

Basic Concepts of International Relations and International Security

- Power
- Anarchy
- Rationality
- Security Dilemma

My web site

- <http://utminers.utep.edu/crboehmer/>
- This was linked to Political Science until yesterday. A new web site will be linked there sometime in the coming weeks.

Power:

- A central concept in international relations.
- Level of power affects state strategies and outcomes of various contests (military conflicts, economic conflicts, and other negotiations).

- **Power is both built on tangible and intangible attributes.**
- **Power leads to influence. Power helps a country win international contests.**
- **Concept used often by diplomats and other analysts to compare countries.**
- **Power is relative, not absolute. We can only say that the United States is powerful compared to others, for example.**

What are the attributes of Power?

- Military capabilities (troops, technology)
- Size of economy (GDP),
- Sophistication of economy and technology
- Population,
- Geography (few borders, mountains, location)
- Internal cohesion (stability)
- Patriotism
- Natural resources (oil, minerals, food)
- Reputation
- Education, information
- Alliances (sometimes unpredictable).

- Some of these attributes are tangible, such as military capabilities and natural resources, while others are intangible such as patriotism and reputation.

- Thus, sometimes it is difficult ranking states by power.

- For example, why did USA lose the Vietnam war??

What makes some countries *superpowers*?

- **Superpowers are very strong countries that can project their power around the world.**
- **By power projection we mean the ability to deploy troops around the world as well as deliver a full-scale nuclear attack.**

- **Such capabilities require a sophisticated economy and society. Presently, only the United States can be classified as a *superpower*.**

- **The Soviet Union was a superpower until the collapse of its economy and communism (1990), which greatly eroded Russia's ability to field a large army and navy.**

