

Lecture 2
30 September 2010
Copyright: Ronald B. Mitchell, 2010

- I. How do international politics differ from domestic politics?
 - A. **Anarchy** - no government. Governments have monopoly on legitimate use of force in domestic society but no equivalent in international society.
 - B. **Self-help** system: World politics as "struggle for power." Nations in "constant state of war:" not always at war, but threat of war constantly looms. Use of force is considered a legitimate means for settling disputes among nations.
 - C. **Law not enforceable** in international system. Few rules and no enforcement.
 - D. **Weaker sense of community and shared values**, norms, standards of justice, views of authority, goals and aspirations.
- II. Theoretical introduction
 - A. Three levels of causes of war and of most else in international relations (Nye's fire metaphor)
 1. Deep (or ultimate): "logs" – structure of system, anarchy, power of different actors
 2. Intermediate: "kindling" – specific policies, structure of state decision-making
 3. Proximate: "matches" – mistakes, particular actions of individuals, etc.
 - B. Three levels of analysis:
 1. Systemic level: system and structure (anarchy, balance of power, polarity)
 2. State level: qualities of states (democracy/dictatorship, capitalist/communist)
 3. Individual level: Traits and decisions of specific people
 - C. Continuity of conflict in world: Gilpin – "In honesty, one must inquire whether or not twentieth century students of international relations know anything that Thucydides and his fifth-century BC compatriots did not know about the behavior of states" and "ultimately international politics can still be characterized as it was by Thucydides" (Gilpin, 1981, 227-228).
- III. History - Map of ancient Greece.
 - A. ~500 BC, Athens and Sparta ally in war against Persia. Athens becomes expansionist sea-based power; Sparta became isolationist land-based one.
 - B. 465 BC, Athens creates empire and forms Delian League, with member states paying tribute for protection from Persia. Long walls built for land-attack protection. Sparta perceives alliance and wall as threatening. Tribute-paying states seek help from Sparta to rebel.
 - C. 461 BC: First Peloponnesian War breaks out, lasts until 445 BC and treaty signed for 30 year peace.
 - D. 11 years later: civil war in small, unimportant city-state of Epidamnus. Corcyraeans and Corinthians enter fight, which drags in Athenians scared that Corinthians and their Spartan allies would take over Corcyraean navy and threaten Athens. Athens's involvement reinforces existing Spartan fears. Pericles of Athens argues for defense of Corcyra against Corinth because "while it may have been wrong to create an empire, it was even more dangerous and wrong to let empire go." Small initial Athenian efforts to deter Corinth failed and soon the Athenians were deeply involved in a war that had started out as a small civil war in a small peripheral city-state.
 - E. Corinthians incite rebellion in Potidaea, which had historic ties with Corinth but was part of the Delian League. Athens sends troops to put down rebellion. Spartans had promised to Corinthians that this would cause the Spartans to come to Potidaea's aid.
 - F. Spartans debate whether to follow through on promised aid to Corinth and Potidaea. Sparta calls on Athens to pull down wall, but Athens builds higher. Spartans split but finally vote to go to war to ensure that its power did not continue to grow.
 - G. 431 BC, Sparta attacks Athens to balance power. Athenians respond and war ensues for years.
 - H. Melian dialogue: ethics and moral issues during war.
 1. "Might makes right" argument in international affairs. Most quoted lines from Thucydides: Athenians tell Melians - who they are about to attack unless they surrender peaceably - "Right is in question only between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Athenians argue that they are following the general rule: that "of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can."
 2. Melians say they won't submit without a fight. They say that if Athens leaves them alone, they will remain neutral, but if Athens attacks they will fight to death, even though Athens is clearly more powerful. They claim Sparta will help them balance Athenian power. Athenians note that Spartans will follow their interests and not aid Melians: "the Spartans are most conspicuous for believing that

