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WORLD

THE MENU FOR CHOICE

POLITICS

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WORLD POLITICS: ANALYSIS, CHOICE, AND CONSTRAINT

THREE MOMENTOUS EVENTS

DROPPING THE ATOMIC BOMB

On August 6, 1945, the U.S. bomber *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Coupled with the explosion of another bomb over Nagasaki three days later, this act precipitated the Japanese surrender and the end of World War II. Nearly 200,000 people, most of them noncombatant civilians, ultimately died from the explosions. These two bombings represented the first, and so far the only, times nuclear weapons were used against enemy targets. Exploding a bomb of this magnitude (about 4,000 times more powerful than the biggest conventional World War II explosive) marked an enormous leap in the ability to kill on a massive scale. At the same time, it brought forth the age of nuclear deterrence, when peace among the great powers was kept, at least in part, by the awesome threat of mutual annihilation. At the time of these bombings, both scientists and statesmen realized that they were engaged in an act that would fundamentally change the future; the nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, on watching the first test explosion a month before Hiroshima, quoted to himself the phrase from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Now, I am become death, destroyer of worlds."

Despite the magnitude of this act and the precedent it set, there was remarkably little discussion within the American government as to whether the bomb should be used in war. Questions of morality were either ignored or quickly stilled with the argument that, overall, using the bomb would save lives. The only alternative to the use of the bomb to force Japan's surrender seemed to be an American invasion of the Japanese home islands, in which tens of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Japanese casualties could be expected. U.S. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson later wrote that the reasons for dropping the atomic bomb "have always seemed compelling and clear, and I cannot see how any person vested with such responsibilities as mine could have taken any other course or given any other advice to his chiefs." British Prime

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Minister Winston Churchill reported that "the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never even an issue. There was unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement."[1] How can we explain this?

Particular characteristics of President Harry Truman may have made some difference. Before President Franklin Roosevelt's death in April 1945, it was assumed that the atomic bomb would be used in combat, although Roosevelt had not entirely ruled out the possibility of first warning the enemy and demonstrating the power of the bomb in a test. However, Truman was inexperienced and uninformed about foreign affairs; when he became president, he was not even aware of the atomic bomb project. He was therefore in no position to challenge the existing basic assumption about the bomb's intended use or to dissent sharply from the military and foreign policy plans that had been put into effect by the advisers he had inherited from Roosevelt. Only one adviser—Admiral William Leahy, whose opinion had already been devalued due to his prediction that the bomb would not work at all—did not accept the consensus. There was some disagreement among the nuclear scientists who had produced the bomb, but in the end the prevailing scientific opinion was that they could "propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we can see no acceptable alternative to direct military use."[2]

Truman was caught up in the near unanimity around him. Roosevelt, although more experienced and politically stronger, probably would not have behaved much differently. Bureaucratic momentum carried matters along, and it would have required either a very unusual president or an exceptionally open structure of decision-making to slow it. Furthermore, the alternative seemed technically and politically dangerous. The Japanese could be warned, and the bomb tested publicly in some deserted spot, but there was a risk that the bomb would not go off or not look very impressive. The enemy would be uncowed, and, some advisers feared, Congress would be in a political uproar over the fizzled demonstration and consequent American casualties suffered in an invasion. Nowhere—in the executive branch, in Congress, or in the public at large—was there much disagreement over the need to end the war as soon as possible, principally to spare American lives. Consequently, there were few moral restraints on the use of atomic weapons in that war. Certainly, there had been little objection earlier to the massive conventional bombing of civilian targets in Germany and Japan.

The basic constraints, therefore, stemmed from the international situation: a war waged against a determined opponent at a time when the moral and legal restrictions on warfare were few. Moreover, the international balance of forces likely to emerge after the war reinforced this perspective. The wartime Soviet–American alliance was deteriorating rapidly, especially in the face of severe

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[1] Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's* 194 (February 1947), p. 106; Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), p. 639.

[2] Scientific report quoted in Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," p. 101.

disagreements about who should control Eastern Europe. Most American decisionmakers welcomed the atomic bomb as a trump card of "atomic diplomacy," which would impress the Russians with American power and encourage them to make concessions to the American view about how the postwar world should be organized. Additionally, the Soviet Union had not yet entered the war with Japan. If the atomic bomb could force a Japanese surrender before the Russians were to attack Japan (in fact, the surrender came after that attack), it would help to limit Russian intrusion into Japanese-controlled portions of the Far East. American foreign policy decisionmakers largely agreed on these perceptions, as did most members of Congress and most opinion leaders in the American public.[3]

ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS

Beginning in the late 1980s, many middle-income countries embarked on a process of financial deregulation whereby central governments became less and less involved in such matters as setting interest rates and limiting the activities of foreign investors. Soon financial capital began pouring into these "emerging markets" in search of high returns. East Asian markets were a popular destination for foreign capital, and when nervous investors began to pull out of Mexico in 1994, causing a currency crisis and ultimately requiring a financial bailout by the United States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian markets became more popular still. Although capital flight from Mexico prompted investors to withdraw from other Latin American markets—the "tequila effect"—few seemed to be concerned that the truly massive financial flows into Asia might be excessive. Asian countries had been experiencing strong economic growth, and their deregulated financial sectors met with the approval of both investors on Wall Street and international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank.

