CHAPTER 9

Power and Twenty-first Century World Order

'A new world order is taking shape so fast that governments and private citizens find it difficult to absorb the gallop of events.'

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, quoted in *The Washington Post*, February 1990

PREVIEW

The issue of world order is vitally important because it reflects the distribution of power amongst states and other actors, affecting the level of stability within the global system and the balance within it between conflict and cooperation. However, this raises questions about the nature of power itself. Is power an attribute, something that states and other actors *possess*, or is it implicit in the various structures of global politics? Does power always involve domination and control, or can it also operate through cooperation and attraction? During the Cold War period, it was widely accepted that global power had a bipolar character: two superpowers confronted one another, the USA and the Soviet Union, although there was disagreement about whether this had led to peace and stability or to rising tension and insecurity. Since the end of the Cold War, nevertheless, there has been deep debate about the nature of world order. An early view was that the end of the superpower era had given rise to a 'new world order', characterized by peace and international cooperation. But what was the 'new world order', and what was its fate? A second view emphasized that the emergence of the USA as the world's sole superpower has created, in effect, a unipolar world order, based on US 'hegemony'. Is the USA a 'global hegemon', and what are the implications of unipolarity? A third view highlights the trend towards multipolarity and the fragmentation of global power, influenced by developments such as the rise of emerging powers (China, Russia, India, Brazil and so on), the advance of globalization, the increased influence of non-state actors and the growth of international organizations. Will a multipolar world order bring peace, cooperation and integration, or will it herald the emergence of new conflicts and heightened instability?

KEY ISSUES

- What is power?
- How, and to what extent, has the nature of power changed?
- What were the implications for world order of the end of the Cold War?
- Is the USA a hegemonic power, or a power in decline?
- To what extent is the world now multipolar, and are these trends set to continue?
- How is growing multipolarity likely to affect global politics?

CONCEPT

Power

Power, in its broadest sense, is the ability to influence the outcome of events, in the sense of having the 'power *to*' do something. In global politics, this includes the ability of a country to conduct its own affairs without the interference of other countries, bringing power very close to autonomy. However, power is usually thought of as a relationship: that is, as the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a manner not of their choosing, or 'power *over*' others. Power can therefore be said to be exercised whenever A gets B to do something that B would not otherwise have done. Distinctions have nevertheless been drawn between potential/actual power, relational/structural power and 'hard/soft' power.

POWER AND GLOBAL POLITICS

Politics is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means. This notion was neatly summed up in the title of Harold Lasswell's book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* (1936). But this merely raises another question: what, exactly, is power? How can power, particularly in global politics, best be understood? Power is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Joseph Nye (2004) likened power to love – 'easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that'. The problem with power is that it is an essentially contested concept: there is no settled or agreed concept of power, only a series of rival concepts. Power can be understood in terms of *capability*; that is, as an attribute, something that states or other actors 'possess'. Power can be understood as a *relationship*; that is, as the exercise of influence over other actors. And power can be understood as a property of a *structure*; that is, as the ability to control the political agenda and shape how things are done. To add to the confusion, there are also debates about the changing nature of power, and in particular about the key factors through which one actor may influence another.

Power as capability

The traditional approach to power in international politics is to treat it in terms of capabilities. Power is therefore an attribute or possession. Such an approach has, for instance, been reflected in attempts to list the 'elements' or 'components' of national power (see p. 212). The most significant of these usually include the size and quality of a state's armed forces, its per capita wealth and natural resources, the size of its population, its land mass and geographical position, the size and skills of its population and so on. The advantage of this approach is that it enables power to be analyzed on the basis of observable, tangible factors, such as military and economic strength, rather than intangibles, suggesting that power is quantifiable. Over time, nevertheless, greater attention has been paid to less tangible factors, such as morale and leadership skills. One of the most significant implications of the capabilities' approach to power has been that it enables states to be classified on the basis of the power or resources they possess, allowing the international system to be analyzed on a hierarchical basis. States were thus classified as 'great powers' (see p. 7), 'superpowers' (see p. 38), 'middling powers', 'regional powers' and so forth.

However, the idea that power can be measured in terms of capabilities has a number of drawbacks, making it an unreliable means of determining the outcome of events. The often quoted example of the Vietnam War (1959–75) helps to illustrate this. The USA (see p. 46) failed to prevail in Vietnam despite enjoying massive economic, technological and military advantages over North Vietnam and its communist ally, the Vietcong. At best, capabilities define *potential* or *latent* power rather than *actual* power, and translating a capability into a genuine political asset may be difficult and perhaps impossible. This applies for a number of reasons:

- The relative importance of the attributes of power is a matter of uncertainty and debate. Is a large population more significant than geographical size? Is economic power now more important than military power?

- Some elements of national power may be less beneficial than they at first appear. For example, a highly educated population may limit a state's ability to wage or sustain warfare, and natural resources may impair economic growth, as in the so-called 'paradox of plenty' (see p. 409).
- Subjective factors may be as significant as quantifiable, objective factors. These include the will and resolve of the armed forces and what can be called national morale. Strategy and leadership may also be decisive, allowing, for instance, weaker actors to prevail over stronger ones in so-called asymmetrical wars. Terrorism (see p. 284) and insurrection can thus be examples of 'the strength of the weak' (Ignatieff 2004).
- It may only be possible to translate resources or capacities into genuine political efficacy in particular circumstances. For example, the possession of nuclear weapons may be irrelevant when a state is confronting a terrorist threat or fighting a guerrilla war, and such weapons are 'unusable' in most political circumstances.
- Power is dynamic and ever-changing, meaning that power relations are never fixed or 'given'. Power may shift, for example, due to economic booms or slumps, financial crises, the discovery of new energy resources, the acquisition of new weapons, natural disaster, an upsurge in ethnic conflict, and so on.

Relational power and structural power

Most accounts of power portray it as a relationship. In its classic formulation, power can be said to be exercised whenever A gets B to get something that B would not otherwise have done. If a concern with capabilities equates power with 'strength', a concern with relationships equates power with 'influence'. Capabilities and relationships are clearly not distinct, however. Power relations between states or other actors may be taken to reflect the balance of their respective capabilities. In this case, the relationship model of power suffers from many of the drawbacks outlined above. For this reason, **relational power** is often understood in terms of actions and outcomes – that is, the effect one actor has on another – rather than in terms of contrasting assessments of capabilities. This is particularly the case because power is about perception. States and other actors deal with one another on the basis of their *calculations* of relative power. This may mean, for example, that reputation can sustain national power despite its decline in 'objective' terms. Foreign policy decisions may thus be based on under-estimates and over-estimates of the power of other actors, as well as various kinds of misinterpretation and misperception (see Perception or misperception? p. 133). Furthermore, especially in military matters, A may exert influence on B in one of two ways: either by getting B to do what B would not otherwise have done (**compellance**), or by preventing B from doing what B would otherwise have done (**deterrence**). Generally, the former will be riskier and require the use of greater resources than the latter. This can be seen in the contrast between the 2003 invasion of Iraq (see p. 131) to bring about 'regime change' (an example of compellance) and the previous policy of preventing attacks on the Kurds and Shia Muslims by maintaining 'no-fly zones' (an example of deterrence).

● **Relational power**: The ability of one actor to influence another actor or actors in a manner not of their choosing.

● **Compellance**: A tactic or strategy designed to force an adversary to make concessions against its will through war or the threat of aggression.

● **Deterrence**: A tactic or strategy designed to prevent aggression by emphasizing the scale of the likely military response (the cost of an attack would be greater than any benefit it may bring).

Focus on . . .

Elements of national power

A common (if now less fashionable) approach to power, particularly associated with the ranking of states within a hierarchy, has been to identify the capacities that states or other actors use to exert influence. In this view, the key elements of national power include the following:

- *Military strength.* For many commentators, especially in the realist school, power in international politics boils down to military capacity. Realists, for example, have traditionally favoured a 'basic force' model of power, on the grounds that military capacity both enables a country to protect its territory and people from external aggression and to pursue its interests abroad through conquest and expansion. Key factors are therefore the size of the armed forces, their effectiveness in terms of morale, training, discipline and leadership, and, crucially, their access to the most advanced weaponry and equipment.
- *Economic development:* States' 'weight' in international affairs is closely linked to their wealth and economic resources. This applies, in part, because economic development underpins military capacity, as wealth enables states to develop large armies, acquire modern weapons and wage costly or sustained wars. Modern technology and an advanced industrial base also gives states political leverage in relation to trading partners, especially if the national currency is so strong and stable that it is widely used as a means of international exchange.
- *Population.* A large population benefits a state both economically and materially, giving it a sizeable workforce and the potential to develop an extensive army. Level of literacy, education and skills may be just as important, however. Economic development, and particularly industrialization, require mass literacy and at least basic levels of work-related skills. As production, distribution and exchange are increasingly dependent on modern technology, higher-level scientific and ICT skills have become a requirement for economic success.
- *Geography.* The primary significance of geographical variables, such as land area, location, climate, topography and natural resources, has traditionally been stressed by geopolitics (see p. 407). Beneficial geographical features include access to the sea (for trading and military purposes); a temperate climate away from earthquake zones and areas where violent tropical storms are frequent; navigable rivers for transport, trade and energy production (hydroelectric power); arable land for farming; and access to mineral and energy resources (coal, oil and gas).

