



فرماندهی کل قوا
ستاد کل نیروهای مسلح
دانشگاه و پژوهشگاه عالی دفاع ملی و تحقیقات راهبردی

بسمه تعالی
جمهوری اسلامی ایران

دقتربه زبان انگلیسی

ویژه مصاحبه دوره دکتری (Ph.D)

رشته روابط بین الملل (بارویکرد دیپلماسی دفاعی)

سال تحصیلی ۱۴۰۱-۱۴۰۲

International Relations

The twenty-first century will encompass the longest period of peace, democracy, and economic development in history.

Allan E. Goodman, *A Brief History of the Future*, 1993

The threat of self-destruction and planetary destruction is not something that we will pose one day in the future, if we fail to take certain precautions; it is here now, hanging over the heads of all of us at every moment.

Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 1982

It is always hard to predict anything, especially the future.

Romanian proverb

THE CHALLENGE

This is a book about international relations in the twenty-first century. It is meant to introduce the subject and distill its key features, although even a basic primer on world affairs today necessarily involves the student in the study of perplexing problems that are as challenging as they are interesting. Indeed, the author's task here is not to simplify the world but rather to make the reader appreciate, and ultimately understand, its great complexity. We are still in the early stages of the new millennium. No generation will experience such a profound moment of reflection about the human condition for another thousand years. Hence, we would seem to have a special obligation to think not only with caring but, more importantly, with carefulness and clarity about the nature of the current world order or, as some might say, disorder. This requires us to think about the past as well, since "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." On the importance of this subject, it has been said that "an introduction to the study of international relations in our time is an introduction to the art and science of the survival of mankind."²

Professors, policymakers, and publics in the United States and throughout the globe are faced with many puzzles that are not easily answerable, whether

through artful speculation or, even less so, through controlled experiments conducted in white lab coats. For example, note the question posed by political scientist John Ikenberry that is on the minds of many contemporary observers:

The rise of China will undoubtedly be one of the great dramas of the twentyfirst century. China's extraordinary economic growth and active diplomacy are already transforming East Asia, and future decades will see even greater increases in Chinese power and influence. But exactly how this drama will play out is an open question. Will China overthrow the existing order or become a part of it? And what, if anything, can the United States do to maintain its position as China rises?³

Ikenberry argues that this situation is comparable to great power transitions in the past, and that it can be managed peaceably as long as the United States adopts enlightened policies. An alternative viewpoint is presented by Parag Khanna, who sees an emergent "Big Three," with the United States having to compete for dominance with both China and Europe (the European Union) in what is "for the first time in history" a "global, multicivilizational, multipolar battle," whose outcome may not be as sanguine as Ikenberry suggests.⁴

How does one answer the question raised by Professor Ikenberry? What are we to make of the world in the early twenty-first century? There is great uncertainty about the United States-China relationship and other dramas being played out on the world stage; how will these evolve, with what denouement? Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* magazine, writing between World War I and World War II, famously declared the twentieth century "the American century." Will the twenty-first century also be the American century? Or will it be the Chinese century, the European century, or a "post-international politics" century altogether?⁵ In the 1970s U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asked Chinese leader Chou En-Lai what he thought of the 1789 French Revolution. He replied, "Too soon to tell." It is especially premature to judge the long-term implications of events occurring in the 2000s, although in the nuclear age we may not have the luxury of sitting back and waiting a couple hundred years for a final verdict on their meaning. We may have to think, and act, now. Few observers, including scholars, have done a good job of correctly assessing and anticipating events of late. I vividly recall sitting in a paneled room at the International Studies Association (ISA) annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in the spring of 1987, attending a session featuring two American diplomats engaging two Russian diplomats in a speculative discussion about "the future of U.S.-Soviet relations." This was at a time when the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was still raging, when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had just come to power in Moscow,

when U.S. president Ronald Reagan was continuing to characterize the USSR as an “evil empire” bent on spreading global communism, and when his secretary of defense said that “we are no longer in the postwar era but the prewar era.” One of the Russian diplomats began his comments by uttering what he took to be an old Romanian proverb, that “it is always hard to predict anything, especially the future.” Indeed, who in that room, or for that matter any room anywhere that day, can claim to have predicted that within a half decade the world would witness the end of the Cold War and the end of the Soviet Union itself, with hardly a shot being fired? Most people—scholars, practitioners, and laypersons alike—shared former Carter administration national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski’s 1986 assessment that “the American-Soviet conflict is not some temporary aberration but a historical rivalry that will long endure.”⁶ Yet by December 1989, the Berlin Wall that had symbolized the Iron Curtain separating the free and nonfree worlds had collapsed, and the Soviet Red Army Chorus could be heard in Washington, D.C., leading Reagan’s successor and a throng of dignitaries at a Kennedy Center gala in a stirring rendition of “God Bless America.” By December 1991, the USSR had dissolved into Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and assorted other independent republics. As Gorbachev proclaimed that “the world is leaving one epoch, the Cold War, and entering a new one,” President George H.W. Bush proclaimed a “new world order” of peace and harmony.⁷

