



# A CENTURY OF CRISIS AND CONFLICT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Theory and Evidence:  
Intellectual Odyssey II

**MICHAEL BRECHER**



*A Century of Crisis and Conflict  
in the International System*

Michael Brecher

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and Conflict  
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Theory and Evidence: Intellectual Odyssey III

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## Multiple Paths to Knowledge

### INTERNATIONAL CRISIS BEHAVIOR (ICB) PROJECT: OVERVIEW

#### *Origins*

The past 4 decades have been a period of intense research concentration on *international crises*, that is, international political earthquakes, and *interstate conflicts*. From the outset it was apparent that the ICB project would become an ambitious, demanding, and rewarding exploration, in depth and breadth, of a large segment of the IR field: it encompassed the study of interstate military-security crises and protracted conflicts on a scale that, as the project unfolded, seemed awesome: *time*—the twentieth century since the end of World War I, November 1918, into the first 15 years of the twenty-first century (ICB dataset, Version 12); *geographic scope*—all states in the global system during that near-century; and *content*—from the *eruption* of crises, their *escalation*, *de-escalation* through attempts at successful *crisis management*, to the *outcome* and *consequences* of all international and foreign policy crises for all states. That project is now 42 years old but is still flourishing, measured by the number of scholars and students engaged in ICB research and the flow of publications, books, and articles. The origins of this project were closely linked to earlier periods and topics of my research. After more than two decades on a select number of crises and conflicts in two volatile regions—from the India/Pakistan conflict over Kashmir (1947)

to the Arab/Israel October-Yom Kippur crisis-war (1973–1974)—the time seemed ripe to launch an inquiry into crises, conflicts, and wars in the world at large over an extended period of time. The result was my initiation of the ICB project in 1975.

Its aims were ambitious. One was to generate *comprehensive datasets on foreign policy and international crises* in the twentieth century, for none existed at the time, unlike the closely related phenomenon of war. The other was *to frame and test a unified model of international crisis and crisis behavior*. Both proved to be demanding tasks on a vast scale.

The few persons consulted, in 1974–1975, before taking the plunge, were skeptical, particularly of the ambitious scope of the project, which, they cautioned, could take decades; it did, with the end not yet in sight. Perhaps they were right; they certainly proved to be correct about the time frame. Their views were considered, with great care; but in the end, declined, and the saga began. (The evolution of this project, its publications, and major findings thus far, will be presented later in this book.)

### *Colleagues, Coders and Advisers*

Since 1977, *Jonathan Wilkenfeld* has been my closest ICB colleague during what has become a very long-term research phase. Jonathan and I differ in many respects: educational background (McGill-Yale and Maryland-Indiana); research skills and methodological dispositions (*qualitative, case study* and *quantitative, aggregate data analysis*); an age difference, 17 years; physical distance—we lived on two continents and in three countries, Canada/Israel and the U.S. during virtually the entire history of the ICB Project, and most of it was before the coming of e-mail, and temperament. We learned a great deal from each other, with mutual respect. This cooperative endeavor facilitated a *multi-method study of crises and conflicts in world politics*. Our close collaboration—and our friendship—continues undiminished and unimpaired after 40 years!

In the early 1980s, we were joined by *Patrick James*, a very talented former Ph. D student of Jon Wilkenfeld, who has made major contributions to the concepts, models, and methods of the ICB project and has become a high-profile, accomplished IR scholar, serving as President of the International Studies Association (ISA) and Peace Science Society in 2018–2019.

The ICB project also benefited from a vibrant and stimulating group of colleagues and graduate students in three universities in three

states—McGill, University of Maryland, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It also had the good fortune of attracting many eager and committed research assistants in the seemingly endless task of creating reliable datasets of international crises, foreign policy crises, and protracted conflicts: for the initial, longest research period, 1929–1979—it took more than a decade, 1975–1987—*Hemda Ben Yehuda, Gerald Bichunski, Diana Brecher, Ofra Einav, Robert Einav, Alex Forma, Etel Goldmann/Solingen, Sharon Greenblatt, Rutie Moser, Hanan Naveh, Arie Ofri, Lily Polliak, Mordechai Raz, Michel Reichman, André Rosenthal, Joel Schleicher, Bruce Slawitsky, and Sarah Vertzberger* (in Jerusalem); and *Mark Boyer, Doreen Duffy, Steve Hill, Patrick James, Cindy Kite, Maureen Latimer, Eileen Long* (in Maryland); for the period, 1980–1985, *Joel Schleicher* (in Jerusalem), *Brigid Starkey and Alice Schott* (in Maryland); for the periods, 1918–1928 and 1985–1994, *Tod Hoffman, Eric Laferriere, Michelle Lebrun, Mark Peranson, and Michael Vasko* (at McGill); and *Ronit Lupu, Iris Margulies, Meirav Mishali, Noam Shultz, and Sarah Vertzberger* (in Jerusalem), and, from 1995–2015, *Kyle Beardsley, David M. Quinn, and Pelin Erlap* (at Maryland).

