

## **PS35: Introduction to International Relations**

### **Questions for Discussion**

**October 8-10**

#### **Oct. 8:**

Bruce Russett excludes several cases of possible democratic/democratic war (e.g. the 1948 war between Israel and Lebanon) for a variety of different reasons. In their piece, Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa argue that, though the reasons some scholars (Russett, for example), discount such wars may indeed be perfectly valid, excluding some cases/wars on specific grounds while not doing the same to other, similar cases within the entire the COW data-set introduces selection bias. What is your view on this? Should cases of Democracy-Democracy war(s) be included in our analyses even in the event that reasonable reasons for excluding them exist? On the other hand, should we be able to manipulate or data-sample in ad hoc ways that may affect the significance of our findings?

Compare and contrast the analyses of Bruce Russett and Henry Farber & Joanne Gowa on the democratic peace. In giving your answer, focus on the theoretical claims the authors make and the empirical evidence they provide. What is your position concerning this debate?

Farber and Gowa note that in “the onset of the Cold War precipitated strong common interests among a relatively large number of democratic states.” Is this a mere coincidence, or can we conclude something from this finding? Do you think that the Farber and Gowa thesis holds after 1991?

Bruce Russett gives a Normative/Cultural and a Structural/Institutional explanation. Which one do you think is a better explanation? How would you go about testing which of the two theses is correct? Emphasize specifically how you would operationalize the explanatory variables put forward by the two explanations.

**Oct 9:**

Hobbes argues that the reason we need (sometimes repressive) government is that, in its absence, life would be nasty, short, and brutish--that we would exist in a war of all against all. This speaks very directly to the (destructive) nature of Man (or Woman) in nature. On the other hand, other scholars have opined that it is, in fact, repressive and exploitative governments, having wrested Man from his peaceful state of nature, that are responsible for the discord and disharmony in our lives. If only government could be none away with and Man restored to his natural state, we should all enjoy (more) peace and tranquility.

In light of the counter-claim, evaluate Hobbes's characterization of the state of nature. Do you find his negative appraisal of human nature justified? Evaluate his argument on both theoretical and empirical terms.

Are the ideas of Thomas Hobbes still relevant to understanding current international political processes and events? Do you believe it is possible to speak of an international society today?

Does Hobbes' argument for anarchy rest on the notion that 'the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself'? (p.183) If so, to what extent can his analysis of the 'the state of nature' be applied to the current state system in which there is one state, the U.S., which is much more powerful than the rest.

Which do you think is a better description of the international system today: Hobbes's anarchical "state of nature" or Grotians' system of "family of nations" (Refer to Bull, especially pp. 732). Explain why?

**Oct. 10:**

Much (but not all) of Robert Jervis's hypothesis lies in the existence of the offense-defense balance. However, there are two forms of this hypothesis: A strong one, wherein material factors favor the offense or defense (for example machine guns and barbed wire in WWI), and a weak one, wherein leaders may BELIEVE that either one or the other is predominant, but, because of the idiosyncratic ways in which weapons may be used, there is never a material advantage to

either one (for example, the stalemate on the Western Front in WWI was broken by the same weapons that created it--only the tactics with which they were employed had changed). Do you see more evidence for either the strong or weak argument (or some combination thereof)? What are the theoretical implications of each?

Does the offense or defense have the advantage nowadays, and what are the implications of such advantage for cooperation under the current system? According to Jervis, what can states do to ameliorate the security dilemma? Assess the likely effectiveness of the strategies he suggests. (focus on p.180-183)

Does the 'offense-defense' balance as Jervis describes it apply to the international system as a whole, or only to relations between pairs of states. If the former, how are we to know what this balance is? (For example, is it the aggregate of all the various different offense-defense balances between all states? Between major powers only?) If the latter, what use is the concept in producing theories about the international system?

Compare the Cold War and Post-Cold War eras in terms of "the Security Dilemma" Jervis discusses in his article. Are there differences between strategies states pursue to defend themselves in the two eras? Explain why or why not.

Security Dilemma is mostly a military concept. Discuss how introducing economic relationships/interdependencies would/would not change the application of this concept in international relations.