

# Analyzing National Security Policy-Making Given Our Theories of Int'l Relations

How Nat'l Security Functions in a  
Complex Adaptive System of IR

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# Lecture Outline

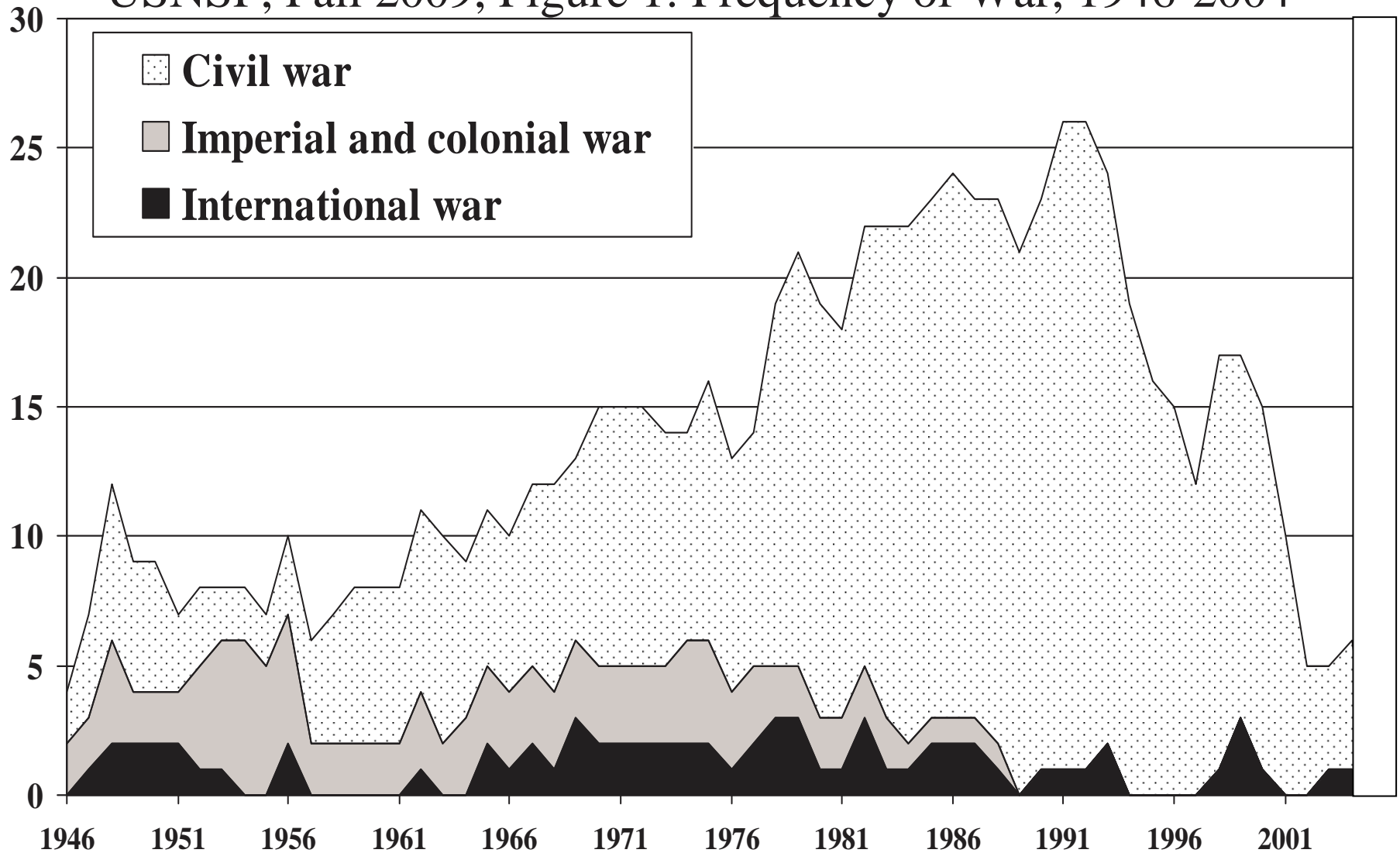
**Problem:** Statecraft treats “cooperation” as desired outcome but what does “realism” say or predict about “cooperation?”

**Proposition:** Treat cooperation as system input variable

**Logic:**

- Challenges
  - Security Issues
  - Alternative International Relations (IR) Views
  - Sovereignty
  - Nation-Building as a Tool
- Complex Adaptive Systems Among Nation-States
- Complex Adaptive Political System
- Global initiatives demonstrating “cooperation” as system input variable – examples?
  - START; SALT; SORT;
  - Proliferation Security Initiative;
  - Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism
  
- What Conclusions Can We Draw Here About the Nature of Conflict & its Changes? How have changes in conflict affected our Nat'l Security response(s)?