The Asian financial crisis started in Southeast Asia. During the 1990s, many Southeast Asian currencies were pegged to the U.S. dollar, meaning that when the dollar appreciated, so did the Thai baht, the Indonesian rupiah, the Malaysian ringgit, and the Philippine peso. Thailand had been experiencing slower growth and declining exports in 1996 and 1997, and the feeling among investors and currency speculators was that the Thai currency was overvalued—its face value was more than its true worth—which led to the divestiture of baht-denominated assets and widespread trading of the Thai currency for more dependable dollars and yen. With the demand for bahts falling, the Thai central bank did what it could to purchase bahts in order to maintain the baht's value against the dollar, but it was quickly overwhelmed. In July 1997, Thailand was forced to let the value of its currency fall to levels determined by the financial market, and the baht plummeted.

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[3] One valuable study is Barton J. Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," *Foreign Affairs* 41 (January/February 1995), pp. 135–152; for the relevance of diplomacy toward the Soviet Union, see, contrastingly, Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1985), especially the new introduction; and McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1988), chap. 2.

The scenario was repeated in Indonesia in August 1997, and similar events unfolded in Malaysia and the Philippines. The financial crisis then spread to East Asia. In October, the South Korean won plunged in value, sending the world's eleventh-largest economy reeling. Despite heroic efforts by the Korean central bank to prevent its currency from breaching the psychologically important barrier of 1,000 won to the dollar, what one Korean official said would "never, never, never" happen did happen in November, when the won was allowed to close at 1,009. The pressure on the won reverberated. The Singapore and Taiwanese dollars also sank to new lows, while the value of the Hong Kong dollar remained steady only as a result of intensive intervention by Hong Kong central bankers in the currency market.

The currency crisis threatened severe economic dislocation in each of the affected countries and, in some cases, forecast economic collapse as it became clear that some major corporate institutions would not be able to meet financial obligations to their creditors, their customers, or their workers. Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and even South Korea turned to the international community for help. Before long, more than $110 billion had been pledged to these countries on behalf of the IMF, the World Bank, and other sources (primarily the U.S. and Japanese governments). In return, the recipients promised to undertake various economic and financial reforms.

Within twelve months of the collapse of the baht, most Asian currencies had recovered, but the economic damage brought on by the financial crisis was stunning. During 1998, the Thai economy contracted by 10 percent, while Indonesia's shrank by 13 percent. Millions of people watched their incomes and savings dry up as assets were devalued, wages were cut, and unemployment soared. The economic crisis had a profound impact on domestic politics in Asia as well. Japan was criticized for not doing more to prevent the meltdown in Southeast Asia, and international pressure mounted for the Japanese government to stimulate its own economy and open its markets in order to assist the region's economic and financial recovery. In April 1998, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto announced an unprecedented $128 billion domestic program consisting of major government spending and substantial tax cuts. In Korea, the financial crisis helped clinch electoral victory for longtime political outsider Kim Dae Jung. And in Indonesia, economic hardships triggered a series of violent riots that ultimately toppled President Suharto after more than three decades in office—a departure which, among other things, helped pave the way for negotiations on East Timorese independence.

There were two main explanations for the Asian financial crisis. One placed the blame on factors internal to Asian societies. Long before the crisis, many Asian governments were criticized in the West for their authoritarian political practices. Dismissing these criticisms as the West's failure to appreciate "Asian values" was relatively easy when the Asian governments had an enviable record of delivering economic prosperity to their citizens. But now the tables were turned as critics pointed to the economic downside of Asian values: poor regulation, high corporate debt, favoritism, even corruption. The multibillion-dollar financial empire controlled by the Suharto family in Indonesia stood as a potent symbol of

the excesses of "crony capitalism." This was essentially the IMF's perspective on the crisis, which is why the Fund insisted on economic and financial reform as a condition for its bailout. It was also the prevalent view within the U.S. government and on Wall Street.[4]

The other perspective looked instead to external factors, seeing in the crisis the classic characteristics of a financial panic. According to this explanation, although there may have been elements of cronyism and other weaknesses in the Asian economies, their macroeconomic fundamentals were basically sound. It was just that the enthusiasm with which international investors sought to profit from the so-called Asian miracle was a bit excessive, and it created a bubble of confidence. The bubble burst in the summer of 1997, investors panicked, and the exodus of capital from the region left currency values in the gutter. International investors participated in a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was their own actions, more than internal economic weaknesses and poor management, that undermined the economic and financial stability of the region. What made Asian economies vulnerable to investor pullout was the very openness and financial deregulation that attracted the huge influx of foreign capital in the first place. Easy come, easy go.

For those who found more merit in this second explanation, including many policymakers in Asia and other emerging economies, one key lesson of the financial crisis was the ineffectiveness of government intervention in capital markets. With the exception of Hong Kong, none of the Asian central banks succeeded in preventing huge devaluations of their national currencies. Thus, in the aftermath, there were calls for the re-regulation of capital flows in hopes that this would enhance the limited leverage exercised by governments when the next currency crisis came along.

