Learning Objectives

• Understand how the various theoretical perspectives view the international system, the state, and the individual as levels of explanation for international events.

• Describe how each of the contending theoretical perspectives explains change in the international system.

• Describe how political scientists measure state power.

• Analyze what psychological factors have an impact on elite foreign policy decision making.

• Describe the roles private individuals and the mass public play in international relations.
Levels of Analysis

Dividing the analysis of international politics into levels helps orient our questions and suggests the appropriate type of evidence to explore.

- **International system level**: focuses on systemic characteristics such as power distribution
- **State level**: focuses on domestic factors and internal characteristics of states
- **Individual level**: focuses on individuals and their perceptions, choices, activities, etc.
FIGURE 4.1
Levels of Analysis in International Relations

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

STATE

INDIVIDUAL
Personality
Perceptions
Choices

Interdependence
Government
Interest groups
Intergovernmental organizations

National interest
Polarity

International norms/rules
Economy
Thinking Conceptually

What is a system?

➢ A system is an assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction.

➢ Because these units interact, a change in one unit causes changes in the others, and the units respond in regularized ways.

➢ To understand international politics from this perspective requires, not solely a focus on the actions of individual states and other units, but also a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of their interactions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterization</th>
<th>Realism/Neorealism</th>
<th>Liberalism/Neoliberal Institutionalism</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anarchic</td>
<td>Three liberal interpretations; interdependence, international order, and neoliberal institutionalism</td>
<td>International system exists as social construct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>State is primary actor</td>
<td>States, international governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, substate actors</td>
<td>Individuals matter; no differentiation between international and domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td>Polarity; distribution of power</td>
<td>Interdependence; institutions</td>
<td>Ongoing interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of Change</td>
<td>Slow change when the balance of power shifts</td>
<td>Low possibility of radical change; constant incremental change as actors are involved in new relationships</td>
<td>Emphasis on change in social norms and identities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The International System: Realist View

• All realists characterize the international system as anarchic.
• No authority exists above the state; the state is sovereign.
• Each state must therefore look out for its own interests above all, exercising "self-help."
Realists disagree about the degree of state autonomy in the system.

- Traditional: states can shape the system.
- Neorealistic: states are more constrained by the system.
Realism: Dimensions of the International System

• System polarity refers to the number of blocs of states that exert power in the international system.

• Polarity is important because it influences system management and stability.

Three types:

➢ Multipolarity
➢ Bipolarity
➢ and hegemony or Unipolarity
Norms of Multipolar System

- **Multipolarity** - Where the distribution of power to conquer is concentrated in two or more states. If there are multiple (typically five or more) influential actors in the international system, a balance-of-power, or multipolar, system is formed.

- In the classical balance of power, the actors are exclusively states, and there should be at least five of them.

- When alliances are formed, they are formed for a specific purpose, have a short duration, and shift according to advantage and changes in the distribution of power rather than ideology.
Norms of Bipolar System

- **Bipolarity** - Where the distribution of power to conquer is concentrated in two states or a coalition of states.

- In the bipolar system of the Cold War, each of the blocs (NATO led by the United States, and the Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union) sought to negotiate rather than fight, to fight minor wars rather than major ones, and to fight major wars rather than fail to eliminate the rival bloc.

- Alliances tend to be long term, based on relatively permanent, not shifting, interests. In a tight bipolar system, international organizations either do not develop or are ineffective. In a looser system, international organizations may develop primarily to mediate between the two blocs.
Norms of Unipolar System

- **Unipolarity / Hegemonic** - Where the power to conquer all other states in the system resides in a single state.

- One state commands influence in the international system by virtue of its large size, great economic and/or military capability, or organizational competence.

- Immediately after the Gulf War in 1991, many states grew concerned that the international system had become unipolar, with no effective counterweight to the power of the United States. Today, although the United States remains the unipole in absolute terms, its ability to exercise hegemony is being challenged by other states and questioned by some in the United States.
FIGURE 4.2

Polarity in the International System

MULTIPOLAR SYSTEM: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BALANCE OF POWER

- GREAT BRITAIN
- AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
- RUSSIA
- FRANCE
- GERMANY

BIPOLAR SYSTEM: THE COLD WAR ERA

- UNITED STATES
- SOVIET UNION

- Canada, France, Israel, Japan, Norway, United Kingdom, West Germany, et al.
- Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia
- Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Syria, et al.
- People’s Republic of China, North Korea

UNIPOLAR SYSTEM: THE IMMEDIATE POST–COLD WAR ERA?

- UNITED STATES
- All other countries

CONTEMPORARY SYSTEM

- U.S. HEGEMONY
- EU
- People’s Republic of China
Which International Polarity Is More Stable?