USNSP, Fall 2009, Figure 1: Frequency of War, 1946-2004



The data are for “wars,” violent armed conflicts which result in at least 1000 battle deaths over the duration of the dispute for international wars, an average of at least 1000 battle deaths per year for imperial and colonial wars, and at least 1000 military and civilian battle-related deaths per year for civil wars.

Source: Kristian S. Gleditsch, ‘A Revised List of Wars Between and Within Independent States, 1861-2002’, *International Interactions*, 30 (2004), pp. 231-62, plus additional correspondence with Gleditsch; & Mueller.

# Concepts to Consider

- Policy Arenas of Nat'l Security Statecraft
- Policy Cycles Model of the Same
  - Agenda setting
  - Problem Framing
  - Implementation
  - Evaluation
- Realist Model
  - Rational Actor Model

\*What are the impacts here on changes in conflict?

# Policy Arenas of Nat'l Security

- **High Policy**

- Fundamental Decisions about Interests, Threats, & Responses
- Should we develop a national missile defense system?
- How much should we spend?

- **Middle Policy**

- Turning decisions into actions
- What would be the most effective NMD configuration?
- How should the program be managed? Who decides or runs the program?

- **Low Policy**

- Which competing interceptor design is best?
- What are the deployed operational characteristics of the system?
- Technical details of actions & operability?

# Policy Cycles Model

- **Heuristic**
  - Focus analytic attention
- **Nested cycles**
  - Policy moves down through arenas of action
    - Implementation



# Agenda Setting – Conflict is it “*Rational?*”

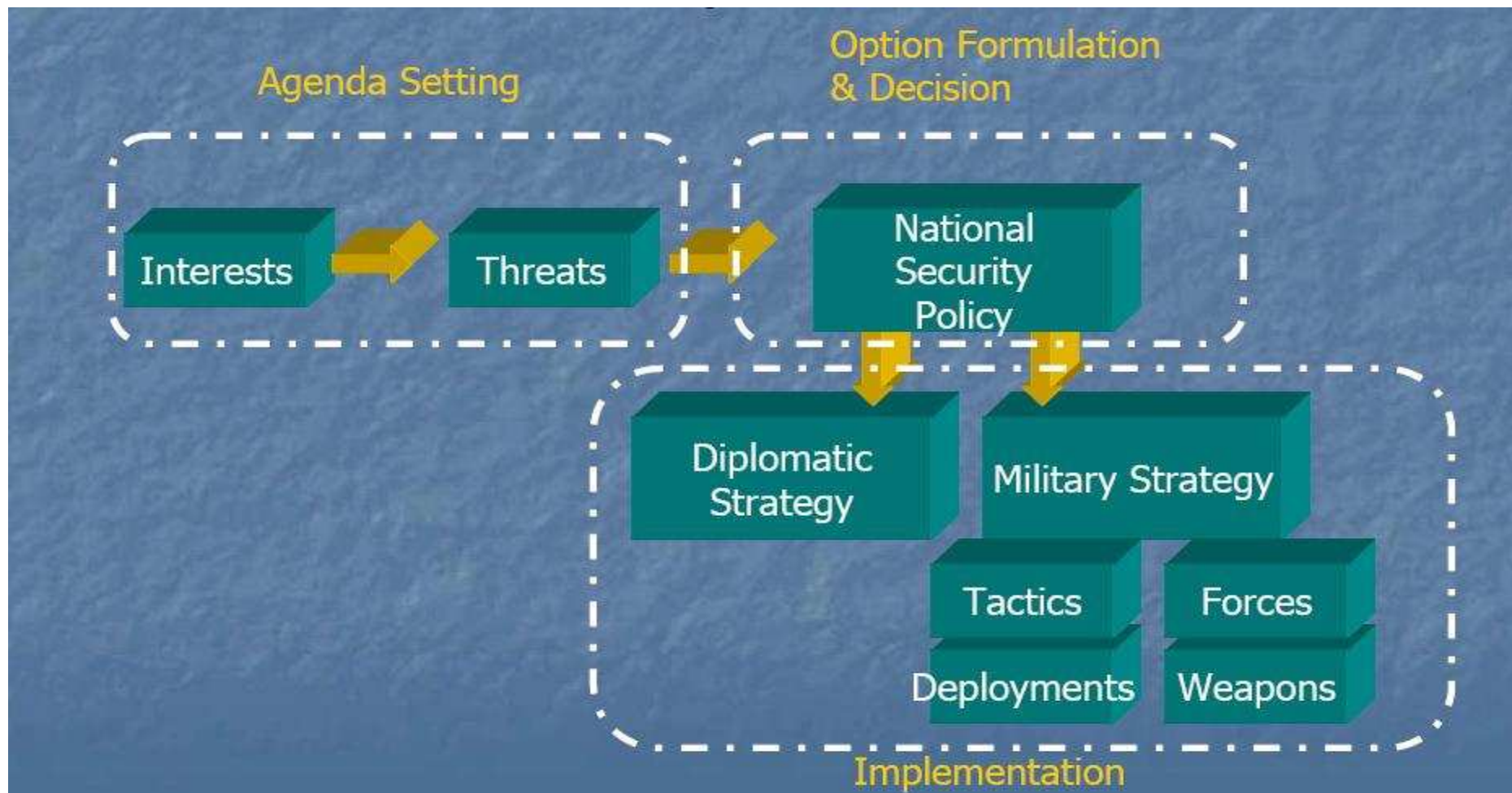
- What should the government “worry about?”
  - Controls subsequent stages in the policy cycle
- Problem Framing – Changes with conflict?
  - How should the government characterize the national issue?
    - What is the causal story that drives the need for policy?
- Terrorism Example
  - Is terrorism a surrogate for stated-based actions?
    - E.g., Iraq, Iran, Libya
  - Is it caused by poverty and desperation?
  - Is it caused by legitimate political-economic complaints against U.S. policies?
  - Is it caused by charismatic religious zealots?
    - Is terrorism rational & goal based?