Many scholars gave generously of their time and knowledge as regional specialists, with many benefits to the ICB project: *Douglas Anglin, Naomi Hazan, and Saadia Touval* (on Africa); *Alexander de Barros, Thomas Bruneau, Nelson Kasfir, Jorge Dominguez, and Edy Kaufman* (on the Americas); *Ehud Harari, Ellis Joffe, Paul Kattenburg, Guy Pauker, Leo Rose, Martin Rudner, Yaakov Vertzberger, and George T.C. Yu* (on Asia); *Luigi Bonanate, Karen Dawisha, Galia Golan, Kjell Goldmann, Amnon Sella, and Robert Vogel* (on Europe); and *Richard H. Dekmejian, Alan Dowty, Benjamin Geist, Jacob Landau, and Yaakov Shimoni* (on the Middle East).

### *Rationale and Methods*

Like other scholars immersed in IR research, the senior ICB scholars have a longstanding policy interest, that is, a wish and hope that our findings on crisis, conflict, and war, especially on how decision-makers behave under (often escalating) stress, might make a contribution in the quest for a more tranquil world, through advice on conflict resolution and even on war prevention. We had no illusions that the contribution would be decisive. But we did—and do—place a high value on trying to ‘bridge the gap’ between academe and the decision-makers’ world.

The ICB approach to the systematic study of crisis, conflict, and war derived from a deep commitment to *pluralism* in the quest for knowledge, that is, to *complementary*, not *competing methodologies*: this commitment to pluralism is not confined to the issue of *qualitative vs. quantitative methods*. It includes recognition of the merit of both *deductive* and *inductive* approaches to *theory-building*. And it extends to a focus on both *large N* and *small N datasets*: ICB has produced—and utilized—both types in its multifaceted inquiry.

ICB began with a *single-state foreign policy crisis decision-making model* and a set of research questions. This model and the questions were designed to direct case studies of decision-making using a common framework and therefore to facilitate generalizations about behavior under the stress of crisis. A series of in-depth studies of individual interstate crises was launched—and nine volumes have been published since 1979; these volumes are set out below.

Within 2 years (1977) and with Jonathan Wilkenfeld's invaluable input, ICB moved to a second, parallel track, namely, *studies in breadth* of a large number of crises to complement the *in-depth case studies*. Each of these paths posed different questions. One dataset was appropriate to the *system or interactor (macro) level of analysis*, the other to the *unit or actor (micro) level of analysis*. One cluster of questions was designed to generate comparable data on the *four phases* of an international crisis—*onset, escalation, de-escalation, and impact*. The data were used to test hypotheses on the conditions most likely to lead to the *eruption* of a crisis, its *escalation* to peak hostility, often with violence at the eruption and/or escalation stage(s), the 'winding down' process leading to *termination*, and its *consequences*. The second cluster focused on the *behavior of decision-makers* at different levels of stress in the *pre-crisis, crisis, end-crisis, and post-crisis periods* of a state's *foreign policy crisis*.

During the past 42 years, we pursued both paths simultaneously, viewing them as complementary, not competitive sources of *findings on international and foreign policy crises* and on *interstate protracted conflicts*. *Path I, 29 qualitative case studies*, ranges from *Ethiopia's decisions in the 1935–1936 Ethiopia/Italy crisis and war* and the *U.K. decisions in the Munich Crisis of 1938 to Iraq and U.S. decisions in the Gulf Crisis and War of 1990–1991* and the *North Korea (DPRK) and U.S. decisions during several crises in the North Korean Nuclear protracted conflict since 1993* ('vertical' research). *Path II* has taken the form of *quantitative*

*aggregate data analysis of 476 international crises and 1052 foreign policy crises since the end of World War I ('horizontal' research).*

### *Objectives*

ICB research on international crises before, during, and after the Cold War focused on *five objectives*. One was to develop the concept of *international crisis as an international political earthquake* and to present a comparison of such earthquakes since the end of World War I: along many attributes such as *trigger, triggering entity, duration, number of decisions, decision-makers, their attitudinal prism, and values*; and along many dimensions such as *geography-region, time, system structure, conflict setting, bloc alignment, peace-war setting, violence, military power, economic development, and political regime*.

A second, closely related aim was to create and apply concepts, indicators, indexes, and scales designed to measure the severity (intensity) and impact (consequences) of international crises viewed as international political earthquakes. These are based on the premise that such precise measurement is scientifically possible.