At that very moment, amid much fanfare and jubilation, Francis Fukuyama of the U.S. State Department wrote that we were witnessing “the end of history,” as the forces of Western liberal democracy and free market capitalism had seemingly achieved their final triumph over all other competing ideologies.⁸ Although not everyone agreed, there was a general sense that those ideas were on the march worldwide.⁹ But the “holiday from history” was short-lived, as was the jubilant mood.¹⁰ If 11/9 (the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989) had been earthshaking, 9/11 was no less so: on September 11, 2001, some 3,000 people lost their lives when al Qaeda terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, leading many to wonder whether the post-Cold War era had abruptly ended and had given way to a new, as yet unnamed era. Euphoria suddenly turned to despair and a doom and gloom view of the future.

Humanity, then, in the recent past has lurched wildly between the extreme mind-sets of heaven one minute and hell the next. Despite our failure to predict even five-year trends, long-term forecasting remains a growth industry. Prognosticators have offered both optimistic and pessimistic prophecies. In addition to Fukuyama, the optimists in the post-Cold War era have included Alan Goodman, whose *A Brief History of the Future* heralded the twenty-first century as an era that “will encompass the longest period of

peace, democracy, and economic development in history.” Another observer echoes Goodman in noting that “the series of positive trends over the last 20 years” have created “an international climate of unprecedented peace and prosperity” in much of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, while another contends that we are witnessing the “obsolescence of major war” and that terrorist threats are “overblown.”¹¹ The ranks of the pessimists include John Mearsheimer, who, a year after Fukuyama’s pronouncement, was already lamenting “why we will soon miss the Cold War” (since he expected the historical inevitability and “tragedy” of great-power politics would take an even more virulent turn in the future), and Samuel Huntington, who hypothesized that “the clash of civilizations” pitting “the West versus the rest” (Islamic fundamentalism and other cultures) would be the successor to the East-West ideological axis of conflict that ended in 1989. Another commentator wrote of “the coming anarchy” and the “shattering of the dreams of the post–Cold War era,” stemming from ecological and other catastrophes, citing the recent genocidal conflicts in Africa as a metaphor for how both the South and North will evolve.¹² Many other writers have contemplated what the future holds in terms of great-power relationships and other developments, including Ikenberry and Khanna, mentioned above.

It is hard to get a handle on the world today, and especially difficult to know whether to feel good or bad about its current state, partly because, to borrow Charles Dickens’s much-quoted 1859 saying, it arguably is the best of times and the worst of times. Suffice it to say, life expectancy in most countries extends beyond anything imaginable in Dickens’s day, even as the entire human species can now be extinguished in a matter of hours and maybe minutes. We have the potential for unprecedented international cooperation (the United Nations, despite its many flaws, represents the most ambitious attempt at global institution-building in the million years that *Homo sapiens* has inhabited the earth) as well as unprecedented international conflict (in the words of one commentator, “it has historically been one thing to die for your country” but, in the event of a major war in the nuclear age, “it is a different thing to die *with* your country”).¹³

On the one hand, one might be forgiven for thinking that Alan Goodman’s prediction above is far too optimistic. After all, the twentieth century saw the worst carnage in human history, with over 100 million people killed in wars, a record that might be dwarfed in the future as ABC (atomic, biological, and chemical) weapons—WMDs (weapons of mass destruction)—all are on the brink of proliferating dangerously; biological and chemical weaponry (the “poor person’s nuclear bomb”) is relatively easy to develop and especially liable to end up in the hands of terrorists. As for poverty, there remain a huge number of poor people in the world, partly as a function of an ongoing

population explosion in many less developed countries and partly because of a growing rich-poor gap that finds almost 3 billion persons living on less than \$2 a day. The onset of a global financial crisis in 2008–2009, which saw wild swings in the U.S., European, and Asian stock markets, only served to exacerbate economic anxieties, even among the rich. In many countries, human rights violations remain prevalent, including cases of genocide. If humanity is not exterminated by the arms buildup of WMDs, it may happen instead through the buildup of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere that are contributing to global warming, making the last two decades since 1990 the warmest on record.¹⁴

On the other hand, the glass would seem at least as half full as half empty. Almost no one currently alive has had to cope with sustained crises of the magnitude experienced by my parents' generation, which in successive decades spent the flower of their youth suffering through World War I (1914–1918), the Great Depression (1929–1939), and World War II (1939–1945). Even amid grinding poverty, average income per capita in developing countries has been rising over the past twenty years while infant mortality and illiteracy have been declining. Globalization of the international economy promises a better life for more consumers if economic growth with equity and with environmentally sustainable development can be promoted and world financial crises stabilized.¹⁵ Recent decades have seen impressive gains in the area of democratization, repressive regimes notwithstanding; the latest Freedom House report counts ninety countries as “free” (representing roughly half of the global population), sixty “partly free,” and forty-three “not free,” with the number of free countries being the highest in the history of the thirty-five-year survey.¹⁶ The president of Harvard University summed up “the remarkable opportunities inherent in the current global moment” in a recent commencement address:

