor does. If the other actor does the same thing, then both actors will cooperate with each other over time. For the PD story, imagine two criminals who worked together for most of their lives and trust each other implicitly—they would not rat on each other.

This cooperative situation does not spring up out of nowhere, however. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union initially had great distrust of one another as they found themselves competing and conflicting over issue after issue in Europe and around the world. With time and repeated interactions in settings such as the UN, the two states began to trust each other enough to attempt an arms reduction treaty. Forums such as the UN provide an important place for states to interact on a public stage so that they can build cooperative or hostile reputations. As the United States came to realize that the Soviets were not as aggressive after Premier Joseph Stalin's death as they had been under Stalin's rule, and as the Soviets realized that the United States could also be trusted, they negotiated ways to "trust but verify," the phrase used by President Ronald Reagan during the arms negotiations with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The solution to the stag hunt (SH) is both easier to attain but also less clear than the PD situation. In SH situations, the hunter who sees the rabbit must decide between sure individual gain and likely collective gain. If she trusts her fellow hunters, it is an easy decision: Hunt the stag because there is more meat, and everyone will benefit. However, if she does not completely trust her fellow hunters, then she must decide how likely it is that the other hunters will go after the stag or after a rabbit if they see one. So how can she be sure the other hunters won't go after a rabbit?

First, if the hunters, or states, are all part of a cohesive group, then trust has already been developed. For example, the Canadians and the British are close allies with the United States. These states are unlikely to betray each other, so cooperating is easy. The less positive, cooperative history a pair of states shares, the less able they will be to cooperate.

Second, if there is a way that the actions of all the hunters can be seen by each other, then no one can chase the rabbit without the others knowing. Because all hunters prefer the stag and can see each other, they know no other hunter will go for the rabbit. Imagine hunting on a grassy plain where each hunter can see the other. In the international context, this means the actions of all states must be transparent. For example, the best way to compel North Korea to curtail its nuclear program is for the powerful states in the region (China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States) to place unified pressure on North Korea. Together these states would have more influence than if they acted alone (which is why North Korea continues to object to multistate talks). Given that for any one of these states to back away from the unified talks would be a public act, they can trust that each of the other states will not back down from the unified position. Solving the SH situation is both as easy as trusting each of the other actors and as hard as developing that trust.

1. Summarize the factors discussed previously that could enable the participants in a prisoner's dilemma to cooperate. What other factors might also contribute?
2. What factors best enable the participants in a stag hunt situation to trust each other and cooperate?
3. What are the short- and long-term implications of the actions associated with the stag hunt scenario?

collective action problem: a condition in which the uncoordinated actions of individuals lead to less than optimal outcomes because, although many individuals would benefit from cooperative action(s), few incentives lead any particular individuals to assume the costs of such action(s).

within two miles of their home (that's 40% of all trips), pollution would be reduced significantly. If everyone did this, we would all enjoy cleaner air, but if everyone did this *except* you, you would still get clean air—and the convenience of driving a car (particularly when it's raining, snowing, extremely hot, etc.). Thus, by cheating on the agreement, you would get all the benefits and none of the costs. The problem, of course, is that few people would ride a bike and give up the convenience with only the hope that the rest of the world will eventually do the same.

Similarly, the two scenarios suggest that part of the underlying issue is trust. In the study of world politics, this is often referred to as a **commitment problem**—countries have a hard time committing to cooperative courses of action that assure their partners that they will keep their end of the deal for mutual benefit and forgo the possibility of their own short-term gains (see "Theory in Action: Defeating the Prisoner's Dilemma and Getting a Stag, Not a Rabbit"). In the stag hunt, for example, the individual hunter must choose between cooperating for the good of all or defecting for selfish gain. But each hunter must also consider the possibility that another member of the hunting party might be faced with a similar choice and must consider the consequences of cooperating with the group if another member does chase the rabbit.

In this case, the game between the players isn't a competition like it is for the prisoners. Instead, this is a coordination and reassurance game. The hunter who chooses not to chase the rabbit will also get her dinner from the stag. Further, by going after the rabbit, the hunter will betray the society and make it very likely that she will be kicked out of the village. Thus, there are plenty of reasons for the hunter to stay the course and go after the stag. However, all the hunters need to know that they are equally committed to the stag hunt, so that a rabbit will tempt none of them. What would ensure that the hunter continued the stag hunt?

CONCLUSION: SEEKING SECURITY AND CONTENDING WITH CHALLENGES

The tensions revealed in the prisoner's dilemma and stag hunt scenarios are rooted in the very same challenges we introduced in this chapter: anarchy, diversity, and complexity. Contending with them forms a major part of world politics and the interactions among the various players. Furthermore, these are not merely abstract questions: There are potentially enormous consequences for countries and other players as they grapple with the dilemmas of self-interest and mutual interest, between doing what is best for oneself and what is best for the group, and between short-term and long-term perspectives. As we bring this introductory chapter to a close, let's return once more to our initial question about how you thought about security. Consider again the ideas you brainstormed at the outset. Given some of the ideas discussed in the chapter, how would you revise your thinking about the meaning of security in light of the challenges of anarchy, diversity, and complexity? ●

commitment problem: countries have a hard time committing to cooperative courses of action that assure their partners that they will keep their end of the deal for mutual benefit and forgo the possibility of their own short-term gains.