Whereas the capabilities and relationship models of power clearly assume the existence of an actor or agent, usually the state, **structural power** links the distribution of power to biases within the social structures through which actors relate to one another and make decisions. A most influential account of structural power was provided by Susan Strange (1996), who defined it as 'the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to one another, relate to people or relate to corporate enterprises'. Strange further distinguished between four primary power structures:

- The *knowledge* structure, which influences actor's beliefs, ideas or perceptions
- The *financial* structure, which controls access to credit or investment
- The *security* structure, which shapes defence and strategic issues

● **Structural power**: The ability to shape the frameworks within which global actors relate to one another, thus affecting 'how things shall be done'

Susan Strange (1923–98)

UK academic and leading exponent of international political economy. A self-described 'new realist', Strange made contributions in a number of areas. Her idea of structural power challenged the prevalent realist theory of power and reframed the debate, fashionable in the 1980s, about US decline and its implications. In *States and Markets* (1988), Strange analyzed the growing ascendancy of the market over political authority since the 1970s, an idea further developed in *The Retreat of the State* (1996), in which she declared that 'state authority has leaked away, upwards, sideways and downwards'. In *Casino Capitalism* (1997) and *Mad Money* (1998), Strange examined the instability and volatility of market-based economies, particularly in the light of innovations in the way in which financial markets work.

- The *production* structure, which affects economic development and prosperity

Strange insisted that the same state or states need not dominate each of these structures, but rather that their structural power may vary across the structures. This analysis of power provides an alternative to state-centrism and highlights the important and growing role played by regimes (see p. 67) and international organizations (see p. 433). Nevertheless, structural power operates alongside relational power, providing an alternative way of explaining how outcomes are determined. The issue of structural power also clearly demonstrates how questions about the nature of power are closely linked to debates about the shape of world order. During the 1980s, Strange used the theory of structural power to reframe the debate about hegemonic stability theory (see p. 229) and to challenge the then fashionable notion of US decline (discussed later in the chapter), which had largely been based on the USA's economic decline relative, in particular, to Japan and Germany.

Changing nature of power

Recent debates about the changing nature of power reflect less on the emergence of conceptually new forms of power, and more on the changing mechanisms through which relational power is exercised. Two alleged shifts in this respect have attracted attention. The first is a general shift from military power to economic power. Military power is the traditional currency of world politics. Realist theorists place a particular emphasis on military power because, in their view, the international system is structured above all by security and survival. In a self-help world, states face national disaster unless they have the capacity for self-defence. However, this image of militarily-based power politics has been challenged by neoliberals who argue that growing trade links and increasing interdependence (see p. 8) make inter-state war more costly and so less likely. Military force has thus become a less reliable and less important policy option. In the modern world, states therefore compete through trade rather than through the use of force. (The debate about the declining significance of military power is examined on p. 246.)

The second shift is the alleged wider decline of **'hard' power**, which encompasses both military power and economic power. Hard power is 'command power', the ability to change what others do through the use of inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks). By contrast, there has been a growth in **'soft' power**. Soft power is 'co-optive power'; it rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others by *attraction* rather than *coercion* (Nye 2004). Whereas hard power draws on resources such as force, sanctions, payments and bribes, soft power operates largely through culture, political ideals and foreign policies (especially when these are seen to be attractive, legitimate or to possess moral authority). For some feminists, the hard/soft power distinction highlights deeper factors, linked to the relationship between power and gender. In this view, the idea of 'power over', particularly when it is associated with 'hard' strategies such as coercion and the use of threats and rewards, reflects 'masculinist' biases that generally underpin the realist theory of power politics. Feminists, on the other hand, have emphasized the extent to which, in domestic and transnational social relations especially, power is exercised through nurturing, cooperation and sharing. Instead of conflictual and capacity conceptions of power, this suggests the alternative notion of power as collaboration, or 'power *with*'. The differences between hard and soft power are illustrated in Figure 9.1.

How has this alleged shift from hard to soft power come about? The key explanation is that the growth of interdependence and interconnectedness means that people see more, hear more and know more about what happens around the globe. Increasing cross-border flows of images, information and ideas make it easier for people to form judgements about the culture and values of other states as well as about the foreign and domestic policies of their governments. This trend is also aided by generally improving literacy levels and educational standards worldwide, and by the spread of democracy, particularly as democratic systems operate largely through soft-power mechanisms (the personalities of leaders, the image and values of political parties and so on). In such circumstances, a state's use of hard-power strategies may risk the loss of 'hearts and minds'. For example, the Bush administration's approach to the 'war on terror' (see p. 223), and particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq, may have been

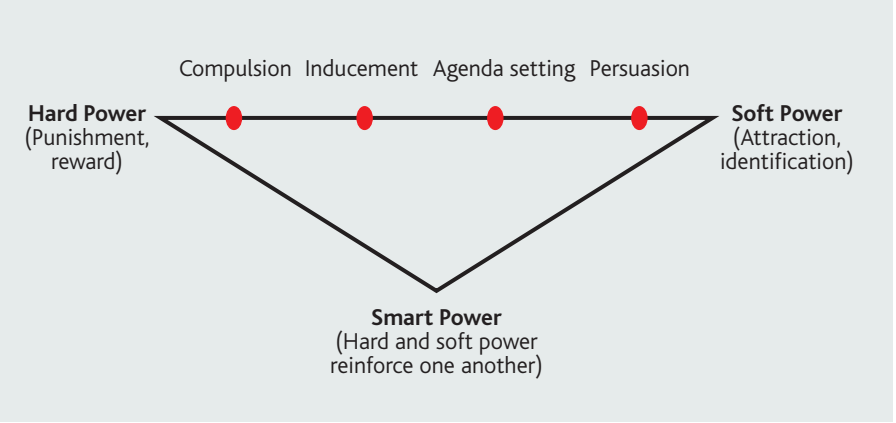
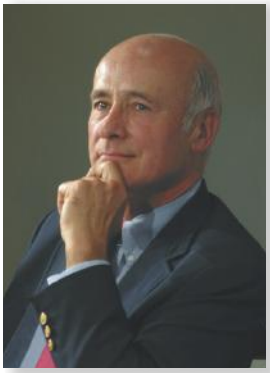


Figure 9.1 Hard, soft and smart power

● **Hard power**: The ability of one actor (usually but not necessarily a state) to influence another through the use of threats or rewards, typically involving military 'sticks' or economic 'carrots'.

● **Soft power**: The ability to influence other actors by persuading them to follow or agree to norms and aspirations that produce the desired behaviour.



Joseph S. Nye (born 1937)

US academic and foreign policy analyst. Nye was, with Robert Keohane (see p. 435), one of the leading theorists of 'complex interdependence', which offered an alternative to the realist belief in international anarchy (Keohane and Nye 1977). In *Bound to Lead* (1990) and *The Paradox of American Power* (2002) he has emphasised the need for the USA to redefine the national interest in the light of developments such as globalization and the information revolution, recognizing that the new conditions of global interdependence placed a greater stress on multilateral cooperation. As he put it, the USA 'can't go it alone'. Nye has been particularly associated with the idea of 'soft power' (the ability to attract and persuade), a term he coined, and later with the notion of 'smart power', a blend of 'soft' and 'hard' power. Nye's other major works include *Soft Power* (2005), *Understanding International Conflict* (2008a) and *The Powers to Lead* (2008b).

Focus on . . .

Beyond 'power over'?

Is the conventional notion of power as domination and control – that is, material 'power over' others – still sustainable? Does power have a single expression or form, or a variety of expressions and forms? Until the 1980s, the prevalent understanding of power was based on realist assumptions about the primacy of states and the importance of military might and economic strength in world affairs. This was consistent with the billiard ball image of world politics (see p. 7), in which power is demonstrated when billiard balls (representing states) collide with one another. This conception of power has nevertheless become less persuasive over time, due to a variety of developments. In addition to the collapse of the Cold War's bipolar threat system and the USA's problematical attempts after 9/11 to deal with the threat of terrorism by military means, these developments included the growing influence of the developing world, the greater prominence of discourses related to human rights (see p. 304) and, especially, the emergence of forms of regional and global governance (see p. 455).