A third goal was to bring closure to the persistent debate on which international structure is the *most*—and the *least*—stable, that is, the least—and the most—disruptive of the global international system—*bipolarity, multipolarity, bipolarity, and unipolarity [or unipolarity]*. The rationale for this debate and research question is that international stability is—or should be—a high value for all states and nations/peoples in an epoch characterized by *weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)*, the *persistence of anarchy* despite the proliferation of international and transnational regimes, the *increase of ethnic and civil wars*, and the growing preoccupation with *worldwide terrorism*. All these sources of turmoil enhance the *normative value* of stability. Thus illuminating the *polarity–stability nexus* has important long-term implications for foreign policy and national security decision-makers and the attentive publics of all states.

A fourth objective has been to extend and deepen our knowledge of *coping/crisis management* by in-depth case studies, focusing on how decision-makers coped with the peak stress crisis period during diverse political earthquakes (crises) in each *structural era* of the past near-century: *multipolarity* (mid-November 1918 [end of World War I]–early September 1945 [end of WWII]), *bipolarity* (early September 1945–end 1962 [termination of the Cuban Missile crisis]), *bipolarity*

(beginning 1963–end 1989 [end of the Cold War]), and *unipolycentrism* (beginning 1990–ongoing).

The *final aim* has been to provide a novel *test of the validity of neo-Realism*. The discovery of no or minor differences in the *patterns of crisis* and *crisis behavior* during the four structural eras would indicate strong support for the neo-Realist contention that structure shapes world politics, as well as the foreign policy-security behavior of states, its principal actors. However, the presence of substantive differences in the patterns of crisis and crisis behavior during the four structural eras since the end of WW I would seriously undermine the claim of neo-Realism to be the optimal paradigm for world politics throughout history and in the decades ahead. Taken together, the general objective of the ICB inquiry since 1975 has been to enrich and deepen our knowledge of *international crisis* and *interstate conflict* in the twentieth century and beyond.

#### *Formative Publications (1977–1980)*

The late 1970s was also a period of several ICB-related publications which became guides to the Project's research program, especially its theoretical framework and its in-depth case studies: two Brecher journal articles, "Toward a Theory of International Crisis Behavior," in the International Studies Quarterly (1977) and "State Behavior in International Crisis: A Model," in the Journal of Conflict Resolution (1979). The following year, the first ICB in-depth case study volume was published, Brecher with Geist, *Decisions in Crisis: Israel, 1967 and 1973*. This book, as noted, served as the conceptual and methodological model for the seven other ICB case study volumes (analyzing 15 crises) that were published from 1980 to 1994, as well as for the 14 unpublished graduate student case studies of foreign policy crises.

#### *Case Studies—Qualitative Analysis*

All ICB case studies applied the *foreign policy crisis model*, initially presented as journal articles in 1977 and 1979, as noted above. The ICB case study volumes are as follows:

\*Brecher with Benjamin Geist, *Decisions in Crisis: Israel 1967 and 1973* (1980).

Dawisha, Adeed I., *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (1980).



- \*Shlaim, Avi, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948–1949* (1983).
- \*Dawisha, Karen, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (1984).
- \*Dowty, Alan, *Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision-Making in 1958, 1970, and 1973* (1984).
- \*Jukes, Geoffrey, *Hitler's Stalingrad Decisions* (1985).
- \*Hoffmann, Stephen: *India and the China Crisis* (1990), and Anglin, Douglas G., *Zambian Crisis Behavior: Confronting Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965–1966* (1994).

[\*These six books were published from 1980 to 1990 by the University of California Press in a series, *Studies in Crisis Behavior*, edited by Brecher.]

The case study volumes and the unpublished crisis studies generated comparable findings which provided a valuable database for testing hypotheses on state behavior in crises. The published ICB books and other in-depth case studies analyzed 15 foreign policy crises of individual states. Fourteen other crises have been researched by my graduate students. These 29 crises served as the empirical basis for Part B (“Qualitative Analysis”) in Brecher, *International Political Earthquakes* (2008); the findings from that inquiry are presented later in this book.

### *Datasets and Aggregate Analysis*

A dozen years, 1975–1987, were devoted to data gathering (coding) and analysis of crises and conflicts from 1929 to 1979, the initial time frame of the ICB Project: it was a collective research enterprise whose success owed much to the devoted coding of our research assistants, under the direction of Brecher and Wilkenfeld. Given the complexity of the Project, it took 2 years to complete the process of publication. In 1988, the first two volumes of a three-volume work, *Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, were published as *Handbook of International Crises* (Brecher and Wilkenfeld) and *Handbook of Foreign Policy Crises* (Wilkenfeld and Brecher). The next year, the third volume containing analytic papers on this dataset appeared as *Crisis, Conflict and Instability* (Brecher and Wilkenfeld).