At the same time, the meltdown in Asia provided an opportunity for the IMF to expand its own role in world affairs, as it had during the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s and the East European transition to market capitalism in the early 1990s. This has generally pleased those who emphasized the homegrown causes of the crisis, since the IMF has spearheaded internal economic and financial reforms consistent with the Western model of free-market capitalism. The policies of the IMF during the Asian crisis were criticized by many, but efforts to reform the "international financial architecture" in order to incorporate lessons learned from the Asian crisis has done nothing to diminish the IMF as an integral component.[5]

The events of 1997 and 1998 highlight some important features of contemporary international relations. The connection between domestic affairs and foreign affairs was, in this case, painfully apparent. Although the free flow of capital

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[4] For the U.S. government and Wall Street view of the crisis, see Robert E. Rubin and Jacob Weisberg, *In an Uncertain World: Tough Choices from Wall Street to Washington* (New York: Random House, 2003), chaps. 8–9. For a critique, see Robert Wade and Frank Veneroso, "The Asian Crisis: The High Debt Model vs. the Wall Street–Treasury–IMF Complex," *New Left Review* 228 (March/ April 1998), pp. 3–23.

[5] Jeffrey E. Garten, "Lessons for the Next Financial Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (March/April 1999), pp. 76–92; Barry Eichengreen, *Toward a New International Financial Architecture: A Practical Post–Asia Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1999).

across national boundaries was nothing new—Asian economies benefited from large capital inflows during the years prior to the crisis—the sheer magnitude and speed of the capital outflow in the fall of 1997 was remarkable and devastating. The crisis also illustrates the fusion of economics and politics, nowhere more clearly than in the social and political upheaval that followed in the wake of Indonesia's currency collapse. Momentous world events are often shaped by international economics as well as international politics, and neither of these realms can be understood in isolation from what goes on within national boundaries.

9/11

On the morning of September 11, 2001, two passenger jets crashed into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and a third into the Pentagon on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. A fourth jet, also headed for Washington, D.C. (the White House or the U.S. Capitol), plunged into the ground in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after a struggle between the plane's hijackers and passengers. Almost 3,000 people were killed in the terrorist attacks, including approximately 400 emergency personnel who perished along with others when the two World Trade Center towers collapsed within forty minutes of each other; over 2,000 were injured. An estimated $16 billion in physical assets were destroyed, and rescue and cleanup cost more than $11 billion.[6] It was the most destructive attack in the history of modern terrorism. For the American people, who have enjoyed a history of insulation from foreign attack, the psychological impact of 9/11 was profound.

The hijackers were operatives of al Qaeda, a global terrorist network led by Osama bin Laden and dedicated to resurrecting the caliphate that once united all Muslims under Islamic law. Although bin Laden, a Saudi exile, and his associates had once received support from the United States in their resistance to Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan in the 1980s, the U.S. became enemy number one after it established a military presence in Saudi Arabia—home to Mecca and Medina, Islam's most sacred sites—as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War. More generally, bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, inveighed against the U.S. for supporting Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and for helping to prop up corrupt and repressive regimes in the Arab world. Although many, including the administration of George W. Bush, hastened to add that the U.S. was targeted due to hatred of American freedoms and the American way of life, it is unlikely that those grounds alone provided sufficient animus for al Qaeda's *jihad* against the United States.

Under the guidance of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Mohammed Atef, and bin Laden himself, planning for the "planes operation," as it was known to those

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[6] The cumulative loss in national income through the end of 2003 was forecast to be 5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), or about $500 billion; see Patrick Lenain, Marcos Bonturi, and Vincent Koen, "The Economic Consequences of Terrorism," OECD Working Paper No. 334 (July 2002), pp. 6–8.

involved, began to gel nearly three years before the 9/11 attack. (Ten strikes against targets on both coasts were originally envisioned.)[7] Ironically, although their grievance was at least partly a reaction to the openness of American society and global reach of Western culture, these became essential tools of the 9/11 hijackers. After training in al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, two of what would eventually become a group of nineteen hijackers—fifteen Saudi nationals, one Egyptian, one Lebanese, and two Emiris—arrived in Los Angeles in January 2000, soon establishing residences in San Diego. In May and June, three more operatives arrived in Newark, New Jersey, from Hamburg, Germany, where they had been students for a number of years (a fourth was denied a travel visa), after which they moved to Florida to attend flight school. This Hamburg contingent would subsequently pilot three of the four planes. The fourth pilot had received flight training in Arizona as early as 1997, before returning to Saudi Arabia, and more training again in 2001. Although some of their travels and activities raised eyebrows with law enforcement officials in both the United States and Germany, and should have raised many more, these Arab nationals were able to maintain low profiles in open and multicultural Western societies.

With the arrival of the remaining "muscle" hijackers, those whose job it was to storm the flight deck and keep the flight crew and passengers at bay, all that was required to carry out the planned attacks was coordination and some luck. The passenger screening procedures in place at the Boston, Newark, and Washington, D.C. airports did not prevent the hijackers from boarding the planes, nor did they prevent them from carrying aboard the box cutters and mace they would need to incapacitate the pilots and any interfering flight attendants or air marshals. Having undertaken a suicide mission, the hijackers' success depended, in the end, on intimidating the passengers, including by threatening to detonate explosives (which they did not in fact have aboard), long enough to guide their fuel-laden missiles to their targets.