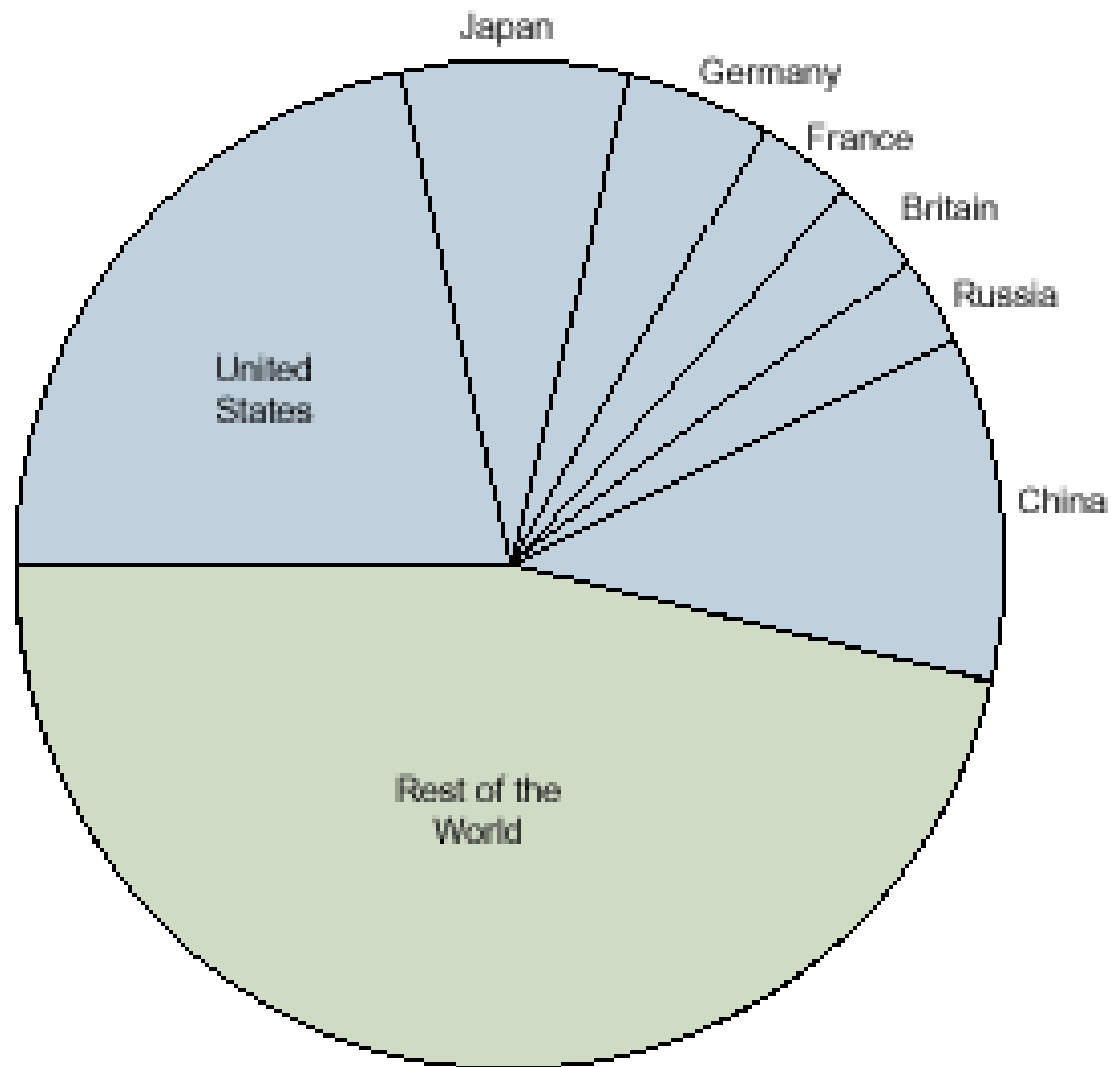


FIGURE 2.1 ■ Great-Power Shares of World GDP, 2000

Anarchy

Is the world is full of conflict because the international system is 'chaotic'?

No. The world is anarchic!

WHAT IS ANARCHY?

Anarchy

- **By anarchy, we mean the lack of a central or higher authority, which characterizes the international system.**
- **There is no legitimate central authority. Unlike domestic systems which are hierarchic, the international system is anarchic.**

Anarchy

- **This does not necessarily mean that the world is chaotic. Of course, for short periods of time chaos has reigned, such as during times of world war.**
- **There is an abundance of peace in the international system – majority of violent political deaths have been civil since WWII.**
- **While there are many disputes and some militarized conflicts, wars are very rare occurrences.**

Implications of Anarchy

- **Fundamentally motivates state behavior forcing competition with no assurance of survival.**
1. **Self-help system: every state is on its own**
 2. **Autarky: Self-sufficiency is a goal.**
 3. **Lack of trust: Easy to lie or cheat.**
 4. **Human Rights Problems: Paradox of Int. Law**
 5. **Collective Action Problems: Cooperation difficult**

- **Only military force and economic statecraft can be used to impose rules on other countries if they refuse to follow them.**
- **By economic statecraft we mean taking measures such as imposing tariffs, cutting off trade altogether through embargoes, freezing assets, etc.**
- **Thus, due to the concept of sovereignty, enforcing international law, norms, or other demands is similar to mob rule or arbitrary coercion.**

Rationality and Decision-making

- Assumption that actors are rational
- Actors must know what is in their best interest
- Actors know how to maximize utility
- Choose ranked options that maximize utility
- In IR, states are often assumed to be *unitary rational* actors

Rational Behavior in an Anarchic World

The Stag Hunt Metaphor

Imagine a primitive band of five hunters hunting a stag (deer), and with primitive technology it takes all the members to work as team for all to eat.

But while hunting a hare runs by that could be captured by a single person but only feeds one of the hunters. As a hunter, what would you do if the hare runs by?

What would be rational?

- **If one believes that another member of the group would defect and chase the hare, then it might as well be you that eats for sure that night.**
- **In an anarchic system, where states do not have the complete confidence that other states will keep their agreements, they must in the end look out for themselves.**
- **Under an anarchic system, a self-help system, being rational means looking toward maximizing the national interest over other concerns.**

Origin of the Security Dilemma

One problem though: By every actor seeking to maximize their own interest, such as security, this threatens other actors.

Security Dilemmas arise when states in the pursuit of security pursue policies that have the effect of making other state's less secure.

Implications:

- 1. Problem of offensive versus defensive weapons**
- 2. Spiraling tensions or arms races**
- 3. Systemic problem of the international system – all states affected**
- 4. May produce fear and conflict where none was there before**

Another metaphor to illustrate this problem is the Prisoner's Dilemma Game.

Imagine you and another person rob a bank but are later arrested but without air-tight evidence. You are placed in separate rooms for interrogation. You are faced with a choice to confess and blame the plan on the other person with the reward of going free or keeping your mouth shut. If you both keep quiet, neither of you may be convicted. If you both confess, you may both get more lenient sentences.

What would you do confess or keep quiet?

TABLE 2.2 ■ Payoff Matrix in India-Pakistan PD Game

		Pakistan	
		Cooperate	Defect
India	Cooperate	(3,3)	(1,4)
	Defect	(4,1)	(2,2)

Note: First number in each group is India's payoff, second is Pakistan's. The number 4 is highest payoff, 1 lowest.

Now think of this situation as the potential for nuclear black mail or the possibility of disarmament.

Would you disarm if you were either India or Pakistan?

Another Recent Example of Security Dilemma: NATO expansion

Nato Expansion

