

## PART I

# Reintegrating the Subdisciplines of International and Comparative Politics

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Long before academic disciplines and subdisciplines emerged, the great writers on politics understood well how the fields of knowledge that we call international relations and comparative politics informed each other. The Greeks did not make a distinction between the two. Indeed, Thucydides, often regarded as the first great analyst of international relations, is centrally concerned with domestic politics. He considers how Athens' direct democracy encouraged quick and ill-considered decisions for war, and how failures in war, in turn, undermined that democracy. Although he does not offer contemporary-style generalizations about the international behavior of different regime types, his narrative is devoted to the details of leadership and debates on decision making. His famous statement, "What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta" (Thucydides 1972:I:23), is ambiguous. As a Greek of his day, Thucydides might well have believed in inevitability. But was it an avoidable fear that made the Peloponnesian War inevitable, or did the fear inevitably follow from the growth of Athenian power? If Thucydides means the latter, his reputation as a realist is fully deserved. His extraordinary concern with the effect of democratic politics, however, suggests something more complex.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the second-image reversed is evident in Aristotle's premier text of comparative politics: *The Politics*. Aristotle sees oligarchies as derived from warriors and is well aware of the role of external intervention and defeat or victory in war in inducing constitutional change. One could go on with similar concerns in most of the canon, notably in Machiavelli's and Rousseau's writings. Hobbes was actually a theorist of the state, and *Leviathan* would likely fall into the contemporary box of comparative politics; application of his theories to international relations is essentially a twentieth-century phenomenon. Of course, Kant's theory provides an elaborate structure of interactions among domestic systems, wars, and alliances.

Despite the rich precedent established by the great writers in politics, the study of international relations remains a distinct focus of analysis in that the security dilemma of self-help in a system of sovereign states conditions any effort to import propositions from comparative politics, which recognizes within most states a greater role for the monopolization of legitimate violence than characterizes the international system. In the shift of late twentieth-century enthusiasm away from

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<sup>1</sup>Doyle (1997:Ch. 1) contends that Thucydides does not regard the full chain as inevitable but regarded both individuals and domestic structure as intervening. Kagan (1969:chapter 20) argues strongly that Thucydides does intend the full chain of inevitability, but that he was mistaken in doing so: that the war "was not caused by impersonal forces," but "by men who made bad decisions in difficult circumstances," and that neither "the circumstances nor the decisions were inevitable" (Kagan 1969:356). Woodruff (1993:xxx–xxxii) reads Thucydides as saying that the Athenians were engaged in "elaborate self-deceptions" about inevitability or necessity.

classical realism (for example, Morgenthau 1949) to Waltz's (1979) neorealism, domestic politics was relegated to a minor role (more than in Waltz 1959), with cruder variants characterizing states as bumping billiard balls of identical internal composition. Some noted works of comparative politics, in turn, regard the evolution of national governments as largely path-dependent from previous domestic experience, with little role for peaceful influences from abroad.<sup>2</sup> Yet on both sides of the international relations (IR)/comparative divide, intellectual developments of the past decade have poked great holes in the boundary dividing the subfields and led to a wide exchange of ideas and movement away from excessive parsimony in both views. Neither can still be passed off as a bounded subdiscipline.

Increasingly, we regard states' behavior in the international system as deriving from a combination of constraints and incentives that are both endogenous and exogenous to the state. Interest has shifted away from such pure IR systemic measures of power as bipolarity and multipolarity. This trend, of course, reflects the passing of Cold War bipolarity, but it also reflects the widespread empirical experience that it is unrewarding to look for consistent patterns of conflict intensity that are affected in any regular or simple way by the systemic distribution of power. The emergence of possible unipolarity in the present system has kept systemic models alive but without much historical referent from which to make persuasive empirical statements.

A promising theoretical turn over the past decade has been from systemic or purely state-level influences to dyadic behavior, and more recently to directed dyads (which state does what). This turn makes it very clear that relative power matters—and matters a great deal. Other inducements or constraints also matter, however. It seems to make a great difference—both for the avoidance of violence and for active cooperation in international economic institutions (Mansfield, Milner, and Rosendorff 2002)—how the state is internally constructed and how each state with which it is interacting is so constructed. So far the major payoff from this turn seems to come from the distinction between autocracies and democracies, but further research is likely to extend and refine that payoff with finer theoretically informed distinctions.