The coordination of simultaneous attacks was key, a capacity that al Qaeda had demonstrated in the twin bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Three of the planes were seized within forty minutes of each other. Airline officials concluded that a simultaneous hijacking was in progress and had barely broadcast their warnings to other aircraft when the fourth plane, which had taken off late, was seized. By then, both towers of the World Trade Center had been hit, and the crash into the Pentagon was only minutes away. The delay and the passengers' realization that the hijackers were planning a similar suicide attack prompted a heroic counter-mutiny resulting in the failure of this plane to reach its target. Had the passengers not acted, it is likely that the plane would have been intercepted by one of two pairs of fighter jets scrambled in

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[7] The definitive account of the planning, execution, and reaction to the attacks is *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: Norton, 2004). For a review of post–9/11 academic and policy literature, see Lisa Anderson, "Shock and Awe: Interpretations of the Events of September 11," *World Politics* 56 (January 2004), pp. 303–325.

response to the first hijacking. By planning and executing near-simultaneous attacks, al Qaeda overwhelmed the American air defense system.

Al Qaeda's planes operation was an example of asymmetric warfare: unconventional actions designed to exploit particular weaknesses of an opponent that otherwise possesses vastly superior military might. The success of the 9/11 attack was not a product of al Qaeda's material capabilities. It was the product of ingenuity, planning and organization, patience, and a fanatical devotion to the mission and cause, all directed at American vulnerabilities. The masterminds counted on the ability of their operatives to infiltrate the country, establish residences there, obtain training in flight schools (and weight rooms), even avail themselves of spiritual reinforcement through continued practice of their radicalized Islamic faith—all while maintaining access to al Qaeda's global communications and financial networks. An attack like 9/11 simply would not have been possible in an earlier period. The ease of travel, instant communication, and the multiplicity of peoples and cultural practices tolerated by many modern societies are ongoing consequences of the current era of globalization. Terrorist attacks by globally networked groups like al Qaeda are another.

This possibility led the Bush administration to launch not only a campaign against al Qaeda but an all-out "war on terror." Terrorism was not a new problem; Osama bin Laden himself had been at the top of the list for U.S. counterterrorism operations since the mid-1990s.[8] But on matters of international security, where both problems and solutions often revolve around the actions of nation-states, nonstate entities with global reach like al Qaeda make difficult targets. The war on terror purported to hold nation-states accountable for the terrorist groups they harbored or supported in other ways. When U.S. military forces overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the months following 9/11, the purpose was to dismantle terrorist training camps and to deny al Qaeda its foremost state sponsor. There was widespread international support for the U.S. military response as an act of self-defense.

Some believe that the 9/11 attacks will become the historical marker for the first post–Cold War period in world politics, one defined mainly in terms of unchecked American power and a sustained U.S.-led campaign against global terrorism with roots in Middle Eastern politics and society. That will be for historians to decide. But from our vantage point at the beginning of the twenty-first century, predictions that the end of the Cold War would usher in an era in which political violence and military conflict give way to more peaceful forms of economic competition appear now to have been mistaken, or at least premature.

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

The preceding three events are taken from different times; involve both developed and developing countries and state and nonstate actors; and deal with military, political, and economic matters. The quality of evidence necessary for

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[8] *The 9/11 Commission Report*, chap. 4; see also Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

understanding the decisions that were made varies from one case to another, as does the plausibility of our speculations. Political scientists usually find it difficult to predict a single event, such as the American decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan or the 9/11 attacks, and economists cannot predict financial meltdowns, as occurred in Asia in 1997. More often, we try to understand what factors contribute to the occurrence of certain classes of events—for example, warfare, terrorism, or currency fluctuation. Thus, most analysts see their job as trying to detect comparable, preceding events that seem to produce similar types of behavior.

How can states and other actors existing within similar environments behave so differently? Why do actors in different environments sometimes behave similarly? To address such puzzles, we need to describe what international systems look like, how they change over time, and how they affect the behavior of the entities within them. We also need to look at the internal, or domestic, makeup of states. Doing so helps us understand the conditions under which states will cooperate or coordinate their actions with other international actors, and those under which conflicts will develop, escalate, and even lead to violence. We wish to understand what processes—cooperative or conflictual; economic, diplomatic, or military—result in what patterns of outcomes. We wish to understand the causes of the patterns we find.

In our attempts to uncover causes, or significant preceding events, we have found it useful to distinguish between **levels of analysis**—points on an ordered scale of size and complexity. These levels include units whose behavior we attempt to describe, predict, or explain, as well as units whose impact on individual decisionmakers we examine. That is, a level may refer to the actors themselves, to the states or individuals whose actions we are trying to explain, or (as in our discussions so far) to different kinds of influences on those actors. In our earlier examples, we used influences from various levels of analysis to explain decisions made by national political leaders and economic officials.

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND NATION-STATE

In an influential article, J. David Singer introduced the idea of levels of analysis and discussed two broad levels: the international system and the nation-state. He highlighted a major distinction used in discerning influences on foreign policy: (1) domestic influences, which originate within the boundaries of the nation-state; and (2) external influences, which arise outside the state's borders.

