Main Topic: Examine the structure of the international system, anarchy, and its effect on interstate cooperation.

1 Key Terms

- realism
- unipolarity
- anarchy
- commitment problem
- collective action problem
- Pareto inefficient
- bargaining
- security dilemma

2 Key Themes/Ideas

Q. What are the three components of the United Nations?
Answer: The three parts of the United Nations are the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the Secretary-General.

Q. What explains the proliferation of new states?
Answer: New states arose after 1945 as a consequence of decolonization, nationalist politics, and empire fragmentation.

Q. What are the key tenets of realism?
Answer: Realism provides a framework for understanding international politics. It argues states seek security in an anarchic environment; they resolve differences and conflicting interests through bargaining. International institutions reflect the interests of the most powerful.

Q. What conditions exacerbate the security dilemma?
Answer: Jervis argues that the security dilemma is exacerbated by (1) the offense-defense balance between states, i.e. whether it is easier to destroy the other’s army and take territory (offense) or maintain one’s ground (defense) and (2) the ability to distinguish offensive and defensive weapons from each other.

Q. What is anarchy?
Answer: Anarchy means there is no supranational authority with the power and motivation to enforce contracts between states.

Q. What is the effect of anarchy on interstate cooperation?
Answer: Anarchy makes interstate cooperation less likely because there is no way to force states to cooperate when they would prefer to defect.

Q. What are three ways to induce cooperation under the Prisoner’s Dilemma (PD)?
Answer: Three ways to facilitate cooperation under the PD are (1) first-party enforcement including changing the preference ordering of parties involved, (2) second-party enforcement via strategies of reciprocity and repeated interactions, and (3) third-party enforcement by outside parties.
Key Readings

- FLS, Chapter 2, p. 69-79
- Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”

Review Questions

Check your understanding of this week’s material and key ideas with the following questions.

- Who are the different actors and interests involved in the 1911 fur seal treaty? What problems did actors encounter during negotiations and how did they overcome them? Is this an example of a Stag Hunt or a Prisoner’s Dilemma? Why?

- The security dilemma argues that actions taken by one state to increase its security can provoke other states to respond with similar measures. Why can’t a state just tell another state that its actions are benign?

- How does the July Crisis and start of World War I match Jervis’ description of the security dilemma? What does this tell us about the relationship between perception/misperception and international conflict?

- Why do realists argue we exist under an anarchic system if the UN exists?

- Jervis argues that technology and geography influence whether the offense or defense has an advantage in interactions, but this article was written in 1978. Does the security dilemma still apply to the new threats of today? How does the experience of counterinsurgency in Iraq or Afghanistan alter his analysis - if at all?

- FLS discuss a WTO case that Costa Rica brought against the United States, in which the United States complied with the WTO court ruling and allowed import restrictions against Costa Rican-produced underwear to expire. FLS explain that, “Protecting U.S. underwear manufactures was not worth the risk that noncompliance would jeopardize those rule and benefits they bring” (70). Would the outcome have been the same if the case involved protecting U.S. car manufacturers? Are there economic activities that the U.S. might decide is worth the risks of noncompliance? If such an economic activity exists, what does it say about the ability of institutions in general to constrain behavior?

- What does cooperation and defection look like in the real-world? For each of the examples highlighted in FLS (prisoner dilemma, chicken, stag hunt), what is a current event example? Try to diagram who the actors, their strategies, and possible outcomes are. How often do the outcomes of your example match the equilibria (the squares with stars) of these games?