For the first time in all of human history, a majority of people now live in countries where leaders are democratically elected, where women are treated as full citizens, and where the press is free. . . . Despite all the tragedies of war that rightly preoccupy us, the fraction of the world's population killed each year in wars has, in recent times, been more than 95 percent lower than the comparable fraction for an average year of the 20th century.¹⁷

Amid the nightmarish possibilities relating to WMDs, it is worth remembering that the Cold War following World War II was just that, a nonhot, nonshooting war. In some important respects, the period since 1945 has been relatively peaceful and has even been characterized as “the long peace,” the

longest continuous stretch of time since the beginning of the modern state system (in the seventeenth century) in which there has not been a single recorded instance of direct great-power exchange of hostilities.¹⁸ The probability of a war occurring between great powers today is perhaps closer to zero than at any point in history. That isn't to say it couldn't happen, only that it is a remote possibility. This is no small accomplishment. If only we could say the same for interstate wars involving not so-great powers, as well as intrastate (civil) wars and extra state violence perpetrated by terrorists, all of which remain major concerns, especially as the specter of WMD proliferation threatens to blur the distinction between who is or is not a "great power" capable of causing great harm to its neighbors and the world as a whole. For the United States, the "long peace" is precariously juxtaposed against the "long war" (the U.S. Defense Department's name for the global fight against al Qaeda and international terrorism), as it awaits the possibility of another 9/11 attack.

We cannot know for sure where humanity is headed—how various dramas will play out—precisely because it depends in large measure on what *choices* policymakers and citizens make across the globe. One hopes those choices are *informed* choices, grounded in knowledge more than ignorance. As noted above, we are obliged to make every effort to think critically about international relations in order to improve our understanding and our capacity to shape things in a positive direction. This book tries to convey what is known and theorized about in the field of international relations, including core concepts and findings developed by political scientists, and to prod students to more deeply explore the subject. Chapter 1 discusses what exactly "international relations" (IR) is, offering a definition, and what approaches have been used to make sense of it, offering competing perspectives that can help us better describe and explain such phenomena. However, before we examine those issues, we need first to dispose of one other matter: Why bother studying IR? The answer may seem obvious from our discussion thus far, but a bit further elaboration may be in order.

WHY STUDY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

Knowledge About Foreign Countries and Foreign Affairs Is Weak

Citizens around the globe understandably tend to be more concerned about happenings within their own societies than outside those societies. The United States, in particular, at least among developed societies, seems to stand out in this regard. Judging from the average American's level of information about the world, one might conclude that the world holds little interest for citizens of the United States, especially its youth. For example, a 2006 *National*

Geographic survey of eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds found that “geography was Greek to young Americans.”¹⁹ Eighty-eight percent could not locate Afghanistan on a map even though it is the country that housed the 9/11 skyjackers, while 66 percent could not find Iraq, even though the United States was involved in a war there that had cost some 3,000 American military casualties; and 70 percent could not find North Korea, even though that country at the time was thought to be developing nuclear weapons capable of reaching California and other parts of the West Coast.²⁰ These findings reinforce an earlier nine-country survey in which young Americans rated next to last on overall geographical knowledge, trailing Sweden, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Great Britain, and Canada, surpassing only Mexico, a developing country that spends far less on education.²¹ Not just geography but world affairs generally seem “Greek” to many Americans, young and old alike, since over half the Americans interviewed in polls taken throughout the Cold War were not certain whether it was the United States or the Soviet Union that belonged to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a bulwark of the Western alliance (which, by the way, includes Greece).²²

Technology Is Making International Relations Increasingly Relevant to Our Everyday Lives

One would hope that Americans would be more cognizant of the importance of international affairs to their lives. If there is one almost absolute certainty that we can count on in the future among all the unknowns, it is that the world is likely to get smaller, not bigger, that the shrinking and linking of the globe will increase, not decrease. Driven mainly by technology, human beings, for better or worse, generally are experiencing a steady, almost inexorably increasing interconnectedness across geographical, cultural, and other divides even as they seek to maintain the distinctiveness and separateness of their individual communities. Technology is a double-edged sword. It has assisted democratization by creating dramatic opportunities to enhance communication, travel, and information processing worldwide, opening up closed societies to new ideas. A three-minute telephone call between New York and London (in current dollars) cost \$300 in 1930; today it costs about a dollar and is practically free over the Internet, which is now being used by over a billion people globally, a 265 percent increase since 2000.²³ The fastest mode of transportation prior to the twentieth century was the steam locomotive, which could reach a speed of 100 miles per hour; jet

planes can now fly over 2,000 mph and humans in capsules can exceed 18,000 mph in outer space. (The new Airbus 380 jumbo jet, eight stories high with a wingspan the length of an American football field, can carry as many as 800 passengers between New York and London in six hours.) Of course, the same technology that disseminates democratic ideas and connects families and friends across national boundaries also can facilitate the growth of terrorist networks and speed up global violence. The mere six hours it now takes to go from New York to London is matched in travel efficiency only by the mere minutes it would take if you caught a ride on an intercontinental ballistic missile hurtling through space between New York and Moscow or Beijing.