• Bipolarity is more stable:
  ➢ Disruptive behavior is immediately evident.
  ➢ Two sides can moderate each other’s use of violence.
  ➢ They can absorb potentially destabilizing changes.
  ➢ Each focuses its activity on just the other.
  ➢ They can anticipate the other’s actions and predict responses.
• The Cold War gave a certain level of stability to the world.
Which International Polarity Is More Stable? 2

- Theoretically, multipolarity should be more stable
  - There are more interactions and less opportunity to dwell on one state.
  - There are more patterns of alliances to address changes of interest or distribution of power.
  - A state becomes less likely to respond to the actions of any single other state.
Hegemonic stability theorists argue that unipolarity leads to a more stable system.

- The hegemon enforces norms and ensures the continuation of the system.
- The hegemon pays the price of enforcing norms to insure stability.
- When the hegemon declines or loses power, system stability will be jeopardized.
Three Liberal Characterizations

The international system is not central to the view of liberalism. Liberals have three different conceptions of the international system:

- **Not as a structure but as an interdependent process**: multiple interactions occur among different parties and various actors learn from the interactions.
  - Actors include, not only states, but also international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, and sub-state actors.
  - There are multiple channels connecting states, and multiple issues and agendas arise in the interdependent system.
  - Negotiating and coordinating in the liberal international system occurs through multilateralism.
Three Liberal Characterizations 2

➢ The international system is seen in terms of a specific *international order governed by basic rules and principles*.
  • Key role for institutions.
  • The dominant power limits its own autonomy and makes credible commitments in order to make durable and legitimate rules that ultimately benefit its long-term interests.
  • A liberal international order governs arrangements among states with basic rules and principles.
Three Liberal Characterizations 3

➢ Neoliberal institutionalists: the international system is anarchic, states cooperate because it is in their interest to do so most of the time.

  • But there is also the possibility that institutions will be created from self-interest.

  • And institutions can moderate state behavior and provide a framework for coordination and cooperation.
Constructivism and the International System

- The concept of an international system is a European idea.
- Changes occurring in the social norms of a system can lead to a fundamental shift in that system.
- Understandings of the international system have altered over time and are socially constructed; there have been different international orders, different views of threats, and reliance on different ways to maintain order.
- The current system, centered on states, is a historical creation and could change in the future to a new type of order.
- The idea of an anarchic international system is socially constructed: “Anarchy is what states make of it”
Change in the International System: Realists

• Changes in either the number of major actors or the relative power relationship among the actors may result in a change in the international system. Wars are usually responsible for changes in power relationships, such as at the end of World War II.
• States grow at uneven rates due to different responses to economic, political, and technological developments
• Exogenous changes may also lead to a shift in the system. (technology such as nuclear weapons)
• In the view of realists, international systems can change, yet the inherent bias among realist interpretations is for continuity.
Change in the International System: Liberals

- All liberals acknowledge and welcome change in the international system. Changes come from several sources:
- Changes occur as the result of exogenous technological developments, such as communication and transportation systems.
- Change may occur because of changes in the relative importance of different issue areas, such as the increasing focus on economic issues, human rights, and the environment.
- Change may occur as new actors, including multinational corporations and nongovernmental organizations, augment or replace state actors.
Change in the International System: Constructivists

• Social norms change, though not all such changes are transformative.

• Norms can be changed by collective and individual actions
  ➢ Collective change can occur through coercion, but most often it occurs through institutions, law, and social movements.
  ➢ Individuals: change occurs through persuasion and the internalization of new norms.

• Over time, changes in social norms could fundamentally alter the international system.
Levels of Analysis: The International System

Explanations emphasize structural factors, most importantly, the distribution of power and its changes.

- **Realists**: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict is a Russian attempt to prevent changes in the balance of power.
- **Liberals**: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict is a Russian attempt to prevent a decrease in Ukrainian dependence on Russia.
- **Constructivists**: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict is rooted in Russian perceptions of threat.
The State

For an entity to be considered a *State*, four fundamental conditions must be:

- A state must have a defined territorial base.
- A stable population must reside within its borders.
- There should be a government to which this population owes allegiance.
- A state has to be recognized diplomatically by other states.
The State

A state is a second level of analysis used to explain the international order.

- **Realists**: states are sovereign, constrained only by the structural anarchy; they pursue national interests as autonomous and unitary actors.

- **Liberals**: states are not autonomous; their behavior is a function of domestic interests, which compete with each other in a pluralistic framework.

- **Constructivists**: state interests are ideational and ever-evolving.
State Power

• What is power?
  ➢ The ability to not only influence others, but also to control outcomes, producing results that would not have occurred naturally.