The international system is the most comprehensive level of analysis. It permits the observer to study international relations as a whole—that is, to look at the overall global patterns of behavior among states and the level of interdependence among them. These patterns include the overall distribution of capabilities, resources, and status in world politics. The nation-state level of analysis allows us to investigate in far more detail the conditions and processes within states that affect foreign policy choices. Thus, although the international-system level provides a more comprehensive picture of patterns and generalizations, the

nation-state level provides a picture of greater depth, detail, and intensity. Singer summarized the level-of-analysis problem with this set of analogies:

> In any area of scholarly inquiry, there are always several ways in which the phenomena under study may be sorted and arranged for purposes of systematic analysis. Whether in the physical or social sciences, the observer may choose to focus upon the parts or upon the whole, upon the components or upon the system. He may, for example, choose between the flowers or the garden, the rocks or the quarry, the trees or the forest, the houses or the neighborhood, the cars or the traffic jam, the delinquents or the gang, the legislators or the legislature, and so on.[9]

In international relations, it is possible to study the flowers/rocks/trees/houses/cars/delinquents/legislators, or to shift the level of analysis and study the garden/quarry/forest/neighborhood/traffic jam/gang/legislature. Thus, we may choose to examine international phenomena from a "macro" or a "micro" perspective: Is it the international system that accounts for the behavior of its constituent state units, or the states that account for variations in the international system? Do we look at the state or at its societal components, ethnic groups or classes, or specific economic interests? Do we look at the government or at the bureaucracies that comprise it? Do we look at bureaucracies or at the individuals that comprise them? Do we look at the system or its constituent parts?

The international-system level lets us see, for example, the global conditions that encouraged the growth of capital markets and permitted several Asian currencies to collapse in a short period of time. Analysis at that level is concerned with questions about the impact of capital mobility in the world economy, international financial institutions, and the interdependence of national economies. Looking at Truman or bin Laden, their particular circumstances and characters, gives us a better understanding of how global conditions, such as the distribution of military and political power, were perceived and interpreted and leads us to consider the role of individual leaders in policy choices. Thinking about the individual investor, about the risky pursuit of profit and the dread of mounting loss, helps us to understand the social psychology of financial panics that can impoverish millions of people. In all three of the cases discussed, we can see how questions are linked across levels.

Distinguishing among various levels of analysis helps us with the different aspects of explanation and understanding. The macro perspective tells one story, explaining what has occurred because of factors emanating from the environment outside a particular decision-making unit. That unit might be understood as an individual decisionmaker, a bureaucracy within a government, or the government as a whole. The micro perspective tells another story, helping us to understand the significance of events from the point of view of people within the units. Using different levels of analysis allows us to clarify what kinds of questions we want to

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[9] J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, eds., *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 77.

ask and what kinds of questions might be answered most profitably from which perspective.[10]

THREE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Singer's distinction is valuable, but we adopt a somewhat different three-level framework similar to that introduced by Kenneth Waltz in what became a highly influential survey of scholarship on the causes of interstate war.[11] Understanding war, and many other phenomena of interest to the student of world politics, may be approached by looking at (1) individuals and groups who make decisions, (2) political, economic, and other social processes within nation-states that provide inputs into decision making, and (3) interactions between states and other actors in a global setting. We most often look to the global level for the core subject matter of world politics—like war or trade or international law—but we know that international events and developments are both consequences and causes of processes occurring within domestic society and the corridors of decision-making power.

Decisionmakers   At the most disaggregated level of analysis, we have individual decisionmakers. In what ways—education and socialization, experience, personality traits, or physical health—does the particular decisionmaker differ from other individuals who have held or might have held the position in the past? How do these characteristics help to account for the policies they choose in response to global problems or opportunities, or even what they consider to be global problems or opportunities in the first place? Answers to such questions try to relate the characteristics of decisionmakers to the ways they identify global problems, the approaches they use to deal with problems, and ultimately the foreign policy decisions they make.

Sometimes we are not interested in the traits and experiences of great or dastardly national leaders, but in the motivations of "typical" individuals faced with situations that require them to choose among alternative policies or courses of action. We may be able to understand a great deal about foreign policy decisions or international events by considering what any actor would do under a particular set of circumstances. Actors' preferences—for example, whether workers (who are members of a labor union, which contributes to a political party, which constitutes a majority in the national parliament) care more about their paychecks and health benefits than the global competitiveness of the industry that employs them—may explain a lot about the outcome of international trade negotiations

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[10] Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990). They note, "At each stage the 'unit' of the higher level becomes the 'system' of the lower layer" (p. 8). See also Barry Buzan, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations Reconsidered," in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 198–216.

[11] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

or the willingness of states to adhere to rules administered by the World Trade Organization. Preference orderings are not personal characteristics or experiences per se but are important components of some types of explanation at this level of analysis.

Foreign policymaking is also affected by the roles that individuals have within the foreign policy bureaucracy. When acting on behalf of an organization, a decisionmaker is the focal point of innumerable pressures and constraints. We might, for example, expect an air force chief of staff to be concerned with protecting the air force as an institution—to see that it receives a fair share of budgets, equipment, and talented personnel and is assigned missions that will improve its operating capabilities without overtaxing them in hopeless causes. Other institutions are protected as well, by their own personnel pursuing organizational interests and by those at higher levels in charge coordinating and overseeing the missions of multiple governmental agencies. Thus, the U.S. secretary of defense must arbitrate among the interests of the three military services (and the civilian defense bureaucracy), and the president must somehow reconcile the interests of the numerous, competing military and nonmilitary departments within the national security establishment. As part of our examination of individual roles, we must also consider the small-group environment within which individuals sometimes function (for example, a president or prime minister in a cabinet setting) and ask how group interaction affects both perceptions and actions.