The fact that the term **interdependence** has become a cliché does not make it any less real. It is not “globaloney.” We are all potentially impacted by what happens in distant corners of the earth, whether the apocalyptic possibilities associated with nuclear proliferation and global warming or more mundane matters of the sort described by Tom Friedman in *The World Is Flat*. Friedman notes that in 2005, roughly 400,000 U.S. tax returns were done in India, compared to only 25,000 two years earlier, and that such outsourcing is likely to be the norm in the future. He adds:

There are currently about 245,000 Indians answering phones from all over the world or dialing out to solicit people for credit cards or cell phone bargains or overdue bills. . . . Sophie Sunder worked for Delta Airline’s lost-baggage department: “Some would ask which country am I from? We are supposed to tell the truth, [so] we tell them India. Some thought it was Indiana, not India. Some did not know where India is. I said it is the country next to Pakistan.”²⁴

In the 2006 *National Geographic* survey, less than half of the Americans polled could find either India or Pakistan on the map (the former, together with China, housing one-third of the human race, and the latter being the second-largest Muslim country in the world and possessing nuclear weapons). They would be even less likely to locate Ghana, the African country whose link to New York City dog owners and other Gotham residents is described below:

If you are found dumping trash in Central Park or letting your dog foul a soft ball field in Queens . . . the hastily scrawled ticket thrust into your hands [by city authorities] is likely to be processed in Ghana. On a three-shift cycle, 24 hours a day in a nondescript office in Accra that is home to the busiest Internet center in West Africa, about 40 employees under contract to a data management firm based in Delaware work busily at their computer station. They get three times the Ghanaian minimum wage to decipher the handwriting on the tickets, search a data base to locate the offender's name, address, the location of the infraction, and the fine, then type in the data and send it back to the United States within 48 hours of the offense.²⁵

"It's the Economy and Foreign Policy, Stupid!"

The Ghana anecdote is a window into globalization that reveals how everyday lives in America and elsewhere are becoming intertwined. For weightier examples than pooper-scooper law enforcement, pick up a copy of any newspaper, the *New York Times*, say, and you will likely find dozens of headlines reporting important stories that have some combination of international and local angles. The *New York Times* of January 29, 2008, covered President George W. Bush's final State of the Union address delivered the day before to the U.S. Congress and the American people. Nearing the end of his second term after almost eight years in office, the president attempted to focus on a few key policy concerns. Whereas his predecessor, Bill Clinton, had won election by emphasizing domestic issues and using the campaign slogan "It's the economy, stupid," George Bush's presidency, along with his last State of the Union speech, seemed preoccupied more with "It's foreign policy, stupid." Although the stupidity or wisdom of Bush's foreign policy decisions is debatable, the growing interrelatedness of domestic and foreign policy is not.

President Bush devoted a great deal of time in his speech to the Iraq War. The United States had invaded Iraq in 2003, claiming that the regime of Saddam Hussein had WMDs and terrorist connections that threatened the United States in the post-9/11 era. Aside from the thousands of military and civilian casualties incurred in Iraq, Washington was spending roughly \$100 billion a year to maintain troops there. This was in addition to an almost \$500 billion annual Department of Defense budget that had contributed to an enormous overall federal government budget deficit

that was making it difficult to fund health care and other social welfare programs. Referring to growing fears of a recession and the need to strengthen the American economy, President Bush mentioned the importance of removing tariffs and other barriers to foreign imports into the United States in the hope that other countries would reciprocate such “free trade” policies. However, many Americans worried not only about a huge trade deficit and the outsourcing of jobs overseas but also the lax regulations on imported goods from China and elsewhere that had resulted in consumers exposing their children to toys with lead-based paints and their dogs and cats to tainted pet food. Bush alluded, also, to the need for the United States to move toward energy security, as reliance on oil not only was costly (hovering around \$100 dollars a barrel at the time, translating to over \$3.00 a gallon at the pump) but also made the country increasingly dependent on supplies from unreliable regimes and unstable regions. He mentioned the immigration problem and the estimated 20 million illegal aliens in the United States, who were part of a growing worldwide problem of mass migration of political and economic refugees. President Bush discussed plans to help support the Millennium Development Goals project that the United Nations had initiated in 2000, which envisioned reducing the number of poor and hungry in the world by half by 2015, along with combating AIDS and other diseases that potentially could spread across borders.