Almost a decade later (1997), a substantially revised and significantly enlarged aggregate dataset and analysis segment of the project appeared, *A Study of Crisis* (Brecher and Wilkenfeld). It presented the updated dataset at both the system-level and actor-level of analysis and an array of

findings on crisis, conflict, and war from late 1918 to the end of 1994. [Important findings from that book are presented later in this book.]

### MILLENNIAL REFLECTIONS ON CRISIS AND CONFLICT

In 1999–2000, as President of the International Studies Association, I confronted the task of conceiving and organizing the theme panels for the annual conference. In meeting this challenge I had the invaluable collaboration of my talented Program Chair for ISA 2000, Frank Harvey, a McGill Ph. D (1993) and, at the time, Professor of Political Science at Dalhousie University and Director of its Center for Foreign Policy Studies. The imminent millennial change seemed an auspicious time to reflect on the state of International Studies (IS).

To accomplish this task, a large number of prominent contributors to IS were invited to prepare papers for the envisaged eight clusters of panels on the main theme of the conference in 2000—**Millennial Reflections on International Studies**. The panelists represented all branches of International Studies and included scholars from many universities in Australia, Canada, Europe, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

#### *Advocates and Critics*

The first cluster comprised six papers by proponents, critics, and a revisionist of **Realism**, the dominant paradigm in International Relations during the state-centric Westphalia era, 1648–1990:

*John J. Mearsheimer* (University of Chicago).

*Joseph M. Grieco* (Duke University and Catholic University of Milan).

*John A. Vasquez* (Vanderbilt University, later, University of Illinois).

*Kalevi J. Holsti* (University of British Columbia).

*Manus I. Midlarsky* (Rutgers University).

*Patrick James* (University of Missouri, later, University of Southern California).

The second cluster of reflections on IR paradigms comprised four papers on **Institutionalism**:

*David A. Lake* (University of California, San Diego).

*Robert O. Keohane* (Duke University, later, Princeton University).

*Joseph S. Nye Jr.* (Harvard University).  
*Oran Young* (Dartmouth College).

A diverse group of **Alternative and Critical** perspectives on International Studies was represented in the third cluster:

*Steve Smith* (University of Wales, later, Essex University) [**Overview**]  
*Robert W. Cox* (York University, Toronto) [**Critical Theory**]  
*Michael Cox* (Editor, *Review of International Studies*, later, University of Wales) [**Radical Theory**]  
*Ernst B. Haas* (University of California, Berkeley) and *Peter M. Haas* (University of Massachusetts at Amherst) [**Constructivism**]  
*Yosef Lapid* (New Mexico State University) [**Post-Modernism**]  
*R.B.J. Walker* (Keele University, later, University of Victoria) [**Post-Modernism**]  
*James N. Rosenau* (George Washington University) [**System Change**]

There were six papers on **Feminist and Gender** perspectives on International Studies:

*L.H.M. Ling* (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague).  
*V. Spike Peterson* (University of Arizona).  
*Jan Jindy Pettman* (Australian National University).  
*Christine Sylvester* (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague).  
*J. Ann Tickner* (University of Southern California).  
*Marysia Zalewski* (Queen's University of Belfast).

Reflections on **Methodology** in International Studies comprised nine papers:

Four were on **Formal Modeling**:

*Michael Nicholson* (Sussex University).  
*Harvey Starr* (University of South Carolina).  
*Bruce Bueno de Mesquita* (Hoover Institution/Stanford and New York University).  
*Steven J. Brams* (New York University).

Three papers focused on **Quantitative Methods**:

*Dina A. Zinnes* (University of Illinois).  
*James Lee Ray* (Vanderbilt University).

*Russell J. Leng* (Middlebury College).

Two papers discussed **Qualitative (Case Study) Methods**:

*Jack S. Levy* (Rutgers University).

*Zeev Maoz* (Tel Aviv University, later, University of California, Davis).

The cluster of millennial reflections on **Foreign Policy Analysis** comprised papers by four authors:

*Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger* (Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

*Stephen G. Walker* (Arizona State University).

*Ole R. Holsti* (Duke University).

*Jonathan Wilkenfeld* (University of Maryland).

There were five papers on **International Security, Peace, and War**:

*Edward A. Kolodziej* (University of Illinois).

*Davis B. Bobrow* (University of Pittsburgh).

*J. David Singer* (University of Michigan).

*Linda B. Miller* (Wellesley College).

Three papers focused on **International Political Economy**:

*Helen Milner* (Columbia University, later, Princeton University).

*Robert T. Kudrle* (University of Minnesota).

*Lisa L. Martin* (Harvard University).