Domestic Society   The structure of the government represents another set of influences on decisions. A democratic system of government with frequent and competitive elections will pose a different set of opportunities and constraints for decisionmakers than will an authoritarian government. In the former, a leader generally needs to build a wider base of approval for chosen courses of action because he or she is likely to be held accountable for those policies in elections held at regular intervals. In an authoritarian system, a leader can work from a narrower political base to repress opposition, even if the fear of a coup or revolt by one's opponents is present.

Subtler differences in types of government are also important. At the end of the Cold War, as the Soviet Union was transforming, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev attempted in vain to maintain political direction over a government that was moving from a tightly controlled authoritarian system to a presidential system based on free elections. As the government became increasingly open, Gorbachev and other high officials had to operate under ever greater constraints, both from the public and from entrenched interest groups, having opened a Pandora's box of change, in both government and society, which ultimately could not be controlled. In Iran, although the country has had an Islamic system of government since the revolution in 1979, amendments to the constitution in 1989 strengthened the position of the popularly elected president. This change allowed for a gradual softening in Iran's relations with the West, under Presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami, but then a worsening of relations under President Ahmadinejad as hardliners politically outmaneuvered reformers.

Other characteristics of domestic society also affect foreign policy choices. Governments in rich countries have far more material resources at their disposal than do those of poorer countries; the former can afford large quantities of modern weapons and can offer economic assistance to other states, while their citizens maintain a high standard of living. Big countries, though they may be relatively poor, still have more resources at their disposal than do small countries. China and India can afford nuclear weapons far more readily than can Laos and Ireland. Small and poor countries are especially likely to be deeply penetrated by other countries or by nonstate actors such as multinational corporations. Different forms of economic organization may have foreign policy implications as well. Various theories highlight the role of capitalism in generating pressures on state leaders to secure access to foreign markets and resources, by military means if necessary. It is reasonable to ask, then, whether capitalist countries have been significantly more prone to war than socialist countries, and if so, why.

Culture is another characteristic of domestic society that may be relevant for understanding some aspects of world politics. In 2001, the Bush administration justified its war against the Taliban in Afghanistan in part by drawing attention to the plight of Afghan women and girls at the hands of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Not only was the administration claiming that the Taliban was imposing social and economic restrictions that were at odds with traditional Afghan culture, it was also appealing to cultural sensitivities in the United States and in other countries where women enjoy substantially equal rights as men. One suspects that at least some of the public support for the U.S. war in Afghanistan would not have been forthcoming if not for such cultural issues.

Global Society   The behavior of states is affected by their internal characteristics but also by the ongoing relationships and patterns of interaction with other states. These interactions help shape the nature of influence exercised between the states—how influence is attempted, how successful it is, and what outcomes are produced as a result. A small, weak country will act differently toward a neighboring small, weak country than toward a neighboring superpower. Democracies may maintain peaceful relations with each other, but the differences between a democracy and a neighboring dictatorship may bring them into conflict. Rich and poor countries are likely to develop a relationship of dominance or dependence vis-à-vis each other that looks very different depending on one's vantage point. When focusing on global society, we are interested in what can be learned from the interactions among states and other global actors that cannot be learned from the characteristics of each state individually (their societies, governments, or leaders).

It is essential to consider the larger regional or global systems in which states interact. One feature of global society is the collection of international laws, institutions, and norms that legitimize some types of state behavior and delegitimize other types. Not so many decades ago, international scrutiny of governments' treatment of their own citizens was virtually absent. That is no longer the case, as illustrated by the UN-authorized humanitarian intervention against Libya in 2011. Another feature of global society is the distribution of power among major states. A system with two dominant powers differs in very important ways from

one with four or five powers of essentially equal strength; and both differ from a unipolar world with one predominant power. A world of two superpowers tends to focus global fears and antagonisms between those two nations and their blocs of allies; a world of several roughly equal powers produces at least the possibility of shifting alliances or coalitions to balance power without creating permanent antipathies. A unipolar world, as some people think has emerged in the aftermath of Cold War, considerably reduces the possibility of effective counterbalancing alliances.

We also ought to consider the global distribution of wealth and technological development. In this regard, the contemporary world is a far different place from the world of the eighteenth century. Rapid communication, swift transportation, and techniques of mass destruction have revolutionized the character of warfare and the prospects for national security. These technologies—and the enormous industrial structures, commercial relations, and financial flows supported by the wealth of the modern world—also have created a far more interdependent system than existed centuries or even decades ago. A cutback in Middle East oil production, the collapse of a major stock market, or a highly destructive terrorist incident can produce virtually instant, and often drastic, worldwide repercussions. And with the Internet, satellite television, and cellular communications, even those not directly affected by such events usually become instantly aware of them and may be prompted to change their behavior.