Aside from the coverage of the State of the Union speech, there was much more to read in the *Times* on January 29, 2008, including the daily ritual for many of checking the weather forecast and the stock market report. Regarding the climate, 2007 had just been cited as the second hottest year in recorded history, which many scientists traced to global warming. As for the financial markets, the entire world was somewhat jittery about U.S. economic problems, reflected in the *Times* front-page headline just a week earlier announcing “World Markets Plunge on Fears of U.S. Slowdown.” Just as the Chinese and other economies depended on a strong U.S. market to purchase their exports, Washington was counting on China and other “big emerging markets” to help bail out the American economy by purchasing American-made goods. The American economy was also looking to benefit from an enormous infusion of foreign investment capital, as foreigners were spending hundreds of billions of

dollars buying up American companies, factories, and real estate properties, which on the one hand, according to a U.S. Treasury official, “represented a vote of confidence in the American economy” and helped “keep Americans employed” (with 5 million Americans working for foreign firms in the U.S.). At the same time it “reinvigorated jingoistic worries about foreigners securing control of America’s fortunes.” The possible undermining of American national identity and national security did not concern state governors from Rust Belt states, such as the governor of Michigan, who, lamenting that “we’ve lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs and I’ve got to get jobs for our people,” had just made several trips to Europe and Japan in search of investment.²⁶ By the end of Bush’s presidency, global economic interdependence was brought home more than ever by the financial crisis in the fall of 2008, which started on Wall Street and affected Main Streets worldwide, prompting the headline “Nations Weighing Global Approach As Chaos Spreads” (*New York Times*, October 10, 2008).

How can we comprehend the myriad discrete events that are reported daily in the print and electronic media, along with the larger phenomena that Ikenberry and others are concerned about, and try to fit these into a coherent framework? In other words, how can we become more worldly? Let us begin by defining some key terms.

THE DEFINITION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Let’s start with “international relations,” a seemingly straightforward term that nonetheless has been contested, at times heatedly, among scholars. In the process of defining international relations, we will also define some other core concepts.

Definitional Problems

International relations as a field of study can be traced at least as far back as ancient Greece and Thucydides’ accounts of the Peloponnesian War, although it is generally considered to have arrived as a distinct academic field in the early twentieth century, following World War I. *Webster’s* online dictionary defines **international relations (IR)** as “a branch of political science concerned with relations between nations and primarily with foreign policies.” This sounds like a perfectly reasonable definition,

except that it raises as many questions as it answers. First, although international relations is often equated with international politics, clearly we can see from the previous discussion that the field is multidisciplinary, encompassing economic and other relations as well. While it is true that the field has traditionally focused on matters of war and peace and the issue-area of **international security**, other issue-areas, such as **international political economy**, have attracted increasing attention in recent years. Not only economists but historians, sociologists, psychologists, and even climatologists, agronomists, and many other specialists find themselves involved in the study of international relations.

Second, in an interdependent world, how easy is it, as the dictionary definition suggests, to separate “foreign” policy decisions from “domestic” policy decisions? A growing number of issues seem to be **intermestic** in nature, involving both international and domestic dimensions, such as energy, agriculture, the environment, and economic development. At a time when the United States has to import over half of the oil it consumes, energy is at least as much a foreign policy matter as a domestic policy matter. Likewise, although the United States could be largely self-sufficient in feeding its population, 40 percent of the fruit and 20 percent of the vegetables consumed by Americans are now imported from abroad, while half of the U.S. farm sector depends for its prosperity on exports. Even issues that would seem to fall purely in the foreign policy category, such as arms control, can have major domestic fallout, as when U.S. diplomats negotiating the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (which aimed to eliminate chemical weapon arsenals) had to take into account the concerns of DuPont and other American chemical firms worried about the possibility of UN inspectors engaging in overly intrusive inspections of their plants and stealing industrial secrets.

Third, where do actors such as DuPont and the UN, along with al Qaeda and other such entities, fit in? None of these are “nations.” They are seemingly excluded from the dictionary definition, yet they are not exactly irrelevant to relations between nations. DuPont is one of approximately 50,000 **multinational corporations (MNCs)** in the world—companies with headquarters in one country and subsidiary branches in other countries. Other examples include Shell, British Petroleum, and the giant

multinational oil companies. The United Nations is one of 300 or so **intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)**—international organizations whose members are national governments and that are ordinarily created by a treaty between governments. In addition to the UN, among the more well-known IGOs are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Health Organization. Al Qaeda is one of many **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)**—international organizations whose members are private individuals and groups. Estimates of the total number of NGOs in the world vary from 5,000 to 50,000, depending on the measures used, and include the International Red Cross, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace. All of these are considered **nonstate** actors, in contrast to the roughly 200 **nation-states** (the United States, China, Russia, India, Ghana, and others) that are demarcated by the thick, dark boundaries on a world map and that are normally treated as the chief movers and shakers in international relations. (See world map on inside cover of this book.)