(The participants are listed above in the sequence with which their papers appeared in Brecher and Harvey (Eds.), Millennial Reflections on International Studies, 2002.)

Although some esteemed colleagues were unable to accept the invitation, the group of 44 participants was a veritable ‘blue ribbon commission’ of the International Studies field; it included 13 former presidents of the International Studies Association (ISA).

### *Rationale*

The essence of the Millennial Reflections Project is evident in the Introductory Statement by the editors of the volume that contained all the Reflections papers.

“When one of the editors was introduced to International Relations (IR)/World Politics at Yale in 1946 the field comprised international politics, international law and organization, international economics, international (diplomatic) history, and a regional specialization. The hegemonic paradigm was Realism, as expressed in the work of E.H. Carr, W.T.R. Fox, Hans J. Morgenthau, Nicholas Spykman, Arnold Wolfers and others. The unquestioned focus of attention was interstate war and peace.”

“By the time the other editor was initiated into International Relations at McGill in the mid-late 1980s the pre-eminent paradigm was neo-Realism. However, there were several competing claimants to the ‘true path’: institutional theory, cognitive psychology, and postmodernism; and by the time he received his doctoral degree, other competitors had emerged, notably, critical theory, constructivism, and feminism.”

“The consequence, at the dawn of the new millennium, was a vigorous, still-inconclusive debate about the optimal path to knowledge about International Studies (IS), most clearly expressed in competing views: that it is a discipline—International Relations {IR} or World Politics—like economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history; or that it is a multidisciplinary field of study, the ‘big tent’ conception held by the premier academic organization, the International Studies Association (ISA). It was in this context that the Millennial Reflections Project was conceived.”

The origin and rationale of the conference idea may be found in the central theme of my presidential address to the ISA conference in Washington in February 1999: “International Studies in the Twentieth Century and Beyond: Flawed Dichotomies, Synthesis, Cumulation” (*International Studies Quarterly*, 1999). Whether a discipline or a multidisciplinary ‘big tent’ *mélange*, International Studies has developed over the last half-century with diverse philosophical underpinnings, frameworks of analysis, methodologies, and foci of attention. This diversity is evident in the papers that were presented at the panels at the Los Angeles conference and revised for this state-of-the-art collection of essays at the dawn of the new millennium.

### *Diversity in International Studies*

In an attempt to capture the range, diversity, and complexity of International Studies, we decided to organize the 44 ‘think-piece’ essays into eight clusters. The mainstream paradigms of **Realism** and **Institutionalism** constitute the first two concentrations. The others were

Critical perspectives (including **Critical Theory**, **Post-Modernism**, **Constructivism**, and **Feminism** and **Gender** perspectives); **Methodology** (including quantitative, formal modeling, and qualitative [case studies]); **Foreign Policy** analysis; **International Security, Peace, and War**; and **International Political Economy**.

The *raison d'être* of the Millennial Reflections Project was set out in the Theme Statement of the conference, titled "Reflection, Integration, and Cumulation: International Studies, Past and Future." First, new debates, perspectives the number and size of subfields and sections have grown steadily since the founding of the International Studies Association in 1959. This diversity, while enriching, has made increasingly difficult the crucial task of identifying intra-subfield, let alone inter-subfield, consensus about important theoretical and empirical insights. Aside from focusing on a cluster of shared research questions related, for example, to globalization, gender and international relations, critical theory, political economy, international institutions, global development, democracy and peace, foreign and security policy, and so on, there are still few clear signs of cumulation.

If, we declared, the maturity of an academic discipline is based not only on its capacity to expand but also on its capacity to select, the lack of agreement *within* these research communities is particularly disquieting. Realists, for instance, cannot fully agree on their paradigm's core assumptions, central postulates, or the lessons learned from empirical research. Similarly, Feminist epistemologies encompass an array of research programs and findings that are not easily grouped into a common set of beliefs, theories, or conclusions. If those who share common interests and perspectives have difficulty agreeing on what they have accomplished to date or do not concern themselves with the question of what has been achieved so far, how can they establish clear targets to facilitate creative dialogue across these diverse perspectives and subfields?

With this in mind, the objective was to challenge proponents of specific paradigms, theories, approaches, and substantive issue-areas to confront their own limitations by engaging in self-critical reflection within epistemologies and perspectives. The objective was to stimulate debates about successes and failures but to do so by avoiding the tendency to define accomplishments with reference to the failures and weaknesses of other perspectives.

It is important to note that our call to assess the 'state of the art' in International Studies was not meant as a reaffirmation of the standard

proposition that a rigorous process of theoretical cumulation is both possible and necessary. Not all perspectives and subfields of IS are directed to cumulation in this sense. Some participants found the use of such words as *synthesis* and *progress* suspect, declaring in their original papers that they could not address, or were not prepared to address, these social science-type questions. We nevertheless encouraged these individuals to define what they considered to be fair measures of success and failure in regard to their subfield, and we asked them to assess the extent to which core objectives (whatever they may be) have or have not been met, and why.