• Power makes states important actors for understanding international relations.

• Effective use of power depends on states’ power potential.
  ➢ Power potential rests on natural, tangible, and/or intangible resources.
FIGURE 4.3

Ingredients of State Power Potential

NATURAL SOURCES OF POWER:
- Geography
- Natural resources
- Population

TANGIBLE SOURCES OF POWER:
- Industrial development
- Level of infrastructure
- Characteristics of military

INTANGIBLE SOURCES OF POWER:
- National image
- Public support
- Leadership
Natural Sources of Power Potential

- Natural sources of power- flows from the innate characteristics of the state.
- Whether power is effective at influencing outcomes depends on the power potential of each party.
- A state's power potential depends on its natural sources of power.
- The three most important natural sources of power are:
  - Geographic size and position (control of territory, access to and control the sea)
  - Natural resources (especially oil)
  - Population
Natural Sources of Power Potential 2

➢ Natural sources of power
  • Natural resources
    • Oil
    • Mineral deposits (e.g., gold, silver, bauxite)
  • States can leverage their control of natural resources to influence political outcomes.
  • Having a sought-after resource may prove a liability, making states targets for aggressive actions.

➢ Geographic size and position
  • Proximity to the sea
  • Temperate zone
Population

• Populous states tend to be more powerful by virtue of their large populations. (size, age, skill level)

• Large populations, especially when poor, may constrain state power.

• States with declining or aging populations may in the future suffer power declines.
Tangible Sources of Power Potential

➢ Tangible sources of power
• Industrial development – production of goods and services.
• Level of infrastructure – roads, bridges, airports, docks.
• Economic diversification – more than one product produced.
• Characteristics of the military – size, training, equipment, mission and structure of armed forces.
Intangible Sources of Power Potential

- Intangible sources of power
  - Intangible sources of power include national image, quality of government, public support, leadership, and morale.
  - States use their intangible sources of power to exert soft power, the ability to attract others because of the legitimacy of the state's values of politics.
  - Smart power is the use of both hard and soft power to succeed in international relations.
Levels of Analysis: The State

Explanations emphasize state-level/domestic factors

- **Realists**: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict reflects Russia’s desire to protect its security, which the Kremlin perceived as threatened.

- **Liberals**: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict stems from the lack of democratic qualities both countries.

- **Constructivists**: In the Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict, Russia’s ideas/identities influenced its perception of threat, leading to war.
### Personality Characteristics of Leaders

**PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS**

- **Nationalism:** strong emotional ties to nation; emphasis on national honor and dignity
- **Perception of control:** belief in ability to control events; high degree of control over situations; governments able to influence state and nation
- **Need for power:** need to establish, maintain, and project power or influence over others
- **Need for affiliation:** concern for establishing and maintaining friendly relationships with others
- **Conceptual complexity:** ability to discuss with other people places, policies, and ideas in a discerning way
- **Distrust of others:** feelings of doubt, uneasiness about others; doubt about motives and actions of others

### Foreign Policy Orientations

- **Independent leader:**
  - high in nationalism
  - high in perception of control
  - high in need for power
  - low in conceptual complexity
  - high in distrust of others

- **Participatory leader:**
  - low in nationalism
  - low in perception of control
  - high in need for affiliation
  - high in conceptual complexity
  - low in distrust of others

Levels of Analysis: The Individual

➢ For realists, individuals are of little importance because they are constrained by the state they inhabit and the international system.

➢ Liberals see individuals and mass publics as important actors in foreign policy.

➢ Constructivists believe leaders can shape the way we understand events, which can have important implications.
Personal Characteristics of Individuals

The Individual: the personality factor

- The personality characteristics of leaders that affect foreign policy behaviors include: nationalism, perception of control, need for power, need for affiliation, conceptual complexity, and distrust of others.

1. Leaders with high levels of nationalism, a strong need for power, low conceptual complexity, and a high level of distrust of others tend to develop an independent orientation to foreign affairs.
2. Leaders with low levels of nationalism, a high need for evaluation, high conceptual complexity, and a low level of distrust of others tend toward a more participatory orientation in foreign affairs.

• Personality characteristics affect the leadership of dictators more than that of democratic leaders because of the absence of effective institutional checks on dictators.
Information Processing

• The decision maker selects, organizes, and evaluates incoming information.

• Relies on existing perceptions, usually based on prior experiences: “screens”
  ➢ Integrating function: synthesizing and interpreting.
  ➢ Orienting function: guidance on future expectations and expedite planning for future contingencies.