When most people think of international affairs, they think in dictionary terms of interactions between national governments that act on behalf of nation-states. This is understandable, since only national governments can make foreign policy and only they have the legal authority to control interactions across national boundaries, whether involving MNCs, IGOs, or NGOs. Walmart's total revenues may exceed the gross national product of Norway, not to mention Ghana, but it cannot join the United Nations and its CEO does not enjoy diplomatic immunity while traveling abroad. In this book, we, too, will be mainly concerned with relations between national governments. However, we will also look at the role of nonstate actors, as they compete with national governments in shaping world politics. If, as Ikenberry says, international relations is a drama, nation-states may be the lead actors, but nonstate actors are hardly bit players on the world stage.

Some Further Problems: Nations, States, and Nation-States

A **nation-state** is a political unit with relatively well-defined territorial boundaries and a population over which a central government exercises sovereign rule through executive, legislative, and judicial institutions based in its national capital. **Sovereignty** refers to the existence of a single

supreme authority that can claim the exclusive right to rule over that patch of real estate and people and recognizes no higher authority outside those borders (whether it be the United Nations, the pope, or any other body). As noted above, there are some 200 such units in the world, ranging from large states such as China and the United States to smaller, lesser-known ones such as Palau and Nauru. In other words, states are *political-legal* entities that enter into treaties, exchange ambassadors, and engage in other official interactions. No matter how big or small a state is (whether representing over a billion people, as in the case of China, or having fewer than 25,000 inhabitants, as in the case of Palau), its sovereignty gives it formal equality with all other states.

Some further clarification is needed here. In everyday conversation, people tend to use the words “state” and “nation” interchangeably (as does *Webster’s* dictionary). However, technically speaking, they are not exactly synonyms. A **nation** refers to a group of people having a sense of shared historical experience (generally rooted in a common language, ethnicity, or other cultural characteristics) as well as shared destiny. In other words, nations are *social-cultural* entities. A nation may constitute part of a state (e.g., the Tamil constituting a distinct cultural group within the state of Sri Lanka), may be coterminous with the state (e.g., the American people and the United States), or may spill over a number of different states (e.g., the Palestinians living in Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan or the Kurds living in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran). There may be as many as 1,500 nations (nationality groups) in the world.

Some states, such as Japan, are ethnically homogeneous, with over 90 percent of their population being of the same Japanese ethnicity. Other states, such as the United States, have had to work harder at assimilating diverse immigrants (Germans, Italians, Vietnamese, and others) from around the world but have largely succeeded in getting them to identify with state symbols in the form of the country’s flag and anthem. Both Japan and the United States are examples where state and nation are one in the hearts and minds of their citizens—these are nation-states in the truest sense of the term. Although various groups in Japan quarrel vociferously over state political institutions, they nevertheless consider

themselves “Japanese” and do not threaten secession to form a new state; the same is true of the United States.

Many other nation-states are less cohesive. In contrast, the so-called Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka tend not to think of themselves as Sri Lankans; the Palestinians in Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan tend not to consider themselves Israelis, Lebanese, or Jordanian; and the Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran tend not to identify themselves as Iraqis, Turks, or Iranians. In all the latter cases, the states suffer from separatist movements seeking to establish their very own state to house their nation. During the 1990s, the breakup of the Soviet Union (into the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and a dozen other newly independent states), along with the disintegration of Yugoslavia (into Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Macedonia), was due to ethnic fault-lines that fractured existing states; some “successor” states themselves experienced continued internal unrest among minority populations, as with Chechnya in Russia and Kosovo in Serbia. Many states in Africa that came into existence during the decolonialization movement after World War II were artificial creations of colonial mapmakers, whose borders did not correspond to any natural, historical, or cultural groupings; hence, these societies often have been torn by **ethnopolitical conflict**, such as the civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda in the 1990s and the strife between the Kikuyo, Luo, and other tribes in Kenya in 2008. Even rich, long-established states can experience tensions over national identity. In Belgium, ongoing discord between the Dutch-speaking north (Flanders) and the French-speaking south (Wallonia) has led one commentator to call that nation-state “two different nations, an artificial state [created as a buffer between France and other great powers in 1830]” whose people “have nothing in common except a king, chocolate, and beer.”²⁷ An important feature of world politics, then, has been the search by culturally distinct nations for statehood and by polyglot states for nationhood.²⁸

The Essence of International Relations

What are we finally left with as a definition of international relations? The definition that I have chosen to adopt is taken from political science, reflecting my primary concern with IR as the study of the relationships

between the world's governments, including not only their interactions with each other but also with transnational and subnational actors. Thus, for our purposes, international relations and international politics is a distinction without a difference. A classic definition of politics is "the study of who gets what, when, and how."²⁹ It follows that *international politics is the study of who gets what, when, and how in the international arena.*