Our intention was not to tie individuals to a particular set of methodological tenets, standards, assumptions, or constraints. We simply wanted to encourage self-reflective discussion and debate about significant achievements and failures. Even where critiques of mainstream theory and methodology are part of a subfield's *raison d'être*, the lack of consensus is still apparent and relevant.

As a community of scholars, we are rarely challenged to address the larger question of *success* and *progress* (however one chooses to define these terms), perhaps because there is so little agreement on the methods and standards we should use to identify and integrate important observations, arguments, and findings.

To prevent intellectual diversity descending into intellectual anarchy, we set out 'guidelines' for the contributors in the form of six theme questions or tasks. The panelists were requested to address one or more of these themes in their essays.

1. Engage in self-critical, state-of-the-art reflection on accomplishments and failures, especially since the creation of the ISA more than 40 years ago.
2. Assess where we stand on unresolved debates and why we have failed to resolve them.
3. Evaluate the intra-subfield standards we should use to assess the significance of theoretical insights.
4. Explore ways to achieve fruitful synthesis of approaches, both in terms of core research questions and appropriate methodologies.
5. Address the broader question of progress in international studies.
6. Select an agenda of topics and research questions that should guide your subfield during the coming decades.

The result was an array of thought-provoking ‘think pieces’ that indicate shortcomings as well as achievements and specify the unfinished business of IS as a scholarly field in the next decade or more, with wide-ranging policy implications in the shared quest for world order.

### *Assessment of the Field*

The essence of each paper in the eight clusters was summarized in the introductory chapter of the Brecher-Harvey edited book. At the end of the volume, the editors presented findings on the six theme questions about International Studies: paradigms, methodologies, and the three broad substantive research areas namely foreign policy analysis; international security, peace, and war; and international political economy. They concluded with five general observations about **progress**, more accurately the **lack of progress**, in International Studies.

“First, new debates, perspectives, theories, and approaches are proliferating much faster than old debates are being resolved—indeed, few if any of the ‘old’ debates have ever been resolved. To the extent that consensus exists at all, it usually emerges in the context of narrowly-defined research programs encompassing small communities of scholars who focus on less significant issues.”

“Second, if we haven’t yet achieved closure on key theoretical and methodological debates, we never will; a symposium in 1972 arrived at the same conclusion.”

“Third, for those who remain convinced that constructive dialogue and consensus is still possible, our most discouraging observation is that there are no solutions.”

“Fourth, self-critical reflection does not come easily to most scholars.

Finally, in response to the advice of one of the elders in the field, James Rosenau, ‘we need to acknowledge our own limitations and alert those we train to the necessity of breaking with past assumptions and finding new ways of understanding and probing the enormous challenges....,’ we declared that these assertions beg crucial questions. What precisely do we tell our graduate students to keep or discard. What is the ‘real world’ and how should it be studied? The debate continues.” (681–684)

*Millennial Reflections on International Studies* (2002) [Eds. Brecher and Frank P. Harvey]



## INTELLECTUAL ODYSSEY: PHASES, THEMES, CONCEPTS

*Phases*

The first of my three long-term research Phases (1950–1969) focused on the **politics, international relations, and modern history of South Asia, mostly India.**

The second Phase (1960–1980) concentrated on articulated **perceptions of the Arab/Israel Conflict by political leaders, officials and intellectuals** from Egypt and Israel, and their **behavior** in a complex protracted conflict.

The third, on-going Phase, which began in 1975, has been devoted to the quest for theory, aggregate data, and case studies of **international crises and protracted conflicts.**

The three phases, as noted early in this book, were linked intellectually but the areas of study and the duration of each phase were not neatly pre-arranged. They emerged in response to changing stimuli and varying concerns over time about *sources of turmoil* in the global system. This conception of research phases provided a framework for an assessment of (a) **political leaders**, notably those who profoundly shaped the political evolution of newly independent states in two regions, South Asia and the Middle East, specifically, India and Israel, since their Independence; (b) the **Arab/Israel Conflict**; and (c) the **theory and practice of interstate crises and protracted conflicts** in the near-century since the end of World War I.

*Themes**Political Leadership and Charisma (Odyssey I)*

This theme explored a selection of the literature on *political leadership* and some notable *political leaders* in Canada, the U.K., India, and Israel from 1944 to 1978: Trudeau (Canada); Attlee and Mountbatten (the U.K.); Nehru and Krishna Menon, along with many less visible but highly influential Indian politicians in those years, including Lal Bahadur Shastri and Morarji Desai, two other prime ministers in the post-Nehru era (India); and Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Eshkol, and Meir, the first four prime ministers of Israel, along with the prominent second-generation figures, Allon, Dayan, Eban, and Peres. This theme and the findings

were the focus of attention in the first of three books that, together, traversed my intellectual odyssey since 1950: **Political Leadership and Charisma: Nehru, Ben Gurion, and Other Twentieth-Century Political Leaders** (2016).