Robert Putnam's (1988) early bridge of two-level games has been followed by much game theoretic work on strategic interactions. This work demonstrates that leaders' policy preferences often vary according to whether their domestic political institutions force them to satisfy a broad coalition of supporters or a narrower set of those who can keep them in power or eject them from it. Importantly, this perspective applies both to international behavior and to the relative pursuit of private and public goods domestically with consequent effects on economic growth (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003). Diversionary wars are alleged to arise from the efforts of leaders whose grip on power is at risk because of domestic dissatisfaction or conflict, and, in turn, that possibility may affect the willingness of their external adversaries to provide a pretext for conflict initiation (Smith 1996).

Not only does the type of domestic regime matter systematically, so too do transnational commercial ties and ties attributable to common membership in international organizations. Indeed, all these so-called liberal variables make a difference, as do such realist variables as power and perhaps alliances (Russett and Oneal 2001). Economic ties matter because they enhance the political role of groups with interests at stake in maintaining peaceful relations with other countries in general, and with particular other countries. Not only can these groups exert greater influence at home, but they can also become players in the political system

<sup>2</sup>This is true even of Huntington (1991:270–279), who famously crosses the IR/comparative boundary. His list of six conditions favoring the consolidation of new democracies identifies only one that is external.

of their country's trading partners. International organizations also matter because they strengthen the role of nonstate actors in domestic politics as well as creating common interests between certain governmental institutions in both countries. International organizations also make a systematic contribution to successful transitions to democracy and to the consolidation of newly democratic regimes (Pevehouse 2002; and note Kant's idea of a mutually supporting confederation of republics). Democracies are more likely to cooperate with one another. Both transitions to democracy and the stability of new democracies are strongly affected by processes of international diffusion, especially from neighbors (Gleditsch 2002; Starr and Lindborg 2003). All these illustrate processes of IR/comparative feedback.

Another example of the connection between international relations and comparative politics is the role of international institutions in promoting economic development. Not long ago it was common to ask simply whether aid from, for example, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, was correlated with subsequent economic growth in recipients of that aid. But doing so ignored problems that in retrospect seem obvious: the international institutions, to enhance their own credibility, have an interest in aiding states that have the prerequisites for growth, and governments more committed to growth may be more likely to seek external assistance. Therefore, an apparent correlation between aid and growth may be spurious—the consequence of selection effects that may reflect the character of domestic regimes and their interest in growth (perhaps at the expense of economic equality). When selection effects are taken into account, the relation between aid and economic conditions turns out to be much less beneficial than might otherwise have been thought (Vreeland 2002). This kind of work fundamentally cuts across the comparative/IR boundary in terms of theory, institutions, variables, methods, and data.

Further evidence of the artificiality of boundaries between comparative politics and international relations shows up in the emerging literature on civil wars. Civil wars violate the standard comparative politics characterization of the state as a monopolist with respect to the instruments of violence; sometimes the breakdown of this monopoly approximates the anarchy of the international system, even in that system's more violent phases. Moreover, in such circumstances the state's legal boundaries break down. Defining what constitutes national territory is part of the process of building identity for a national state, and it can promote or reduce conflict with nearby states. Partly for this reason, civil wars often have serious contagion effects, drawing in neighbors and often lengthening the war (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2001). Just as regime type matters to the likelihood of international conflict, the lack of democracy is likely to exacerbate ethnic conflicts because out-of-power minorities have little leverage to redress their grievances (Gurr 2000). Civil wars may be least likely to occur in democratic states, and most likely in states that are weakly authoritarian—not democratic, but not dictatorial enough to be able to repress internal conflict effectively (Hegre et al. 2001). Stable and institutionalized settlements of civil wars are most likely to arise from political reform, elections, and democratization. And—to complete the IR/comparative loop—a civil peace is more likely to stick if the peace agreement is bolstered by a multidimensional and multilateral peace-building operation that goes beyond military intervention and provides economic reconstruction and reform of political institutions (Doyle and Sambanis 2000).

An explosion of accessible and increasingly refined data, breakthroughs in statistical analysis, the shock of changes in the world, and major theoretical improvements have combined synergistically to offer a greater possibility for big advances in understanding comparative politics and international relations than ever before. Comparative politics scholars created many of the data sets now used in international relations research, including all the measures of domestic regime type. The Correlates of War Project, for instance, never showed any interest in

compiling that information. Both subfields have had to address similar specification problems for pooled data sets varying across time and space and for the management of selection effects. One cannot even begin to explain the end of the Cold War without understanding changes in both the international distribution of power and institutional crises within the formerly Communist countries, and without constructing new theoretical models that combine those influences.

All these advances cannot be merely linear within each subdiscipline; they must be integrating as well, as each subdiscipline enriches the other. Just as feedback loops exist between domestic and international politics in the world, feedback loops exist between the scholars who try to understand them.

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