As the above definition suggests, international politics is a game, a competition. Indeed, many writers have used the game metaphor to capture the essence of what international politics is all about.³⁰ Games typically have rules. What rules generally govern the game of international politics, as opposed to intranational politics? Is politics the same in both venues? No. There is at least one basic, critical difference. International politics plays out in a setting in which there are no central institutions with authority to regulate the players, unlike national politics, where, at least on paper, there are legislatures, courts, and other authoritative bodies that are expected to oversee the contestants. If you think of the world—over 6 billion people—as a single polity, there is, of course, no world government. Perhaps the most striking, fundamental feature of the international political system is precisely its *decentralized* character, with its members organized in some 200 territorially based units—nation-states—that are sovereign. Despite the existence of nonstate actors, the nation-state remains the primary form of political organization and the locus of authority in the world.

The term **anarchy** is often used to describe the international system, referring to the lack of any hierarchy of authority beyond the individual nation-states. World politics conjures up the image of a lawless realm, without any rules whatsoever. The anarchical nature of the international system makes it inherently prone to conflict, frequently involving violence. As we have noted, it is true that many nation-states experience their own problems of internal instability and violence stemming from ethnic and other causes; some, like Somalia, which has seen almost the complete collapse of its central governmental institutions, have been labeled "**failed states.**" Still, such problems seem endemic to the international polity because of the anarchical structure that is the hallmark of the international system.

Even so, it is important to understand that the members of the international community often have found ways to “cooperate under anarchy”³¹ and to achieve a degree of peace and harmony in their affairs. In international relations there is an “ever-present tension between the struggle for power and the struggle for order,” the competition for ever greater national resources moderated by mutual interests in at least a modicum of stability.³² International relations is like a two-sided coin. We usually notice only one side, the struggle for power that involves efforts to maximize **national interests**, at times resulting in war. Less noticed is the other side, the search for order, involving efforts to develop **international law** and **international regimes**—rules—in various problem areas ranging from regulating the flow of air traffic and mail across national boundaries to regulating the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The latest act of aggression makes front-page headlines in the world’s newspapers, but the 500 millionth airline passenger or 6 billionth piece of mail safely and routinely crossing national frontiers (thanks to the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Universal Postal Union) is not covered. There are more treaties and more international organizations than ever, both at the regional and global level, many of which represent ambitious attempts at interstate collaboration and “pooling” of sovereignty. The development of these institutions, primitive as they may be, is a manifestation of humanity’s continual quest for order in a fragmented world of politically independent but economically, socially, and otherwise interdependent units that are being drawn ever closer by technological and other forces.

We have seen here that there is a schizoid, “split personality” quality to the human condition today. First, there is the aforementioned “best of times, worst of times” aspect. Second, related to that, there is the “two-sided coin” of world politics, which in the twenty-first century could produce unparalleled conflict or unparalleled cooperation. Finally, as the backdrop to all this, the traditional “state-centric” concepts that international relationists have used over the years to make sense of IR—nation-states, national interests and national security, sovereignty, citizenship, and the like—remain fundamental to understanding how the world works, yet are becoming increasingly problematical in a world of globalization and multinational corporations, cyberspace, and other

phenomena that are blurring national borders and identities. The American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that “the measure of a first-rate intelligence is to be able to hold two contradictory ideas in your head at once and still function.” That is a real challenge for the contemporary student of international relations! If the main goal of education is to learn to cope with ambiguity, how does that work in the field of IR? To find out, we will examine several alternative theoretical perspectives that political scientists have used to try to make meaning out of the jumble of world politics.

THE PARADIGM DEBATE

Social scientists assume that although each event (e.g., World War I or World War II) is unique, we nevertheless (1) can uncover and describe patterns that include not just that specific case but also other cases that fall into a more general category of similar phenomena (e.g., war) and (2) can explain those patterns. We often refer to this as engaging in *theory*, as developing answers to *why* not only specific events but larger happenings occur. For example, earlier I noted speculation by John Ikenberry and others whether the rise of China today can be understood as having similar characteristics as previous great power transitions and whether there are lessons we can learn from those previous cases that can help the United States and other members of the international community manage such change peaceably. IR specialists debate how best to understand such puzzles in world politics. At the center of these debates is the paradigm debate.