- what they like doing is honorable and what suits their interests is just." The Melians respond that, even if true, they would rather take their chances fighting than roll over and play dead.
3. Athenians attack immediately and within a year force Melians to surrender, kill all the men, enslave all the women and children, and take over island.
- IV. 413 BC: Athens tries to conquer Sicily, including Spartan allies, and fails. Defeat splits Athenian opinion regarding whether to continue war. Athenian power declines and in 404 BC, the Athenians forced to pull down their walls and lose dominant position in Greek system.
- V. Lessons from Peloponnesian War
- A. Summary
 1. Sparta and Athens had already seen devastation of first Peloponnesian War
 2. They had a treaty.
 3. Neither side wanted war, but they ended up going to war anyway. Eventually, Athens lost its power and eventually had to submit to Sparta's demands.
 4. So, why did the war occur?
 - B. What caused the war between Sparta and Athens? Generate alternative hypotheses.
 1. DEEP CAUSES. Thucydides argues war was inevitable, was caused by "the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta." (Book I, Ch. 23).
 - a) Was it inevitable? Could Athens have chosen otherwise? Athenians saw war as necessary to defend their empire: go to war or lose empire, and chose former.
 - b) Why did Athenian power threaten Sparta? Athenians built wall for defensive purposes but Spartans saw it as offensive. Melian dialogues show that Athen's was a threatening power.
 - c) Security Dilemma: cycle of insecurity - one state increase its security, but by definition decreases security of other states who attempt to increase their security and thereby threaten the first state.
 - d) Eventually, both Sparta and Athens saw war as inevitable: each believed that if they did not act promptly, other side would gain a power advantage that would threaten its own survival. The belief that war was inevitable was a deep and major cause of the war.
 - e) Anarchy: With no higher government to protect them from threats by others, each side had to protect its own interests. Anarchy (lack of government) above the interacting states, left them no recourse but to protect themselves.
 2. Intermediate and Proximate causes: Even if structure made war very likely, strong argument can be made that policy decisions on all sides converted "manageable stresses" to war. Pericles speech, Athenian policy of requiring tribute, Spartan and Athenian involvement in small war in Epidamnus and Potidaea are proximate causes of war. These actions provided sparks that set wood on fire.
 - a) What if Athenians had not constructed defensive walls? What if Epidamnus had not revolted or Corinth and Corcyra had not gotten involved? Was Athens too rigid in increasing taxes on other states and barring them from trading, reacting to uprising in Potidaea? Could Spartans have decided not to go to war? Each decision could have been different. Their would have been other prices paid but maybe these would have been less than those of war.
 - b) Misperceptions and misjudgment also play important roles and can often lead to war. Corinth misread whether Athens would help Corcyraeans.
 - c) What if women had withheld sex, as suggested by Aristophanes in the play Lysistrata? Would that have made a difference? How so?
 - C. Lessons about the structure of international relations
 1. Outlines of Peloponnesian War visible in many modern wars. Parallels to Cold War, Arab-Israel conflict, Persian Gulf War of 1991, and Bosnia. But also differences, since none of these conflicts are likely to turn out exactly the same way as the Peloponnesian War did.
 2. Power: States tend to see increasing power of other states, especially increasing military power, as threatening their power and, more importantly, their survival.
 3. Self-help: States can only rely on themselves for survival. While we root for the Melians as they try up to ruthless Athenian oppressors, the bottom-line is that after a few minor victories, they lost everything they had. Might may not mean right, but it often means survival.
 4. Lack of trust: Because national survival is at stake, states usually will not trust good intentions and good behavior of others. Lack of trust leads to providing for own security, but this threatens others.
 5. Balancing: "Secondary states, if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side; for it is the stronger side that threatens them. On the weaker side, they are both more appreciated and safer"

(Waltz, 1979, 127). In Peloponnesian War, lesser city states saw Athens as tyrant and Sparta as liberator. Weak do not always accept their fate, despite overwhelming odds.

VI. Power

A. Two meanings of power:

1. Control of resources: Resources provide potential to wield influence over others.
 - a) Military capability - quantity and quality.
 - b) Economic strength.
 - c) Other tangible resources: population, territory, geographical position, natural resources.
 - d) Information
 - e) Government efficiency, political system and leadership
 - f) Intangible resources: political ideology, national morale, national leadership.
2. Influence over outcomes: Ability of one nation to make another nation do things they would not otherwise do.
 - a) Power is always **relational** - "Power over whom?" Cannot determine whether a state has power except by comparison to another state.
 - b) Power is always **situational** - "Power to do what?" E.g., Brazil's control over rainforest. Brazil has the power to get US to forgive foreign debt because the US population values rainforest.