In this light, Barnett and Duvall (2005) proposed a more nuanced approach to power, based on four contrasting (but possibly overlapping) conceptions – 'compulsory', 'institutional', 'structural' and 'productive' power. The first two of these are familiar from conventional realist and liberal thinking on the subject. *Compulsory* power allows one actor to have direct control over another, usually through the exercise of military or economic means. *Institutional* power occurs when actors exercise indirect control over others, as, for instance, when states establish international institutions that work to their own long-term advantage and to the disadvantage of others. The other two are more commonly used by critical theorists. *Structural* power operates through structures that shape the capacities and interests of actors in relation to one another, as in the tendency of the global capitalist system to create a differential relationship between capital and labour. (Strange's (1996) conception of 'structural power' encompasses both this notion and 'institutional' power.) *Productive* power is, in a sense, 'inter-subjective' power: it is power that operates through the ability to shape either one's own beliefs, values and perceptions (making it liberating) or those of others (making it oppressive). Influenced by social constructivist, poststructuralist and feminist thinking, productive power works by defining 'legitimate' knowledge and by determining whose knowledge matters.

CONCEPT

Bipolarity

Bipolarity refers to an international system which revolves around two poles (major power blocs). The term is most commonly associated with the Cold War, restricting its use to the dynamics of East–West rivalry during the 'superpower era'. For a system to be genuinely bipolar a rough equality must occur between the two pre-eminent powers or power blocs, certainly in terms of their military capacity. Neorealists have argued that this equilibrium implies that bipolar systems are stable and relatively peaceful, being biased in favour of a balance of power (see p. 256). Liberals, however, have associated bipolarity with tension and insecurity, resulting from their tendency to breed hegemonic ambition and prioritize military power.

counter-productive in that it provoked increased anti-Americanism across the Arab and wider Muslim world, possibly even fuelling support for terrorism. It is noticeable that since 2009 the Obama administration has placed much greater emphasis on the use of soft-power strategies. In most circumstances, however, hard and soft power operate in tandem. Figures within the Obama administration, for instance, have thus been championing the idea of 'smart power', by which they mean soft power backed up by the possible use of hard power. There are, nevertheless, some examples of soft power that operate in the absence of hard power, such as the Vatican, the Dalai Lama, Canada and Norway.

POST-COLD WAR GLOBAL ORDER

End of Cold War bipolarity

Although there is considerable debate about the nature of twenty-first century **world order**, there is considerable agreement about the shape of world order during the Cold War period. Its most prominent feature was that two major power blocs confronted one another, a US-dominated West and a Soviet-dominated East. In the aftermath of the defeat of Germany, Japan and Italy in WWII and with the UK weakened by war and suffering from long-term relative economic decline, the USA and the Soviet Union emerged as 'superpowers', powers greater than traditional 'great powers'. Their status was characterized by their preponderant military power (particularly in terms of their nuclear arsenals) and their span of ideological leadership. Cold War bipolarity was consolidated by the formation of rival military alliances, NATO in 1949 and the Warsaw Pact in 1955, and it was reflected in the division of Europe, symbolized by the Berlin Wall erected in 1961. The bipolar model of the Cold War, however, became increasingly less accurate from the 1960s onwards. This was due, first, to the growing fragmentation of the communist world (notably deepening enmity between Moscow and Beijing, the Chinese Revolution having occurred in 1949) and secondly to the resurgence of Japan and Germany as economic superpowers. One of the consequences of this emerging multipolarity (see p. 230) was *détente* between East and West. This was reflected in President Nixon's historic visit to China (see p. 251) in 1972 and the Strategic Arms Limitation talks between 1967 and 1979 that produced the SALT I and SALT II Agreements.

What were the implications for the international system of Cold War bipolarity? For neorealists in particular, bipolarity is biased in favour of stability and order. This occurs for a number of reasons. First, and most importantly, bipolar systems tend towards a balance of power (see p. 256). During the Cold War, the approximate, if dynamic, military equality between the USA and the Soviet Union inclined both of them towards a strategy of deterrence. Once a condition of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) was achieved, the two superpowers effectively cancelled each other out, albeit through a 'balance of terror'. Second, stability of this period was guaranteed by the fact that there were but two key actors. Fewer great powers reduced the possibilities of great-power war, but also, crucially, reduced the chances of miscalculation, making it easier to operate an effective system of deterrence. Third, power relationships in the Cold War system were more stable because each bloc was forced to rely on inner (economic and

● **World order**: The distribution of power between and amongst states and other key actors giving rise to a relatively stable pattern of relationships and behaviours.

military) resources, external (alliances with other states or blocs) means of expanding power not being available. Once the division of Europe was developed, in effect, into the division of the world, shifting alliances that may have destabilized the balance of power were largely ruled out. Bipolarity therefore led to the 'long peace' between 1945 and 1990, in particular bringing peace to a Europe that had been the crucible of world war twice before in the twentieth century.

However, not all theorists had such a positive view of Cold War bipolarity. One criticism of the bipolar system was that it strengthened imperialist tendencies in both the USA and the USSR as, discouraged from direct confrontation with each other, each sought to extend or consolidate its control over its sphere of influence. In the capitalist West, this led to neocolonialism (see p. 226), US political interference in Latin America and the Vietnam War, whereas in the communist East it resulted in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Hungary (1956) and the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979). A further criticism of bipolarity was that superpower rivalry and a strategy of nuclear deterrents produced conditions of ongoing tension that always threatened to make the Cold War 'hot'. In other words, the Cold War may have remained 'cold' more because of good fortune or the good sense of individual leaders, rather than through the structural dynamics of the system itself.

Even though neorealism may be effective in highlighting some of the benefits of Cold War bipolarity, it struggles to explain its collapse (see p.218). The programme of accelerating reform, initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 onwards, ended up with the Soviet Union relinquishing many of its core strategic achievements, notably its military and political domination over Eastern Europe, as well as, ultimately, over the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the image of equilibrium within the Cold War bipolar system may always have been misleading. As will be discussed later, in many ways the USA became the hegemonic power in 1945, with the Soviet Union always as a challenger but never as an equal. This was reflected in the fact that while the Soviet Union was undoubtedly a military superpower it, arguably, never achieved the status of an economic superpower. Moreover, the imbalance between its military capacity and its level of economic development always made it vulnerable. This vulnerability was exploited by Ronald Regan's 'Second Cold War' in the 1980s, when increased US military spending put massive pressure on the fragile and inefficient Soviet economy, providing the context for the Gorbachev reform process.

The 'new world order' and its fate

The end of the Cold War produced a burst of enthusiasm for the ideas of liberal internationalism (see p. 64), reminiscent of Woodrow Wilson's designs for the post-WWI peace and the post-WWII process that saw the creation of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods system. The idea that the post-Cold War era would be characterized by a 'new world order' was first mooted by Gorbachev in a speech to the UN General Assembly in December 1988. In addition to calling for a strengthening of the UN and a reinvigoration of its peacekeeping role, Gorbachev called for the de-ideologization of relations amongst states to achieve greater cooperation and proposed that the use or threat of force should no longer be considered legitimate in international affairs. At the Malta Conference

APPROACHES TO . . .

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Realist view

The end of the Cold War came as a shock to the overwhelming majority of realist theorists, creating something of a crisis within realist theory. The problem was that the events of 1989– 91 simply do not fit in to realist assumptions about how states behave. States are meant to pursue their national interests, particularly though the maintenance of military and territorial security. However, under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union was prepared to relinquished its military and political domination over Eastern Europe and accepted the break-away of its non-Russian republics. This was, moreover, accomplished without the Soviet Union being subject to irresistible strategic pressure from outside. Nevertheless, realism may shed some light on these developments. From a realist perspective, the Cold War could only end either in the military defeat of one superpower by another, or through the decline in the relative power of one or both of the superpowers, either bringing about the collapse of bipolarity. The contours of the bipolar system were certainly affected in the 1970s and 1980s by the relative decline of the Soviet Union. However, it is difficult to argue that bipolarity had disappeared altogether, certainly as far as military matters were concerned.