Actors in World Politics

These three levels of analysis serve as a way to organize the first part of this book. In Part I, we proceed systematically through these levels, focusing primarily on the policies adopted by the governments of nation-states. This focus is typical of the field of study known as *international relations* (or *IR*). Governments exercise control over territory, dominion over the people in the territory, and a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within that territory. In many ways, the nation-state remains the most significant single type of actor in determining conditions of war and peace, as well as the distribution of wealth and resources.

There are good reasons, nevertheless, to refer to our field of study as world politics, thereby acknowledging the importance of actors other than nation-states. The distinction is observed in the title of this book, and we shall often refer to nonstate actors. Decisionmakers typically act not merely on their own behalf but also on behalf of some group or organization. One such group is the nation-state itself, for whom a president or prime minister acts, along with countless other state officials. Other entities relevant to world politics include: (1) organizations operating within a nation-state, such as lobbying groups, labor unions, or insurgencies; (2) parts of national governments, such as the British ministry of defense or the Democratic leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives; (3) intergovernmental organizations like the UN or NATO; and (4) international nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International, the Roman Catholic Church, or al Qaeda.

Within nation-states there exist numerous subgroups based on ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, cultural, regional, or economic identifications. The process by

which states fragment and subgroups strive for independence as separate international actors (for example, the violent fragmentation of what had been Yugoslavia) or as autonomous transnational actors (for example, the Kurds, who are spread across five different nation-states) gives such groups an important place in world politics. James Rosenau includes such subgroups with all other nonstate actors in his discussion of the rise of a "multicentric" world of politics, which he claims now coexists with the "state-centric" world.[12] Depending on the circumstances, nonstate groups and individuals can be important actors in world politics. Although we give special attention to the state as actor, we must remember that the state acts within an environment that includes the multicentric world of groups and individuals pursuing their own, as opposed to their states', interests. Levels of analysis, which focus our attention on different entities and different forms of interaction, help to identify the variety of key actors in world politics.

Analyzing world politics invariably involves simplification, at any level of analysis. In examining the Asian financial crisis, we did not look at the specific personality characteristics of leaders of the different countries caught up in that event. In looking at the decision to use the atom bomb, an explanation based on Truman's personality traits may set aside the impact of the balance of U.S. and Soviet power. But we have to start somewhere. Certain questions about national decisionmakers' behavior are more readily answered from one level than from another. Questions that can be answered from various levels allow for different perspectives on the same issue and may require different kinds of evidence. Micro-level information on the perceptions of individual leaders and their true preferences may, for instance, be very hard to obtain. But if one contends that nearly all leaders have similar preferences under similar circumstances, individualized information may not be needed so long as one has a firm grasp of factors operating at the level of domestic or global society.

The choice of a level of analysis is therefore determined by one's theory and by the availability of data, but explanations from different levels need not exclude each other. They may be complementary, with each making a contribution to our overall understanding. To some degree, estimates of the relative weight of each explanation can be compiled through the techniques of data gathering and analysis typical of modern social science. Beyond that, however, we remain in the realm of speculation, intuition, and informed wisdom.

THE "MENU": CHOICE AND CONSTRAINT IN WORLD POLITICS

OPPORTUNITY AND WILLINGNESS

For any given decision-making unit—whether located in the foreign ministry of a major state power, the headquarters of a nongovernmental human rights organization, or a mountaintop redoubt sheltering an insurgency—we can examine

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[12] James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990). See also his *People Count! Networked Individuals in Global Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

what goes on inside each of these units as well as the ways in which their decisions are constrained by the environment. As Martin Hollis and Steve Smith put it, "Whatever the unit, its activities can be explained from without or understood from within. Every unit has a decision-making process. Those making the decisions are influenced from outside and from inside." Any particular choice is a function of **opportunity**—the possibilities and constraints that a decisionmaker faces. When presented with opportunity, a decisionmaker's **willingness** to choose a course of action reflects his or her goals and motivations.[13]

Constraints on choice can be identified at all three levels of analysis: by the decisionmaker's role in the governmental process; by the resources, demographic makeup, and political dynamics within domestic society; and by the web of influence and relations connecting the decisionmaker's state with other world actors. Each level affects the opportunities available to decisionmakers, the images they hold, and the ways in which they make choices. The concepts of opportunity and willingness encourage us to try to explain world politics by reference to the variety of forces constraining actors and to understand these actors' choices by reference to their motivations and beliefs.[14]

Opportunity   Otto von Bismarck, the nineteenth-century Prussian statesman, once remarked that politics is the art of the possible. The decision environment consists of options, risks, and potential costs and benefits. How are all these elements captured by the concept of opportunity?

First, the environment makes possible certain courses of action and not others. Napoléon could not threaten Moscow with nuclear destruction, nor could Franklin Roosevelt coerce the Japanese in 1941 with the atomic bomb—but Truman, with that opportunity at hand, had to decide whether and how to make use of it. In the eighth century, the Spanish could not draw on the resources of the New World to repel the initial Islamic invasion of Iberia, because no European knew there was a world beyond what was represented by the maps of the day. The economically besieged countries trying to deal with the Great Depression of the 1930s could not call on the IMF for assistance because it did not exist.