# Recall the Realist Model of IR

- “State” as the focal and unitary actor
  - Actions can be understood without reference to domestic politics ,leadership, etc.
  - States have interests that transcend domestic politics and leadership change
    - Broad orientation of foreign and defense policies are invariant
    - Interests are fixed by geo-political-economic situation & state “character”
- Decisions are based on strategic analysis of interests, threats, resources, etc.
  - Cost-Benefit Analysis
  - Maximizing preferences
- *Requires the least amount of information to “predict” behavior*
- “Short-cuts vs. Encyclopedias”



# Implications for How We Analyze National Security Decisions



# Summary Questions to This Point

- How do national security issues get on the government's agenda in the realist model?
  - Where do policy options come from?
  - How are decisions made?
  - What do we assume about implementation?
  - What comes from evaluation of policies?
- 
- Let's step back for a moment & look more closely at realism, rationality, & changes ( $\Delta$ ) in conflict.

# Realist and Neorealist Theories of War

Two important characteristics of the international system for this theory:

- Anarchy; and
- Sovereignty

# Assumptions of Realism – Key Slide!

- 1) The state is the primary actor in IR.
- 2) States pursue their own self-interest, seeking to increase their power.
- 3) States behave rationally.
- 4) The international system is anarchic.
- 5) The behavior of states is governed by the power relationships between them.

\*\* So what is the role of changes in conflict here?

# Further Realist Ideas

- States are concerned with relative, not absolute gains.
- Security dilemma creates fear, which leads to arms racing and alliance formation.

# Realist Theories

- Balance of Power theory (e.g. Morgenthau): The international system is most stable when the power distribution among the major powers is equal.
- Hegemonic Stability Theory (e.g. Gilpin): The international system is most stable when there is one dominant power, or *hegemon* who is clearly the strongest military and economic power in the world.
- Neorealist Theory (Waltz)
- Offensive Realism (Mearsheimer, 2001)

# Neorealist Theory

- Waltz accepts realist assumptions 1, 3-5 above
- States pursue power to *survive* (internally or externally)
- Variations in the characteristics of states cannot fully account for war
- Emphasis on the structure of the international system—a systemic focus

# The Structure of the International System

- 1) Organizing principle (anarchy)
  - 2) Functional differentiation among units (none)
  - 3) Distribution of capabilities across states in the system (bipolar or multipolar)
- Role of competition and socialization / norms / mores?



# Conclusions of Neorealism

- Because states seek to survive, balances of power automatically form.
- Bipolar balances are more peaceful than multipolar balances.
- “Balancing,” not “bandwagoning,” is the behavior induced by the international system.

# Offensive Realism

- Mearsheimer (2001) distinguishes between defensive and offensive realism.
- Defensive realism (e.g. Waltz): Structure pushes states to obtain enough power to survive
- Offensive realism: Great Powers strive to become the hegemon
- States may emulate successful aggression & they prize military innovation.