Liberal view

Although the end of the Cold War led to a burst of optimism amongst liberal theorists who anticipated that morality, rather than power politics, could be placed at the heart of international diplomacy, liberals fared little better than realists in predicting the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, liberals had been highlighting a general trend in favour of cooperation and away from the use of military power. This was based on the tendency of economic modernization to create patterns of 'complex interdependence' that both favoured integration and encouraged states to compete through trade rather than war. Cold War-style antagonism and military confrontation in the form of the nuclear arms race were therefore seen to be increasingly outmoded, as the tendency towards *détente* demonstrated. In this view, the Soviet Union's reluctance to use military force to maintain its control over Eastern Europe as well as its own territorial integrity stemmed, in part, from the recognition that ending East–West rivalry would be likely to bring economic benefits.

Critical views

The end of the Cold War struck many critical theorists with disquiet. While disillusionment with the Soviet Union had steadily grown in critical and radical circles, many theorists, especially those linked to the Marxist tradition, continued to regard the actually existing socialism of the Eastern bloc as a viable, if imperfect, alternative to western capitalism. Communist regimes were therefore usually viewed as stable and cohesive, especially in view of their ability to deliver economic and social security. The levels of public disaffection with the communist system that were demonstrated across Eastern Europe in 1989 therefore caught most critical theorists by surprise, particularly as these revolutions sought to reverse history, by ditching socialism in favour of capitalism. The one way in which critical thinkers can claim to help to explain the end of the Cold War is through the extent to which the Gorbachev reform process was inspired by a model of 'market socialism', which some had seen as the best hope for a non-authoritarian or 'reform' communism. However, the failure of the Gorbachev reforms merely demonstrated the limitations of market socialism.

The end of the Cold War nevertheless gave significant impetus to social constructivism. The failure of conventional theories adequately to explain why the Cold War ended highlighted, in a sense, a missing dimension: the role played by ideas and perceptions. What was changing during the 1990s was the identity of the Soviet Union, which informed its interests and, in turn, its actions. The social identity of the Soviet Union was reshaped by the 'new thinking' that Gorbachev and a younger generation of Soviet leaders brought to the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Believing that Soviet interests would best be served by international engagement across the capitalist–communist divide and no longer perceiving the USA and the capitalist West as a security threat, they calculated that political and military domination over Eastern Europe had ceased to be a key strategic interest for the Soviet Union, and may indeed have become an impediment.

of 1989 Bush Sr and Gorbachev committed themselves to a shift from an era of containment and superpower antagonism to one of superpower cooperation based on new security arrangements. In his 'Towards a New World Order' speech to Congress in September 1990, Bush outlined his vision for the post-Cold War world in more detail. Its features included US leadership to ensure the international rule of law, a partnership between the USA and the Soviet Union including the integration of the latter into the world economic bodies, and a check on the use of force by the promotion of collective security. One way in which Bush's version of the 'new world order' differed from that of Woodrow Wilson was the assertion, as shown by the 1991 Gulf War, that the 'international community' should protect the sovereign independence of all regimes, regardless of their complexion, and not give priority to liberal-democratic states on the grounds that they are likely to be more peaceful.

However, the wave of optimism and idealism that greeted the birth of the post-Cold War world did not last long. Many were quick to dismiss the 'new world order' as little more than a convenient catchphrase and one that was certainly not grounded in a developed strategic vision. Much of how this 'new world' would work remained vague. For example, how and how far should the UN be strengthened? What institutional arrangements were required to ensure that the US–Soviet partnership would be enduring? How could the renunciation of the use of force be squared with the USA's emerging role as the 'world's police officer'? For that matter, the advent of superpower cooperation was only a manifestation of Soviet weakness and, anyway, owed much to the personal relationship between Bush Sr and Gorbachev.

Moreover, alternative interpretations of the post-Cold War world order were not slow in emerging. Some heralded the rise not of a new world order, but of a new world *dis*order. One reason for this was the release of stresses and tensions that the Cold War had helped to keep under control. By maintaining the image of an external threat (be it international communism or capitalist encirclement), the Cold War had served to promote internal cohesion and given societies a sense of purpose and identity. However, the collapse of the external threat helped to unleash centrifugal pressures, which usually took the form of ethnic, racial and regional conflicts. This occurred in many parts of the world, but particularly in eastern Europe as demonstrated by the prolonged bloodshed in the 1990s amongst Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, and by the war between Russia (see p. 177) and the secessionist republic of Chechnya that broke out in 1994. Far from establishing a world order based on respect for justice and human rights, the international community stood by in former Yugoslavia and, until the Kosovo crisis of 1999, allowed Serbia to wage a war of expansion and perpetrate genocidal policies reminiscent of those used in WWII. Nevertheless, the greatest weakness of the idea of an emerging liberal world order was a failure to take account of the shifting role and status of the USA. The main significance of the end of the Cold War was the collapse of the Soviet Union as a meaningful challenger to the USA, leaving the USA as the world's sole superpower. Indeed, talk of a 'new world order' may have been nothing more than an ideological tool to legitimize the global exercise of power by the USA. In other words, the 'liberal moment' in world affairs turned out to be the 'unipolar moment'. But what was to be the shape of emerging unipolarity (see p. 222), and how was the USA to respond to its new status?

US HEGEMONY AND GLOBAL ORDER

Rise to hegemony

Since the end of the Cold War, the USA has commonly been referred to as an 'American empire', a 'global hegemon' or a '**hyperpower**'. Comparisons have regularly been made between the USA and the British Empire of the nineteenth century and, though less convincingly, with sixteenth-century Spain and seventeenth-century Holland. However, the USA is a hegemon of a very different, and perhaps unique, kind, with some suggesting that the only helpful historical parallel is Imperial Rome. In particular, if the USA has developed into an 'empire', it has done so (usually) by eschewing traditional imperialism in the form of war, conquest and the formation of colonies. This happened for two main reasons. The first is that, as the child of revolution, the USA is a 'political' nation defined more by ideology than by history or culture. The American Revolution of 1776, being a revolt against British colonialism, not only imbued the fledgling USA with an anti-imperialist self-image but also highlighted a range of 'American values', such as political freedom, individual self-sufficiency and constitutional government. Not only did this ideological heritage incline the USA to oppose traditional European imperialism but it has also given US foreign policy a recurrent moral dimension. The second factor is that, in contrast to a medium-sized country such as the UK, the territorial size of the USA enabled it to develop economically through internal expansion rather than external expansion. Thus, the USA was able to surpass the UK on most industrial measures by the 1880s by relying on its seemingly unlimited mass home market and despite relatively low levels of international trade. In sharp contrast to settler colonies, the USA was and remains a receiver, not a sender, of populations. Such factors meant that while the European great powers (with the possible exception of territorially massive Russia) became increasingly outward-looking in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, linking national power to imperial expansion, the USA remained firmly inward-looking, and often isolationist.

The twentieth century has often been portrayed as the 'American century'. However, despite being the world's largest economy (in the 1920s and in the early post-WWII period the USA accounted for about 40 per cent of global manufacturing output), such a description is in some ways misleading. The USA only became a truly global actor through its involvement in WWII and its aftermath. Indeed, the 'American century' may only have lasted from Pearl Harbour in 1941 (when the USA's entry into the war probably determined its outcome) to the explosion of the first Soviet atom bomb in 1949 (when the USA ceased to be the world's sole nuclear power). Nevertheless, the Cold War ensured that there would be no return to pre-war isolationism, with the USA increasingly assuming a position of economic, political and military leadership within the capitalist West. The USA was the chief architect of the institutions of the 'multilateralist' post-1945 world (the United Nations (see p. 449), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see p. 469), the World Bank (see p. 373) and so on), it underpinned the economic recovery of war-exhausted Western Europe and Japan, and US corporations quickly achieved international dominance in most economic sectors. Theorists such as Robert Cox (see p. 120) interpreted such developments in terms of the USA's rise to hegemony. In this view, the USA

● **Hyperpower**: A state that is vastly stronger than its potential rivals, and so dominates world affairs.

CONCEPT

Hegemony

Hegemony (from the Greek *hegemonia*, meaning 'leader') is, in its simplest sense, the leadership or domination of one element of a system over others. Gramsci (see p. 71) used the term to refer to the ideological leadership of the bourgeoisie over subordinate classes. In global or international politics, a hegemon is the leading state within a collection of states. Hegemonic status is based on the possession of structural power, particularly the control of economic and military resources, enabling the hegemon to shape the preferences and actions of other states, typically by promoting willing consent rather than through the use of force. Following Gramsci, the term implies that international or global leadership operates, in part, through ideational or ideological means.

provided the political framework for the growing world economy, exercising the 'military-territorial power of an enforcer' (Cox 1994).