A **paradigm** is essentially a big theory. In most fields of study, the scholarly community tends to share at any given moment a widely accepted, broad theoretical orientation that dominates the field in terms of determining the kind of research questions asked and puzzles investigated. If over time the commonly held worldview becomes increasingly at odds with empirical evidence, then a competing paradigm may emerge that replaces the former as the dominant paradigm in the discipline. For example, for centuries the dominant paradigm in the study of astronomy was the Ptolemaic paradigm, named after the second-century philosopher Ptolemy, who assumed that the earth is the center of the universe. Such

thinking heavily influenced the study of astronomy until the sixteenth century, when Copernicus advanced the notion that the sun is at the center of the solar system and all the planets, including the earth, revolve around it. Although paradigms are of particular importance to scientists, they have relevance to policymakers and laypersons as well. The Copernican revolution in thought not only paved the way for the modern science of astronomy but also fundamentally changed many people's outlook about the universe. Another example would be Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americas in 1492, which altered the conventional wisdom that the earth was flat rather than round. Put simply, paradigms are lenses through which we can see the world—broad frameworks that organize our overall understanding of some set of phenomena we are trying to fathom. They give general direction to our observations, steering our attention toward some things and away from others.³³

As applied to the study of world politics, paradigms help us “tease meaningful patterns” out of “the welter of events, situations, trends, and circumstances that make up international affairs.”³⁴ Three paradigms have vied for the title of dominant paradigm in IR, although they have gone through several permutations and have been challenged by other contenders: (1) the *idealist* paradigm (more commonly called today the *liberal* paradigm), (2) the *realist* paradigm, and (3) the *Marxist* paradigm. I discuss each of these below, along with more recent challengers, such as *constructivism* and *feminism*.

The Idealist (Liberal) Paradigm

The **idealist (liberal) paradigm** stresses the *cooperative* side of the IR coin. It takes a positive, optimistic view of human nature and human progress. Its roots extend as far back as Dante, the fourteenth-century Italian poet who wrote of the universality of man and advocated for the unification of Europe. The idealist tradition also includes Hugo Grotius, the Dutch jurist widely considered the father of international law, whose *On the Laws of War and Peace*, written in 1625 (shortly before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 gave birth to the modern nation-state system), suggested a body of rules that sovereign states might be persuaded to abide by; Emeric Cruce, the French monk and worldly thinker who died in 1648, having dreamed of the creation of a world court, a common meeting place for

states to work out their disputes, and the abolition of armies; Adam Smith, the Scottish author of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, who argued that the increased commercial ties produced by free trade between states would inhibit war making between them; and Immanuel Kant, whose *Perpetual Peace* (1795) envisioned a federation of democratic, pacific states sharing a harmony of interests.³⁵

In the twentieth century the idealist paradigm was most closely associated with Woodrow Wilson and other thinkers who were prominent in the interwar period between the end of World War I in 1918 and the beginning of World War II in 1939, when idealism dominated the study of IR. Idealists argued for a focus on legal-formal aspects of international relations, such as international law and international organizations, and on moral concerns such as democracy and human rights. It was out of the ashes of World War I that, idealists claimed to have learned certain lessons about the dynamics of international relations and what was needed to prevent another major war. They believed a new world order had to be constructed based on a respect for law, the acceptance of shared universal values, and the development of international institutions such as the League of Nations.

Idealism's reign as the dominant paradigm ended with its failure to anticipate and prevent World War II, as idealists were discredited for decades as too utopian in their worldview. However, the idealist school remained active throughout the postwar era, with the term "liberal" becoming a substitute label for the paradigm. By the 1970s and 1980s, the paradigm had regained some credibility, with the growing economic interdependence among states, the growth of the European Union as an almost supranational organization, and the end of the Cold War without a shot being fired. Liberals argued that, rather than viewing international relations simply as a contest between nation-states forever locked in the struggle for power aimed at maximizing their security—which according to critics of the idealist paradigm was a "zero-sum" (win-lose) game not conducive to cooperation—international relations had become more complicated in ways that offered the potential for "positive-sum" (win-win) outcomes. In particular, "complex interdependence" was increasingly entangling states in a web of relationships involving a host of subnational actors (including rival bureaucracies within a national

government and rival domestic interest groups within a national society) and transnational actors (MNCs, NGOs, and the like), with security and nonsecurity issues competing equally for attention. In other words, liberals relaxed the assumption that nation-states were the only actors of importance, that they were unitary, cohesive, “rational” actors whose rationality dictated a single-minded pursuit of power in support of national security, and that conflict and war was the inevitable fate of humanity.³⁶

One variant of liberalism, **neoliberalism**, is especially important today. Neo liberals do not dismiss the continued potential for conflict and violence in international affairs. However, they point out that, even if one accepts a state-centric view of the world, states’ self-interests will lead them often to realize they have a mutual stake in developing international regimes in order to optimize the security and well-being of their citizenry. Because of their emphasis on the need for international institution-building to help manage interdependence, and the opportunities that presents for interstate collaboration, neoliberals such as Robert Keohane and Robert Axelrod (sometimes labeled “neoliberal institutionalists”) are considered in some ways the heirs of the idealist tradition, although they see themselves as improving on the latter by trying to ground their ideas in more rigorous formulation and testing of hypotheses.³⁷