• A belief system emerges when perceptions form a relatively integrated set of images.
Information Processing 2

- Cognitive consistency: the desire to be consistent, ignoring other information. (UK resolve to require the Falklands)
- Evoked set: look for details in the present similar to past situations. (Every war is another Vietnam)
- Mirror image: see the opponent as having characteristics the opposite of one’s own.
- Groupthink: the tendency to form consensus and resist criticism.
- Satisficing: search for a “good enough,” not optimal, solution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive consistency</td>
<td>The tendency to accept information that is compatible with what has previously been accepted, often ignoring inconsistent information.</td>
<td>Just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, military spotters saw unmarked planes approaching Hawaii. Not believing the evidence, they discounted the sightings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evoked set</td>
<td>Details from a present situation that are similar to information gleaned from past situations.</td>
<td>During the Vietnam War, U.S. decision makers saw the Korean War as a precedent, although there were critical differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror image</td>
<td>Seeing in one's opponent the opposite of characteristics seen in oneself. One views the opponent as hostile and uncompromising, whereas one views oneself as friendly and compromising.</td>
<td>During the Cold War, the U.S. elites and public viewed the Soviet Union in terms of their own mirror image: the United States was friendly, the Soviet Union hostile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupthink</td>
<td>The tendency of individuals to strive for cohesion and sometimes unanimity to achieve cohesion, at the risk of not examining alternative policies.</td>
<td>During the U.S. planning for the Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba in 1961, opponents were ostracized from the planning group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Situational Factors

- Individual leaders are likely to be influential. *Individual action affect the course of events when several factors are present.*
  - When political institutions are unstable, young, in crisis, or collapsed, leaders are able to provide powerful influences.
  - Individual leader’s personal characteristics have more influence on outcomes when the issue is peripheral rather than central, when the issue is not routine, during crisis (Economic crisis) that demand quick decisions, and when the situation is ambiguous. (Roosevelt-New Deal, Gorbachev-Perestroika/glasnost)
  - Individuals, especially national leaders, exercise more influence over the course of events when they have few institutional constraints, such as in dictatorial regimes.
Public Opinion

• Mass publics can affect international relations when elites listen to those opinions and adopt policies accordingly.
• Some argue mass publics hold different opinions and attitudes about foreign policy than elites.
• Public opinion polls sometimes reflect perceived general mood of population.
• Even authoritarian leaders pay attention to dominant moods.
• More often, publics do not express a single, dominant mood, but rather an array of policy attitudes.
Figure 4.5: The Impact of Individual Elites

Individual leaders affect the course of events

When political institutions are
- unstable
- young
- in crisis
- collapsed

When institutional constraints are limited

When the issue or situation is
- peripheral
- unusual
- ambiguous
Private Individuals

• By virtue of circumstances, skills, or resources, private individuals may carry out actions, independent of an official role
  ➢ Less bound by rules of the game and institutional norms.
  ➢ Can magnify impact through the use of social media.
  ➢ Can address programs and causes governments might not want to fund.
  ➢ Celebrity individuals mobilize attention for particular causes.
  ➢ World wide treatment of women and girls.

• Examples: Bill and Melinda Gates, George Clooney.
Levels of Analysis: The Individual 2

Explanations help us understand micro-foundations of policy decisions.

Realists: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict reflects Putin’s drive for power, both domestically and internationally.

Liberals: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict represents the role that public opinion played in Putin’s decision. Use war as a diversionary foreign policy in order to secure domestic public support.

Constructivists: Russia-Ukraine (2014) conflict reflects the importance of Crimea for Russian identity.
Key Terms

1. Belief Systems - Individual rely on existing perceptions and prior experiences as a means of perceiving and interpreting new and often contradictory information.

2. Bipolar - Distributions of power with two major powers.

3. Cognitive Consistency - Individuals select or amplify information that supports existing belief and ignore or downplay contradictory information.

4. Evoked Set - Individual perceive and evaluate the world according to what they have learned from the past.

5. Groupthink – Individuals believing and thinking the same as their social group, regardless what the facts are.

6. Mirror Images - When an individual considers its actions to be good and noble, while at the same time see the opposite in one's own enemy.

7. Multilateralism – Conduct of international activity by three or more states in sharing general principles through an international organization.
Key Terms

8. **Multipolar** – Distributions of power with more than two major powers.

9. **Power**- the ability to get what you want.

10. **Power Potential**- The potential of a state to get what it wants depends on it’s geographical size, natural resources and population.

11. **Smart Power**- the combination of coercion and payments coupled with persuasion and attraction in pursuit of a diplomatic solution.

12. **Soft Power**- power based on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion.

13. **System** – An assemblage of units, objects, or parts united by some form of regular interaction.

14. **Unipolar** - Distributions of power with one preeminent power.