However, during the 1970s and 1980s it became fashionable to proclaim the decline of US hegemony. This occurred through the emergence of both internal and external challenges. Internally, politico-cultural tensions arose as a result of the growth, from the 1960s onwards, of the civil rights movement, an anti-establishment youth 'counter-culture' and the women's movement, challenging traditional views on matters such as race, consumerism, abortion and gender roles. These were compounded by the shock to the national psyche of the Watergate scandal of 1974, which led to the resignation of President Nixon. External challenges included the USA's effective defeat in the Vietnam War, the Iran hostage crisis (in which the US embassy in Tehran was seized and 66 US citizens were held hostage for 444 days, between November 1979 and January 1981), and, most importantly, the rise of economic competitors such as Germany, Japan and the 'Asian tigers'. Indeed, it became increasingly common during this period to assert that the USA was succumbing to a tendency common amongst earlier great powers to **imperial over-reach**. This implies, as Paul Kennedy (1989) put it, that 'military conflict must always be understood in the context of economic change'. The rise and fall of great powers is therefore not only determined by their ability to engage in lengthy armed conflict, but also by the impact such conflicts have on their economic strength relative to other major states.

Nevertheless, the USA proved to be remarkably resilient, both politically and economically. The Reagan administration (1981–89) helped to strengthen American nationalism, both by preaching a 'frontier ideology' based on entrepreneurialism, tax cuts and 'rolled back' welfare and by adopting a more assertive and explicitly anti-communist foreign policy. This involved a military build-up against the Soviet Union, sparking what is called the 'Second Cold War'. Moreover, while some of its erstwhile economic rivals, notably Japan and Germany, started to falter during the 1980s and 1990s, the USA's high level of spending in research, development and training helped to improve US productivity levels and gave the country an unchallengeable lead in high-tech sectors of the global economy. The most significant event, however, was the collapse of communism and the fall of the Soviet Union in the revolutions of 1989–91. These provided the USA with a unique opportunity to establish global hegemony in what appeared to be a unipolar world.

The end of the Cold War gave economic globalization (see p. 94) a considerable boost as new markets and new opportunities opened up for western, and often US, capitalist enterprises. Encouraged by the IMF, many post-communist countries embarked on a 'shock therapy' transition from central planning to *laissez-faire* capitalism. Moreover, the US model of liberal-democratic governance was quickly and eagerly adopted by many post-communist states and elsewhere. The Gulf War and the growing trend in the 1990s towards humanitarian intervention (see p. 319) also seemed to reflect the USA's willingness to adopt the role of the 'world's police officer'. Nevertheless, the tendencies and dynamics of the unipolar system were different from those of the bipolar system it had replaced. Not only does the existence of a single dominant state breed resentment and hostility amongst other states, but the global hegemon can also, potentially, disregard the multilateral constraints that restrict a state's freedom of

● **Imperial over-reach**: The tendency for imperial expansion to be unsustainable as wider military responsibilities outstrip the growth of the domestic economy.

CONCEPT

Unipolarity

Unipolarity refers to an international system in which there is one pre-eminent state, or 'pole'. In a unipolar system there is but a single great power, implying an absence of constraints or potential rivals. However, as this implies some form of world government, unipolarity is always relative and not absolute. Unipolarity has been defended on the grounds that the dominant actor is able to act as the 'world's police officer' settling disputes and preventing war ('Pax Britannicus' and 'Pax Americana') and guaranteeing economic and financial stability by setting and maintaining ground rules for economic behaviour. Critics argue that unipolarity promotes megalomania on the part of the dominant actor, as well as fear, resentment and hostility among other actors.

manoeuvre. This was seen in the **unilateralist** tendency of US foreign policy following the election of George W. Bush in 2000, evidenced by the decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court and a continued refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol on global climate change. However, the events of September 11 (see p. 21) significantly altered the direction of US foreign policy and with it the balance of world order.

The 'war on terror' and beyond

September 11, 2001 is often treated as a decisive point in the formation of world order, equivalent to 1945 or 1990. Indeed, some commentators have argued that 9/11 was the point at which the true nature of the post-Cold War era was revealed and the beginning of a period of unprecedented global strife and instability. In that sense, the advent of the 'war on terror', rather than the collapse of communism, marked the birth of the 'real' twenty-first century. On the other hand, it is possible to exaggerate the impact of 9/11. As Robert Kagan (2004) put it, 'America did not change on September 11. It only became more itself'.

A variety of theories have been advanced to explain the advent of global or transnational terrorism (see p. 284) and the nature of the 'war on terror'. One of the most influential of these is Samuel Huntington's (see p. 514) theory of a 'clash of civilizations' (discussed in Chapter 8), which suggests that it is part of a larger trend for cultural, and more specifically religious, conflict to assume greater prominence in twenty-first century global politics. Alternative explanations highlight the significance of changes in world order. According to Robert Cooper (2004), the East–West confrontation of the old world order had given way to a world divided into three parts:

- In the 'premodern' world, by which he meant those post-colonial states that had benefited neither from political stability nor from economic development, chaos reigns. Examples of such states include Somalia, Afghanistan and Liberia, sometimes seen as 'weak states', 'failed states' (see p. 121) or 'rogue states' (see p. 224).
- In the 'modern' world, states continue to be effective and are fiercely protective of their own sovereignty (see p. 3). Such a world operates on the basis of a balance of power, as the interests and ambitions of one state are only constrained by the capabilities of other states.
- In the 'postmodern' world, which Cooper associated primarily with Europe and the European Union (EU) (see p. 505), states have evolved 'beyond' power politics and have abandoned war as a means of maintaining security in favour of multilateral agreements, international law (see p. 332) and global governance (see p. 455).

This view of the new world order, however, embodies a range of challenges and new security threats. Not the least of these arises from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction which in the premodern world can easily get into the hands of 'rogue' states or non-state actors such as terrorist organizations. Particular concern has been expressed about nuclear proliferation, with the so-called 'nuclear club' having expanded from five (the USA, Russia, China, France and the UK) to nine, with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan,

● **Unilateralism**: One-sidedness; a policy determined by the interests and objectives of a single state, unconstrained by other states and bodies.

Focus on . . .

The 'war on terror'

The 'war on terror' (or the 'war on terrorism'), known in US policy circles as the Global War on Terror or GWOT, refers to the efforts by the USA and its key allies to root out and destroy the groups and forces deemed to be responsible for global terrorism. Launched in the aftermath of 9/11, it supposedly mapped out a strategy for a 'long war' that addresses the principal security threats to twenty-first century world order. It aims, in particular, to counter the historically new combination of threats posed by non-state actors and especially terrorist groups, so-called 'rogue' states, weapons of mass destruction and the militant theories of radicalized Islam. Critics of the idea of a 'war on terror' have argued both that its inherent vagueness legitimizes an almost unlimited range of foreign and domestic policy interventions, and that, in building up a climate of fear and apprehension, it allows the USA and other governments to manipulate public opinion and manufacture consent for (possibly) imperialist and illiberal actions. Others have questioned whether it is possible to have a 'war' against an abstract noun. (See Deconstructing the 'war on terror', p. 297.)

Israel and North Korea, and with other countries, such as Iran, being thought to be close to developing them. Although Europe may be a 'zone of safety', outside Europe there is a 'zone of danger and chaos', in which the instabilities of the premodern world threaten to spill over into the modern and even the postmodern worlds. Cooper (2004) acknowledged that a kind of 'new' imperialism may be the only way of bringing order to chaos.

Such an analysis overlaps at significant points with the neoconservative – or 'neo-con' – ideas that had a particular impact on the Bush administration in the USA in the years following 9/11, and which were reflected in what came to be known as the 'Bush doctrine' . According to this, the USA had a right to treat states that harbour or give aid to terrorists as terrorists themselves. Neoconservatism (see p. 226) sought to preserve and reinforce what was seen as the USA's 'benevolent global hegemony' (Kristol and Kagan 2004). Its key features included a build-up of the USA's military strength to achieve a position of 'strength beyond challenge' and a policy of worldwide 'democracy promotion', focused primarily on the Middle East, seen as a region of particular conflict and instability.