### *Arab/Israel Conflict (Odyssey II)*

The second theme centered on *perceptions* of a complex unresolved conflict by eight prominent political leaders of Israel during the first three decades of independence (1948–1977) and by Egyptian officials and intellectuals during the decade of Sadat’s presidency in the 1970s, before his epochal visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the Egypt–Israel peace agreement in 1979. There were also explorations of crucial decisions by Israel, with profound consequences: *to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel* in December 1949; *to accept German reparations in 1952*; *to launch a pre-emptive strike against Egypt* in October 1956 and *against Egypt and Syria in June 1967*; *not to launch an interceptive war in October 1973*, and *the Egypt–Israel peace process, 1977–1979, culminating in a formal peace agreement in 1979*. The findings from many years of research on this in-depth conflict were presented in my **Dynamics of the Arab/Israel Conflict** (2017).

### *Interstate Crises and Conflicts (Odyssey III)*

This theme focuses on *international and foreign policy crises*—their *onset phase/pre-crisis period*, *escalation phase/crisis period*, *de-escalation phase/end-crisis period*, and *impact phase/post-crisis period*, for all independent states in the global system since the end of World War I, along with 33 *interstate protracted conflicts*—by states, major powers and international institutions, from late 1918 to 2017. This phase includes the major findings from in-depth case studies of *decisions*, *decision-makers*, and *the decision process by principal adversaries in 29 foreign policy crises and 11 protracted conflicts* from all polarity structures, geographic regions, types of political régime, levels of power, and levels of economic development.’

### *Concepts*

The quest for theory, insights, and findings on the three main themes was guided by ten concepts in the field of **International Relations–World Politics–International Studies (IR–WP–IS)**.

**Concept 1 Subordinate State System**, an intermediate level of analysis between the **dominant subsystem** (interactions among the major powers of the global system) and a **state**. A subordinate system requires six conditions:

1. Its *scope* is delimited, with primary emphasis on a *geographic region*.
2. It comprises *at least three state actors*,
3. Together, they are objectively acknowledged by other state actors and international organizations as constituting a *distinctive community, region, or segment of the global system*.
4. The *members* of the subsystem *identify themselves* as such.
5. The *level of power* among subsystem members is *relatively inferior to that of states in the dominant system*, using a sliding scale of power in both.
6. *Changes in the dominant system have greater effects on the subordinate system than the reverse*.

This concept of a subordinate state system grew out of extensive research on South Asian international relations, in particular, the India–Pakistan conflict since the late 1940s (Brecher 1963).

[Three scholars presented somewhat different definitions of a subordinate system and a focus on three other regions: Binder (1958 Middle East), Modelski (1961 South East Asia), and Hodgkin (1961 West Africa)].

**Concept 2: Foreign Policy System** This concept, which took the form of a *pre-theory of foreign policy*, was developed in the mid-late 1960s and was first published as “A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behavior,” in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1969, and was elaborated in my book *The Foreign Policy System of Israel* (1972).

The research design was based on a simple proposition: the *concept of system is no less valid in foreign policy analysis than in the study of domestic politics*. Like all systems of action, a foreign policy system comprises an

*environment* or setting, a group of *actors*, *structures* through which they initiate *decisions* and respond to challenges, and *processes* which sustain or alter the flow of demands and products of the system as a whole.

Underlying this research design is the view that the *operational environment*, reality, affects the results or *outcomes of decisions* directly but influences the *choice among policy options*, that is, the *decisions* themselves, only as they are filtered through the *images* [*perceptions*] of decision-makers. Thus, the *link* between *perceptions* and *decisions* is the *master key to a valuable framework of foreign policy analysis*.

This relationship of the two environments—*operational* and *psychological*—also provides a technique for measuring ‘success’ in foreign policy decisions. To the extent that decision-makers perceive the operational environment accurately, their foreign policy acts may be said to be rooted in *reality* and are thus more likely to be ‘successful.’ To the extent that their images are inaccurate, policy choices will be ‘unsuccessful’; that is, there will be a gap between elite-defined objectives and policy outcomes.

The *boundaries* of a foreign policy system are vertical, that is, they *encompass all inputs and outputs that affect decisions*, whose content and scope lie essentially in the realm of International Relations, World Politics. As such, the boundaries fluctuate from one *issue* to another. It is necessary, therefore, to explore the content and interrelations of these key variables—*environment*, *actors*, *structures*, *decisions*, *processes* and *issues*—all placed within a framework of demands on policy or *inputs*, and products of policy or *outputs*.