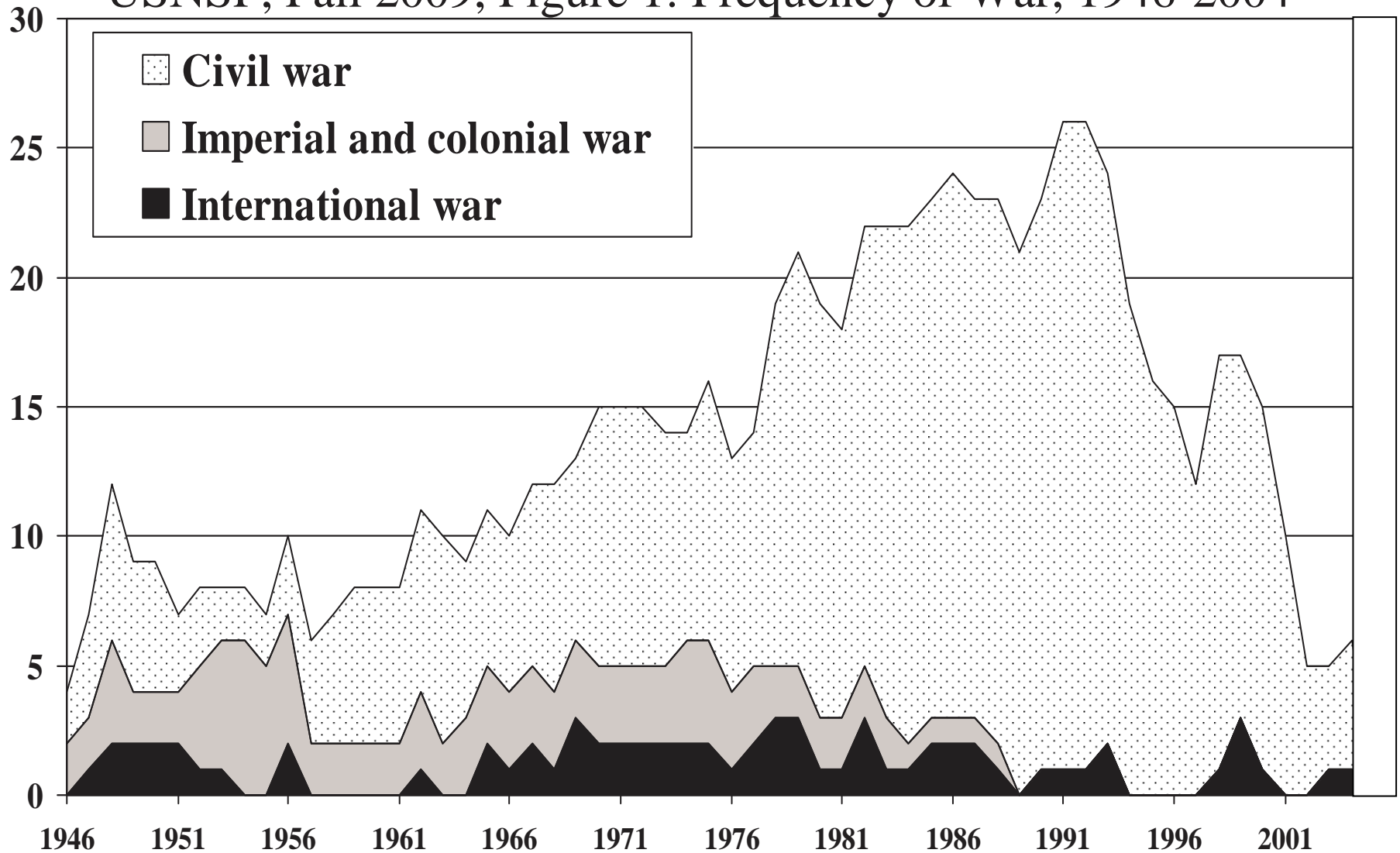
# Offensive Realism

- Hegemonic aspirations are impeded by difficulty of projecting power across oceans.
- Armies are key for military strength because they are necessary for capturing and controlling territory.
- Strategies for survival are balancing & buck-passing.
- Unbalanced multipolar systems (with a potential hegemon) are the most dangerous.

# Critiques So Far For Us

- Is there any functional differentiation among states (e.g. democracy versus autocracy)?
- What about unipolar or hegemonic systems?
- What produces changes from one polar structure to another?
- Is anarchy what states make of it?
- Why do so few states “die” in the system?
- How do non-state actors & nation-states deal with each other in this environment?

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