After 9/11 the USA's approach to the 'war on terror' quickly started to take shape. Its opening act was the US-led military assault on Afghanistan in October 2001 that toppled the Taliban regime within a matter of weeks. In January 2002, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran and North Korea as part of an 'axis of evil', later expanded to include Cuba, Syria and (though subsequently removed from the list) Libya. The 'war on terror', however, moved in a more radical and controversial direction as it became clear that 'regime change' in Saddam Hussein's Iraq was the Bush administration's next objective. This led to the 2003 Iraq War, fought by the USA and a 'coalition of the willing'. What made the Iraq War controversial was that whereas the attack on Afghanistan was widely seen as a form of self-defence (Afghanistan had provided al-Qaeda (see p. 295) with the closest thing to a home base, and there were strong politico-ideological links between al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime), the war against Iraq was justified

CONCEPT

Rogue state

A rogue state is a state whose foreign policy poses a threat to neighbouring or other states, through its aggressive intent, build-up of weapons (particularly WMD), or association with terrorism. However, the term is controversial. It was used by US policy-makers in the early post-Cold War period to draw attention to new threats to regional and possibly global security (examples included Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea). Critics have argued that the term has been used in a selective and self-serving fashion to justify US intervention in other countries' affairs; that it is simplistic in disregarding the complex causes of 'rogueness'; and that it may entrench 'rogue' behaviour by strengthening a state's sense of alienation from the international community.

using the doctrine of pre-emptive attack. Although the Bush administration alleged (with little substantiation) that there were links between the Saddam regime and al-Qaeda, and asserted (contrary to subsequent evidence) that Iraq was in possession of WMD, the central justification was that a 'rogue' regime such as Saddam's that actively sought, and may have acquired, WMD could not be tolerated in the twenty-first century.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, despite early dramatic successes (the overthrow of the Taliban and Saddam's Ba'athist regime), the USA and its allies found themselves fighting wars that proved to be more problematical and protracted than anticipated. Both developed into complex counter-insurgency wars against enemies whose use of the tactics of guerrilla warfare, terrorism and suicide bombings highlighted the limitations of preponderant US military power, as discussed in Chapter 10. The conduct of the 'war on terror' was undermined by both tactical failings and strategic difficulties. Among the tactical flaws were the deployment initially of an insufficient number of troops in Iraq, the absence of an exit strategy if the USA's objectives proved to be more difficult to achieve than anticipated, and the failure to develop clear plans for a post-Saddam Iraq before the invasion took place. The invasion of Iraq also, crucially, drew attention and resources away from Afghanistan, allowing Taliban insurgency to gain renewed strength.

However, the deeper, strategic approach to the 'war on terror' may also have been flawed. Three problems have received particular attention. First, the USA, arguably, overestimated the efficacy of military power. Not only have, as in the Vietnam War, guerrilla warfare tactics proved to be highly effective against a much more powerful and better resourced enemy, but the use of military means has weakened the USA's 'soft' power and damaged its reputation across the Middle East, and, if anything, alienated moderate Muslim opinion. In that sense, the USA has threatened to create the very 'arc of extremism' that it set out to destroy. Second, the strategy of imposing 'democracy from above' has proved to be naive at best, failing in particular to recognize the difficulties involved in 'nation-building' and that stable democratic institutions usually rest upon the existence of a democratic culture and require a certain level of socio-economic development. Third, lack of progress with the 'Palestinian question' continues to poison the politics of the Middle East. The neo-cons were inclined to support Israel as an article of faith, but this tended to embitter public opinion against the USA and the West across the Arab world and, in the process, strengthened support for militant Islam.

Growing difficulties in making progress with the 'war on terror' as deeper insurgencies arose first in Iraq and then increasingly in Afghanistan inclined the Bush administration to edge towards **multilateralism** during Bush's second term in office, 2005–09. However, more significant shifts occurred once President Obama was inaugurated in January 2009. In line with the advice of soft-power theorists for the USA to 'learn to cooperate, and to listen' (Nye 2004), Obama certainly altered the *tone* of the USA's engagement with world affairs generally, and with the Muslim world in particular. In a keynote speech in Cairo in June 2009, he called for a 'new beginning' between the USA and Muslims around the world, acknowledging that 'no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by another'. In March, he had released a video with Farsi subtitles to coincide with the Iranian new year, in which he declared that

● **Multilateralism**: A policy of acting in concert with other states or international organizations, or a system of coordinated relations amongst three or more actors (see p. 460).

Focus on . . .

Pre-emptive attack

A pre-emptive attack (sometimes called preventive war) is military action that is designed to forestall or prevent likely future aggression. It is therefore a form of self-defence in anticipation; it involves 'getting your retaliation in first'. As such, it is an alternative to strategies such as deterrents, containment and 'constructive engagement' as a means of dealing with potential aggressors. It has attracted particular attention since the 1990s in relation to threats from 'rogue' states and terrorism, especially in the case of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The attraction of a pre-emptive attack is that military action can take place before a potential aggressor gets too strong (for example, before they acquire weapons of mass destruction), meaning that the overall cost of military conflict is reduced. Moreover, alternative strategies may constitute appeasement, and help to embolden an unchallenged potential aggressor. However, its drawbacks include the possibility that the calculations of future actions or threats, on which pre-emptive attacks are based, may be flawed. In addition, being based on anticipated rather than actual aggression, it may be difficult to establish or maintain domestic or international support for such attacks. Finally, it is almost certainly illegal under the UN Charter, which authorizes war only in cases of individual or collective self-defence.

the USA wanted to end decades-old strains in its relationship with Iran (a particular object of neo-con hostility, especially in the light of alleged attempts to acquire nuclear weapons), calling on Tehran to tone down its bellicose anti-American rhetoric. Such attempts to reach out to the Muslim world and establish greater cross-cultural understanding were linked to other initiatives designed to alter how the USA was fighting the 'war on terror'. Notably, an order banning the use of torture was signed and a commitment was made to close the Guantanamo detention camp (although the promise to do this within Obama's first year of office was soon abandoned). A greater emphasis was also placed on making progress with the Palestinian problem. This issue, nevertheless, has proved to be no less complex and difficult than had previously been the case.

However, even though the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' was quickly toned down and the strategic approach to it revised, military engagement has continued to play an important role under Obama. This was reflected in a significant shift of emphasis from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the form of what became known as the 'Af-Pak' policy. Thanks to the success of the 'surge' in US troops, which started in 2007, in reducing levels of civil strife and civilian deaths in Iraq, responsibility for maintaining security in Iraqi towns and cities was passed from US and allied troops to Iraqi forces in 2009, and the USA's combat mission in Iraq ended in August 2010. Under Obama's redrawn battle strategy for Afghanistan, a similar 'surge' was initiated in early 2010, which saw some 30,000 additional US troops deployed in the country, in an attempt to refocus and re-energize NATO's deeply problematical mission there. At the same time, July 2011 was set as the date that US forces in Afghanistan would start to withdraw. This occurred in association with attempts by the Pakistani military to deal with Taliban bases in the tribal areas of north-west Pakistan. However, there is disagreement about the significance of the shifts that have occurred under

CONCEPT

Neoconservatism

Neoconservatism was an approach to foreign policy-making that sought to enable the USA to take advantage of its unprecedented position of power and influence in a unipolar world. It consisted of a fusion between neo-Reaganism and 'hard' Wilsonianism. Neo-Reaganism took the form of a Manichean world-view, in which 'good' (represented by the USA) confronted 'evil' (represented by 'rogue' states and terrorist groups that possess, or seek to possess, WMD). This implied that the USA should deter rivals and extend its global reach by achieving a position of 'strength beyond challenge' in military terms. 'Hard' Wilsonianism involved the desire to spread US-style democracy throughout the world by a process of 'regime change', achieved by military means if necessary ('democracy from above').

Obama. Some have seen them as a reassertion of US power, in the form of 'smart power', involving the use of soft and hard power in tandem to create a more sophisticated approach to tackling the challenges of religious-based militancy and global terrorism. Others, however, have seen them as evidence of the limitations within which the USA now operates, reflecting, perhaps, the end of the period of US hegemony.

Benevolent or malign hegemony?

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since September 11, attitudes towards the USA have become a major fault-line in global politics, to some extent displacing the older left–right battle between capitalism and socialism. Is the USA the 'indispensable nation', a benevolent hegemon whose widening influence brings peace and prosperity? Or is it a malign hegemon, the source of much of the chaos and injustice in the modern world? The popularity of the 'malign' interpretation of US hegemony was evident in the sometimes very different reaction to September 11 in the developing South compared with the widely sympathetic reaction in the developed North. Anti-Americanism grew in reaction to the increasingly unilateralist turn in US foreign policy, and peaked when the USA pressed ahead with the invasion of Iraq despite failing to gain clear UN approval for military action. From a realist perspective, all global hegemons are destined to be malign, regardless of their political, economic and ideological characters. As all states pursue their national interest by seeking to accumulate power, hegemons will simply be able to do this in a more ruthless and determined fashion because they are unconstrained by serious rivals. The idea of 'benevolent global hegemony', favoured by neo-con analysts, is therefore an illusion.