A foreign policy system may thus be likened to a flow into and out of a network of structures or institutions that perform certain functions and thereby produce decisions. These, in turn, feed back into the system as inputs in a continuous flow of demands on policy, the policy process, and the products of policy. All foreign policy systems, then, comprise a set of components which can be classified into three general categories, *inputs*, *process*, and *outputs*, a concept of the political system pioneered by David Easton in a *World Politics* article (1957). All data regarding foreign policy can be classified into one of these categories.

**Concept 3: International System** Two questions about *international system* were posed in 1980 by a prominent IR scholar, Dina Zinnes: (1) ‘how do we know one when we see one’ and (2) ‘what distinguishes one from another’? A new definition of international system, that

provides answers to these questions, was presented in a 1984 joint paper with an ICB associate, Brecher and Hemda Ben-Yehuda.

An *international system* is a set of [state] actors who are situated in a configuration of power (*structure*), are involved in regular patterns of interaction (*process*), are separated from other units by *boundaries* set by a given *issue*, and are constrained in their behavior from within (*context*) and from outside the system (*environment*).

The essential properties of an international system are *structure*, *process*, *equilibrium*, and *stability*.

*Structure* refers to how the actors in a system stand in relation to each other. Its basic variables are the number of actors and the distribution of power among them, from unipolar through bipolar to multipower or polycentric.

*Process* designates the interaction patterns among the actors of a system. A link between structure and process is postulated: every structure has a corresponding interaction process, and a structure creates and maintains regular interaction.

*Issue* is another distinctive property of a system, which serves to demarcate its boundaries. This concept may be defined as a specific shared focus of interest for two or more actors. There are *war-peace* issues, *economic and developmental* issues, *political, cultural, status*, and *technological* issues within broader categories of issue-areas.

Every system has *Boundaries* which differentiate two kinds of effects on the behavior of actors—*contextual*, those arising *from within* a system, and *environmental*, those *from outside*. *Context* and *Environment* incorporate all geographic, political, military, technological, societal, and cultural elements that affect the structure and process of a system, from within and from outside the system, respectively.

The definition of international system presented above enables us to *identify* a system. Other concepts are needed to *distinguish* among systems. These are *Stability* and *Equilibrium*, system attributes. The concept of *Change* is the key to the distinction between stability and equilibrium, as well as to the organic link between them. Change may be defined as a shift from, or an alteration of, an existing *pattern of interaction* between two or more actors in the direction of greater conflict or cooperation. Change may also occur in the *structure* of a system, namely, an increase or decrease in the number of actors and/or a shift in the distribution of power among them.

*Stability* may be defined as change within explicit bounds. *Instability* designates change beyond a normal fluctuation range. These concepts may be operationalized in terms of the *quantity (number) of change(s)* in the structure of a system, its process or both, ranging from no changes to many changes. This continuum denotes degrees of stability. The absence of change indicates pure stability, its presence, and some degree of instability. Instability in the international system can be illustrated by *change in the volume of such phenomena as wars or crises* involving essential actors.

Equilibrium may be defined as the steady state of a system, denoting change below the threshold of reversibility. Disequilibrium designates change beyond the threshold of reversibility. This meaning is broader than the notion of balance of power, a widely used synonym for equilibrium in the world politics literature. Incremental change indicates a state of equilibrium, which has no effect on the system as a whole. Step-level (irreversible) change indicates disequilibrium, which inevitably leads to system transformation, that is, a change in essential actors and/or the distribution of power among them. The new system, with properties which significantly differ from those of its predecessor, denotes a new equilibrium, that is, changes within it which are reversible.

Every system has explicit or implicit *rules of the game*. Many international systems permit resort to violence as an instrument of crisis and conflict management. This is evident in the inherent right of individual and collective self-defense, enshrined in international institutions of the twentieth-century multipower system (League of Nations), as well as the bipolar, bipolarcentric, and unipolarcentric systems (United Nations) .

*In sum*, a revised definition of international system comprises six components: *actors, structure, process, boundaries, context, and environment*. Furthermore, the two basic system attributes, *stability* and *equilibrium*, were redefined and the links between them specified, completing the dual task of identifying and differentiating systems.

**Concepts 4 and 5 *International Crisis*** (presented in my articles in International Studies Quarterly 1977, The Journal of Conflict Resolution 1979, and many other publications during the past three decades, culminating in my book, International Political Earthquakes [2008]), occurs at two levels of analysis.

An *international (macro-level)* crisis is conceived as an international political earthquake. It denotes (1) a change in type and/or an increase