Determining what is possible involves two considerations. First, the phenomenon—nuclear weapons, satellite communication, capitalism, democracy, human rights standards—must have been invented or discovered so that it presents a possibility to at least some actors. Second, actors must have some sense of the availability of this possibility within the system. Nuclear weapons do exist; however, most states cannot "take advantage" of them—for example, to deter an attack by a hostile state—because they have neither the wealth nor the expertise to

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[13] See Benjamin A. Most and Harvey Starr, *Inquiry, Logic and International Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), chap. 2. The quote is from Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, p. 42.

[14] Opportunity and willingness are similar to two other concepts used by social scientists, "structure" and "agency." See Alexander E. Wendt, "The Agent–Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41 (Summer 1987), pp. 337–370; Gil Friedman and Harvey Starr, *Agency, Structure, and International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1997).

acquire such weapons. The technology needed to place telecommunications satellites in space is widely known but is not affordable to all. Though a possibility may exist, limits on resources will affect the ability to make use of it. Capitalism and democracy are economic and political arrangements that are common today, but the possibilities and constraints they present are not the same for all societies. Nor are these arrangements universally admired.

Those who make decisions on behalf of states and other actors are able to avail themselves of opportunities because they operate in domestic and global societies that permit interaction with others and because they have access to resources allowing certain kinds of action. Lewis Fry Richardson, one of the pioneers of the scientific study of war and peace, drew a parallel between war and murder. Wondering why people in one country tended to murder each other more often than they murdered foreigners, he came to the simple conclusion that they had much less opportunity to murder foreigners because they had far fewer contacts with them.[15] Police records indicate that a person is most likely to be murdered by a close relative or a friend, presumably because constant contact and high levels of interaction provide the opportunity for murder. Similarly, Thailand and Bolivia are unlikely to fight each other because their range of interaction is too limited to allow a conflict to develop.

Willingness   The concept of willingness concerns the motivations that lead people to seize or decline opportunities. The goals, hopes, and desires of decisionmakers are important considerations because they may shed light on why one course of action was chosen over another. Willingness derives from calculations of the costs and benefits flowing from alternative courses of action and informed by perceptions of the global scene and domestic political conditions. Although it is sometimes useful to assume that these costs and benefits are assessed objectively, we must bear in mind that decisionmakers behave on the basis of their perceptions of the world, which in fact may be very different from the way it appears to others.

Such differences will often stand out in bold relief when decisionmakers attempt to implement their policies. Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, believed that Adolf Hitler could be appeased, and so gave in to his demands at Munich in 1938 expecting that his aggressive impulses would be sated. The result, however, was further Nazi expansion. History also provides us with a picture of Hitler some years later, isolated in his Berlin bunker, moving army divisions on a map—lost divisions that were real only to him and that had no impact on the Soviet Red Army as it moved inexorably toward the German capital. The impact of the 9/11 attacks was magnified because they were perpetrated against a people who had taken their physical security for granted. The willingness of the American public to support an interventionist military policy after 9/11 was a consequence of a dramatic change in their perceptions of threat.

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[15] Lewis F. Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), p. 288.

Thus, when we study different environments, we are also interested in how they affect the images of the world that decisionmakers hold. Willingness involves factors that affect how decisionmakers see the world, process information about what they see, formulate preferences, and ultimately make choices. Behavior is a product of *both* opportunity and willingness; they are *jointly necessary conditions*.[16] Successful deterrence, for example, requires both appropriate weapons—the opportunity—and the willingness to pay the political and military costs of using the weapons should deterrence fail. The development of the atomic bomb made its use a possibility, but analysts since 1945 have been studying the willingness of state leaders to use it.

THE MENU

Opportunity, willingness, and the relationships between the decision-making entity and its environment can be summarized and brought together through the analogy of a menu. The person (entity or actor) who enters a restaurant is confronted by a gastronomical environment—the menu. The menu provides a number of behavioral opportunities, not determining the diner's choice but constraining what is possible. (Pizza, lasagna, and linguini are possible in an Italian restaurant, but chicken chow mein and matzo ball soup generally are not.) The menu also affects the probability of the diner's choice through price, portion size, specials, and the restaurant's reputation for certain dishes. In an Italian restaurant whose menu proclaims that it has served pizza since 1910 and offers over fifty varieties at low prices, a diner is most probably going to order a pizza. The restaurant, however, offers other selections as well, and the probabilities that they will be ordered are affected by how a diner sees those choices. Knowing a patron's palate and resources, as well as the patron's perception of the menu, permits us to analyze and predict his or her choice of entrée.

The menu analogy is helpful for understanding that the opportunities presented to international actors are constrained in various ways and that these constraints affect the willingness of decisionmakers to act. Constraints can be external, or, as is so often the case, they can be self-imposed. For four decades, the academic writings of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have stressed the domestic and international constraints on the foreign policy decisionmaker. The skilled diplomat, Kissinger has emphasized, understands these constraints and learns to work within them to achieve his or her desired aims.[17] The skilled diplomat also realizes that the menu changes, and is therefore on the lookout for better choices as new selections become available.

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[16] Claudio Cioffi-Revilla and Harvey Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness, and Political Uncertainty: Theoretical Foundations of Politics," in Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, eds., *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 225–248.

[17] See, for example, Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), as well as his *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (Darby, Penn.: Diane Publishing, 2004).