KEY CONCEPTS

1-1 Summarize the complex arena of world politics.

The study of world politics involves more than the political relationships among the countries of the world. It also includes the activities and interactions—political, economic, and social—among states and a wide variety of non-state actors, such as international organizations, non-state national and ethnic groups, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals. The range of issues extends across conflict to cooperation and from basic security issues to quality-of-life concerns, so identifying the patterns and forces at work and explaining their causes and consequences is difficult. What happens in world politics has real-life consequences for ordinary citizens everywhere, so understanding and explaining the patterns and forces at work in world politics is increasingly important.

1-2 Identify the nature and challenges of security, prosperity, and quality of life in international relations.

In world politics, security involves three arenas or dimensions:

- National and international security, which involves issues related to national defense, conflict and war, and arms control and disarmament
- Economic security, which involves the pursuit of wealth and prosperity by countries, corporations, and others

- Human security, which concerns the quality of life that people experience and includes issues such as human rights and the global environment

As the players in world politics seek security in these three arenas, they grapple with three fundamental challenges:

- Anarchy, which is the absence of a central, authoritative government over the players of world politics, both states and non-states
- Diversity, which is the myriad differences among the players of world politics
- Complexity, which refers to the multidimensional issues, players, connections, and interactions of world politics

1-3 Define the levels of analysis in the study of international relations.

Levels of analysis help us comprehend the interactions, causes, and consequences of world politics. The broadest of these levels is the systemic or international level, where attention is directed to the structural characteristics of the international system itself—including anarchy, the distribution of power, interdependence, globalization, and others—and their impact on the broad patterns and interactions among the players of world politics. The state or national level directs attention to the states—or units—themselves and their attributes, such as the type and processes of government or the economy, culture, ethnic groups, or other state or national attributes, and how these factors shape the goals, behavior, and interactions of the players. The individual level directs attention to people—policymakers, business CEOs, and other influential persons—and how their personalities, perceptions, and preferences affect policy and interactions.

1-4 Describe the challenges of cooperation among the actors of international relations.

It would make sense for countries to cooperate in order to control the costly acquisition or dangerous spread of weapons, but often they do not cooperate, even when doing so would be in their mutual best interest. Attempts at mutually beneficial collaboration to promote economic growth and development and to protect the environment are frequent, but these attempts also frequently fail.

1-5 Assess the dilemmas of cooperation illustrated by the prisoner's dilemma and stag hunt scenarios.

Stories of the prisoner's dilemma and the stag hunt highlight the tension between pursuing self-interest and broader collective interests. They also suggest that the conditions of the game provide incentives for the players to see things through the lens of self-interest rather than more broadly. In the prisoner's dilemma, it is logical for the suspects to confess, even though they each could derive greater mutual benefits from cooperation. By confessing, they give up the best mutual outcome, but they avoid the worst outcome—being held solely responsible and serving a long jail term. The opposite is true in the stag hunt, where it may be easier to cooperate and bring down the stag rather than grab a rabbit, but fear of betrayal by others can lead to individual pursuit of the rabbit anyway.

KEY TERMS

world politics 3
security 7
norms 8
levels of analysis 10
systemic or international level 10
state or national level 10
individual level 10
theories 11
prisoner's dilemma 12
stag hunt 13
collective action problem 14
commitment problem 15

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be secure in international relations?
2. How might anarchy, diversity, and complexity pose challenges for the pursuit of security in international relations?
3. What are levels of analysis through which we can attempt to understand and explain international relations?
4. What are the key challenges for cooperation in international relations?

THINK ABOUT THIS

The Cooperation Puzzle in World Politics

At first glance, the benefits of cooperation seem obvious and compelling. They can be observed at almost any level of interaction. In fact, we all engage in cooperation when we obey traffic laws when driving—if we didn't, there would be traffic accidents all over the place, many of them lethal. Yet in world politics, cooperation appears less often and is more difficult to attain than we might expect. It would make sense for countries to cooperate in order to control the costly acquisition or dangerous spread of weapons, but often they do not, even when cooperating would be in their mutual best interest. Attempts at mutually beneficial collaboration to promote economic growth and development and to protect the environment are frequent, but these attempts also often fail. The players of world politics work together to establish institutions, norms, and rules to shape behavior in mutually beneficial and predictable ways, but those efforts are often incomplete and episodic or fleeting. And although most states are at peace with most other states most of the time, many observers would argue that conflict and war happen regularly enough to be the rule and not the exception in world politics. All countries are not necessarily "engaged in, recovering from, or preparing for war," as Professor Hans Morgenthau, a famous international relations scholar, once argued, but certainly war happens persistently enough to make us wonder why countries do not cooperate to prevent it more often.

Why is cooperation so hard in world politics, and what conditions make it most likely?

FOR MORE INFORMATION . . .

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