B. Processes by which states convert power as resources into power as influence

1. Persuasion and diplomacy: try to change what actor thinks is in its best interests.
2. Positive rewards - carrots
3. Punishment and sanctions - sticks
4. Foreclosing options
5. Think about different uses of different types of resources: Coercive resources, Attractive resources, Go-it-alone resources

C. Paradox of unrealized power:

1. In most cases, states that are "powerful" in first sense (i.e., have more resources) are also "powerful" in second sense (i.e., have more influence over outcomes). One study of 30 wars showed 21 were won by the country with the larger military force. "God is always on the side with the larger army."
2. But "powerful" states (many resources) often fail to get their way against less powerful states. Why do weaker states sometimes win in conflicts with stronger states? Why do states sometimes fail to convert power as resources into power as influence? Six reasons:
 - a) Weak states have friends: Melos and Sparta; Vietnam and China; Kuwait and Iraq.
 - b) Loss-of-strength gradient: distance weakens strength on the battlefield.
 - c) Resolve: Power as influence requires will to use power as resources. Large state have more resources, but willing to apply only small fraction. Small state may have more at stake.
 - d) Non-fungibility and relevance of power resources: Who is influencing whom about what: relational and situational aspects of power again. Military power works to seize and hold territory, but not to create loyal workers and economic wealth. One type of power may not be relevant to desired goal. Japan's economic power can influence our economy but not our legal and political systems; needs military force for that. Our nuclear weapons have not helped us reduce trade deficit with Japan. OPEC had power over U.S. economy.
 - e) Prestige and reputation: Perceived power may be less or more than actual resources controlled. China, Latin America, Iraq, Russia today.
 - f) Skill of use: Sufficient resources to accomplish a task and applying them so that actually accomplish it are not always the same thing.

VII. Intro to realism and its alternatives: What are underlying theories of why war happens in three readings?

A. Liberal theories of IR: Cooperation among Iroquois article

1. Argument and evidence that war is not inevitable even if conflict is
2. What caused cooperation among Iroquois?
 - a) Crawford argues that reality is complex, not simple
 - b) Well-operating regime: 300 years of peace despite prior problems of war (counterfactuals)
 - c) Nations involved were democracies – different than realism – domestic institutions matter
 - d) Issue of institutional choice by the Iroquois
3. Cross-cultural comparison: variation in factor that may cause war - "Being European causes War"?

B. Feminist theories of IR: Lysistrata play

1. What's the underlying notion of why there is war in this play?

2. Aggressive nature of men. Values of people differ, based on gender
3. Women not holding positions of power
- C. Constructivism and the role of ideas as additional alternative. Core argument is that IDEAS MATTER.
 1. Reformation suggested the idea that there was a sphere of influence that the church did not have authority over and that government had the right to control that, more material, sphere of life
 2. Other ideas that shape what IR looks like such as:
 - a) Liberal orthodoxy that free trade is good rather than bad for economic growth has produced the EU, NAFTA, etc. – compare to mercantilist views of prior eras
 - b) Democracy as an idea
 - c) Human rights as an idea, including the changing of that idea to include rights of women, rights of children, economic and social rights. French response to Moussaoui trial
 - d) Environmental concern

VIII. Conclusions

- A. Different approaches and explanations of international relations and the causes of war
 1. Realist – seeking of power, fear, capabilities rather than intentions
 2. Liberal institutionalist – obstacles to cooperation that can be overcome under certain conditions and with a whole lot of work; war is not inevitable
 3. Feminist – aggressive nature of men; lack of women in power; underlying values
 4. Constructivism – the power of ideas.
- B. Power and its different meanings.
- C. Deep, intermediate, and proximate causes of war. Be aware of both when we talk about what CAUSED a war. Both the international structure and human decisions about foreign policy do matter. Structure of an anarchic international system assures there will be conflict, and often makes it likely that there will be war, but war occurs only if people decide to go to war. The Melians could have avoided war by surrendering, but they did not. Accidents and misperceptions make war likely, but it requires conscious human action to produce war.