Nevertheless, the most trenchant critics of the USA have been radical theorists, amongst whom Noam Chomsky (see p. 228) has been the most prominent. Chomsky's analysis of international affairs is influenced by anarchism and the belief that violence, deceit and lawlessness are natural functions of the state. In Chomsky's 'radical' realism, the more powerful the state, the greater will be its tendency towards tyranny and oppression. His analysis of the USA emphasizes its abiding and, in many ways, intensifying inclination towards imperialism. US expansionism, through the growth of corporate power and the spread of neo-colonialism, as well as through large- and small-scale military intervention in places such as Vietnam, Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, is motivated by a desire to ensure economic advantage and to secure control of vital resources. US policy in the Middle East and the wider 'war on terror' are therefore largely driven by the desire for secure oil supplies. To this end, the USA has consistently subverted democracy and has fostered the development of a network of often authoritarian client states. In this view, the USA, as a 'rogue superpower', is the principal source of terrorism and violence across the globe.

However, such views have also been subject to criticism, and quite different images of the USA have been offered. For example, even some of those who welcome Chomsky's 'new anti-imperialism', on the grounds that it sheds light on forms of tyranny, injustice and hypocrisy that might otherwise not be exposed, accept that his analysis is often simplistic and one-sided. US power has done much to foster and not just frustrate democracy (as, for instance, in the post-WWII reconstruction of Germany and Japan), and the prevalent assumption

Debating . . .

Does the USA remain a global hegemon?

Debates about the decline of the USA's global hegemony are nothing new. They date back to the late 1950s and the launch by the Soviet Union of the Sputnik satellite and the 1970s and 1980s when the eclipse of the USA by resurgent Japan and Germany was widely predicted. However, renewed interest in the issue has been generated by the 'war on terror' and other developments.

YES

Global military dominance. The USA's military lead over the rest of the world is huge. By 2007, the USA accounted for 46 per cent of the world's military spending, and had a nine-fold lead over China, the second largest military spender. The USA has some 700 military bases in over 100 countries, as well as an unchallengeable lead in high-tech weaponry and in air power. The USA is the sole power that can intervene militarily in any part of the world and sustain multiple operations.

Economic resilience. The USA accounts for about 40 per cent of world spending on research and development, giving it an almost unassailable technological lead over other countries and ensuring high productivity levels. China is generations away from rivalling the USA in the technologically advanced economic sectors. Moreover, just as the British Empire remained a global hegemon until the mid-twentieth century despite having been overtaken by the USA and Germany, the USA may continue to retain global leadership in a world in which it is no longer the economic number one.

The US population. The US population is expected to reach 439 million by 2050, with big increases in the number of Hispanics and Asians, helping to underpin economic performance and to keep the US age profile low relative to fast-aging Europe, Japan and China. Allied to this is the highly educated and skilled nature of the US population, particularly in areas such as science and technology.

Unrivalled structural power. The USA exercises disproportional influence over the institutions of global economic governance and over NATO. Despite the growing influence of the developing world and of emerging economies, no country is close to challenging the USA's influence over global economic decision-making. This was reflected in the leading role that the USA played in formulating a global response to the 2007–09 global financial crisis (see p. 108).

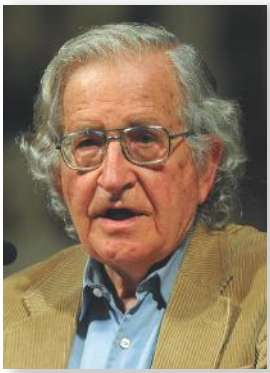
NO

Redundant military power. Preponderant military power may no longer be a secure basis for hegemony. There is a huge gap between the destructive capacity of the US military machine and what it can achieve politically. The forced withdrawals of the USA from Lebanon in 1984 and Somalia in 1993, and the difficulty of winning asymmetrical wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, demonstrate how the use of terrorist, guerrilla and insurrectionary tactics can thwart even the most advanced power.

Relative economic decline. Although the USA remains the world's largest economy, its competitors, notably China and India, have been growing much more quickly in recent decades, with the Chinese economy predicted to outstrip the US economy, perhaps by 2020. The 2007–09 global financial crisis may have further weakened the USA, exposing the flaws of the US economic model and bringing the dollar's position as the world's leading currency into question.

Damaged soft power. The USA's 'soft' power has declined in a number of respects. Its reputation has been damaged by its association with corporate power and widening global inequality, resentment developing against 'globalization-as-Americanization'. Serious damage has also been done to the USA's moral authority by the 'war on terror' generally and the Iraq War in particular, made worse by the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and in the Guantanamo detention camp.

Declining diplomatic influence. The USA has lost influence in Latin America (formerly seen as 'America's backyard'); it has to rely on Chinese diplomacy to exert influence over North Korea; EU diplomacy is needed to influence Iran; and even its capacity to exert pressure on Israel is limited. Moreover, China (for instance, over Tibet) and Russia (for instance, over Georgia) are largely immune from US diplomatic pressure. The decline of the USA's structural power is also evident in the rise of the G-20 (see p. 117) as the key forum for global economic policy-making.



Noam Chomsky (born 1928)

US linguistic theorist and radical intellectual, Chomsky was born in Philadelphia, the son of eastern European immigrant parents. His *Syntactic Structures* (1957) revolutionized the discipline of linguistics with the theory of 'transformational grammar', which proposed that humans have an innate capacity to acquire language. Radicalized during the Vietnam War, Chomsky subsequently became the leading radical critic of US foreign policy, developing his views in an extensive range of works including *American Power and the New Mandarins* (1969), *New Military Humanism* (1999) and *Hegemony and Survival* (2004). In works such as (with Edward Herman) *Manufacturing Consent* (1988), he developed a radical critique of the mass media and examined how popular support for imperialist aggression is mobilized.

that 'the USA is the problem' tends to ignore, and perhaps legitimize, other – and perhaps more serious – sources of oppression and threats to security. An essentially positive view of US hegemony can also be constructed on the basis of hegemonic stability theory, which highlights the benefits that a global hegemon can bring to other states and the international system as a whole. The USA has demonstrated its willingness and ability to be such a hegemon, mainly through its leadership of the institutions of global economic governance since 1945 and the role of the dollar as an international currency (even though both of these may be under threat in the twenty-first century). The final basis for upholding the image of the USA as a 'benevolent' hegemon is based on its (perhaps uniquely) moral approach to world affairs. While not ignoring the pursuit of national self-interest – after all, the USA is a state like any other state – the USA's 'liberal' self-image as a land of freedom and opportunity usually inclines it towards self-restraint and multilateralism in world affairs. This was most clearly evident in the USA's contribution to post-war reconstruction after WWI and WWII, and there is no reason, once the impact of the 'war on terror' fades, why the balance between self-interest and self-restraint should not be restored in the twenty-first century.

A MULTIPOLAR GLOBAL ORDER?

Debate about the decline, or even end, of US hegemony is invariably linked to an assessment of rising multipolarity. This involves two main issues. First, to what extent, and in what ways, is world order acquiring a multipolar character? Second, what are the likely implications of multipolarity?

Rise of multipolarity

World order, in the modern period, is being shaped by a number of multipolar trends. The most significant of these is the rise of so-called 'emerging powers'. These are the new, or the would-be, great powers of the twenty-first century. Some states already have a significant measure of regional influence – Brazil and, possibly, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela in Latin America; South Africa and Nigeria in Africa; Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle

Focus on . . .
Hegemonic stability theory

Hegemonic stability theory is the theory, accepted by realists and many neoliberals, that a dominant military and economic power is necessary to ensure the stability and prosperity in a liberal world economy (Kindleberger 1973; Gilpin 1987). The two key examples of such liberal hegemons are the UK during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the USA since 1945.

The theory has two main components. First, it recognizes that a liberal world economy is in constant danger of being subverted by rising nationalism and the spread of protectionism. This was clearly demonstrated by the so-called 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policies that helped to create the Great Depression of the 1930s. A set of ground rules for economic competition are therefore needed, particularly focused on upholding free trade, in order for such an economy to be successful. Second, a dominant or hegemonic power is likely to be both willing and able to establish and enforce such rules. Its *willingness* derives from the fact that, being a hegemon, its interests coincide significantly with those of the system itself. It has a crucial stake in the system: in ensuring the stability of the world economy, the hegemon is attending to its own long-term interests (it does not act altruistically). Its *ability* to do this stems from the fact that it alone has the capacity to deliver **public goods**; that is, goods that bring collective benefit rather than benefit merely to the state responsible. The hegemon, in other words, is powerful enough to act in line with 'absolute gains' rather than 'relative gains' (see p. 229). By contrast, smaller, less powerful states are forced to act more narrowly in line with national self-interest. To be a hegemon, a state must therefore (1) have sufficient power to enforce the rules of the system, (2) possess the will to use this power, and (3) be committed to a system that brings benefit to the mass of states.

East; and South Korea, Indonesia, Pakistan and Australia in Asia and Oceania. However, a range of other powers have acquired, or are acquiring, wider, and possibly global, significance. These include, most obviously, China, Russia and India, but also Japan and the European Union (see Chapter 20). Between them, and together with the USA, these powers account for over half the world's population, about 75 per cent of global GDP and around 80 per cent of global defence spending.

Of all the powers that may rival, and even eclipse, the USA, the most significant is undoubtedly China. Indeed, many predict that the twenty-first century will become the 'Chinese century', just as the twentieth century had supposedly been the 'American century'. The basis for China's great power status is its rapid economic progress since the introduction of market reforms in the mid-1970s under Deng Xiaoping (1904–97), the most dramatic phase of which began only in the 1990s. Annual growth rates of between 8 and 10 per cent for almost thirty years (about twice the levels achieved by the USA and other western states) have meant that China became the world's largest exporter in 2009, and in 2010 it overtook Japan to become the world's second largest economy. By 2010, the Chinese economy was 90 times larger than it had been in 1978. With the world's largest population (1.3 billion in 2007), China has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of cheap labour, making it, increasingly, the manufacturing heart of the global economy. The resilience of the Chinese economic model (see p. 89) was further demonstrated by the ease with which it weathered the 2007–09 global

● **Public good**: A good or service that, by its nature, benefits everyone, meaning that no party can be denied access to it.

CONCEPT

Multipolarity

Multipolarity refers to an international system in which there are three or more power centres. However, this may encompass arrangements ranging from tripolar systems (the USA, Japan and the EU in the latter decades of the twentieth century) to effectively nonpolar systems (Haass, 2008), in which power is so diffuse that no actor can any longer be portrayed as a 'pole'. Neorealists argue that multipolarity creates a bias in favour of fluidity and uncertainty, which can lead only to instability and an increased likelihood of war ('anarchical' multipolarity). Liberals nevertheless argue that multipolar systems are characterized by a tendency towards multilateralism, as a more even division of global power promotes peace, cooperation and integration ('interdependent' multipolarity).

financial crisis. China also has a growing military capacity, being second only to the USA in terms of arms expenditure. China's emerging global role is evident in the influence it now exerts within the WTO and G-20 and over issues such as climate change, as well as in its much strengthened resource links with Africa, Australia and parts of the Middle East and Latin America. An often neglected aspect of China's growing influence is the extraordinary rise of its 'soft' power. This reflects both the significance of Confucianism (see p. 195) in providing a cultural basis for cooperation in Asia, and the attraction of its anti-imperialist heritage in Africa and across much of the developing South. By contrast, the reputations of the USA and western powers are usually tainted by colonialism in one form or another. The prospect of the twenty-first century becoming the 'Chinese century' is discussed at greater length in Chapter 21.

Nevertheless, the rise of China is often seen as part of a larger shift in the balance of global power from West to East, and specifically to Asia, and maybe from the USA to the BRICs countries (see p. 477), sometimes dubbed 'the Rest'. Some argue that the twenty-first century will not so much be the 'Chinese century' as the 'Asian century', with India and Japan in particular also being viewed as key actors. The transformation of India into an emerging power has been based on economic growth rates only marginally less impressive than China's. It is estimated that if current trends persist, by 2020 China and India will jointly account for half of the world's GDP. However, the Indian economic model differs markedly from China's 'market Stalinism'. As the world's largest liberal democracy, India's increased growth rates stem from the introduction of liberal economic reforms in the early 1990s, more than a decade after China began its market reforms. India has become a world leader in industries such as computer software and biotechnology, while Bollywood films have become a global entertainment phenomenon. Japan, on the other hand, emerged as a major power though its post-1945 'economic miracle', becoming the second largest economy in the world during the 1970s. Indeed, until the 1990s, Japan, together with Germany, was widely seen as an economic superpower and perhaps as a model for the 'de-militarized' great powers of the twenty-first century.

However, the continued forward march of a Chinese-led Asia cannot be taken for granted. The Japanese economy stalled badly in the 1990s (Japan's 'lost decade'), and its economic and political significance in the twenty-first century may largely depend on its developing relationship with the other emerging powers of Asia, notably China and India. Japan's record of 10 per cent growth rates in the 1950s, progressively declining in each subsequent decade, may also contain lessons for China and India about the long-term sustainability of their high growth rates. India's emergence as a great power is constrained by a number of factors. India still suffers from acute problems of poverty and illiteracy, which are being fuelled by a population growth crisis that is fast getting out of hand. India has also been less interested than China in projecting itself militarily, despite having joined the 'nuclear club' in 2001. In part, this is because significant regional tensions, mainly with Pakistan but also with China, tend to divert India's attention away from a larger world role. As far as China is concerned, there are reasons for questioning whether it can yet be viewed as a serious rival of the USA. The Chinese economy remains heavily dependent on supplies of cheap labour, and a transition to a more highly technologized economy based on

GLOBAL ACTORS . . .

CHINA

Type: State • **Population:** 1.34 billion • **GDP per capita:** $7,240
HDI ranking: 92/182 • **Capital:** Beijing

The People's Republic of China was founded on 1 October 1949, by Mao Zedong. During the 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sought to establish control over the entire country. This involved not just political control but also the establishment of a collectivist economy and the ideological coordination of Chinese society and culture. In 1966, Mao launched the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution', which resulted in a dramatic purge of the CCP, as well as of economic and cultural elites. Following the deaths in 1976 of Mao and his loyal deputy, Zhou Enlai, dramatic changes took place that saw the introduction of market-based economic reforms, linked to the rapid re-emergence of the pragmatic Deng Xiaoping. China is a one-party communist state, based on:

- The National People's Congress, an almost 3,000-member legislature that meets for only brief periods.
- The State Council, headed by the prime minister (China has a president, who serves as a ceremonial head of state.)

Political change in modern China has been much slower than economic change, meaning that the most important aspect of the Chinese political system remains the leading role of the CCP. Party members occupy the key positions in all major political institutions, and the media, including the Internet, are tightly controlled.

Significance: China's re-emergence as a world power dates back to the 1949 Chinese Revolution. The modern rise of China nevertheless stems from the market-based economic reforms that have been introduced since 1977. Growth rates of consistently around 10 per cent a year for over 30 years have made the Chinese economy the second largest in the world, after the USA. China is the second largest trading state in the world, the largest exporter and the second largest importer of goods. If current trends persist, China will become the largest economy in the world during the 2020s. Although China's world power is very closely related to its economic resurgence, its influence is also growing in other respects. China has by far the largest army in the world and is second only to the USA in terms of military spending. Its influence over Africa in particular has expanded considerably due to massive investment, linked to securing supplies of energy and raw materials. China's structural power has also grown, as is reflected in the growing influence of the G-20 (see p. 117), its role within the WTO (see p. 511) and the fate of the 2009 Copenhagen climate change conference (see p. 403). China's 'soft' power is linked to its association with anti-colonialism and its capacity to portray itself as the representative of the global South.

China's global power should not be over-stated, however. In the first place, China is still some way from challenging the USA as the world's number one power. Indeed, the Chinese leadership appears to recognize that continued US hegemony has a variety of advantages as far as China is concerned, not least insofar as it means that China can have global power without global responsibility. Thus, for example, it was the USA rather than China that was instrumental in orchestrating the international response to the 2007–09 global financial crisis. Similarly, China has been reluctant to mark out a clear global role for itself, being more concerned to act in conjunction with other states, as in the case of the so-called BRICs (see p. 477). In this sense, Chinese foreign policy is structured less around global power projection and more around establishing conditions that are favourable for continued economic success. Many, nevertheless, argue that internal contradictions may ultimately establish limits to China's external influence. The most important of these relate to the political pressures that are likely to be generated by economic liberalization, which may, in time, render one-party authoritarian rule unsustainable. This may either mean that the CCP's monopoly of political power will, sooner or later, become a constraint on continued economic growth, or that economic reform will inevitably build up pressure for political reform, leading to greater instability and perhaps the downfall of the CCP.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION . . .

The 2008 Russian war with Georgia

Events: On the night of 7–8 August 2008, as the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics was taking place, the Georgian military launched a large-scale assault against South Ossetia (population 50,000), an ethnic autonomous territory that had broken away from Georgia in 1990. Russian forces began to move into South Ossetia during 8 August, opening up a second front the following day in Abkhazia (population 200.000), another breakaway ethnic autonomous territory of Georgia. In the five-day war, massively outnumbered Georgian troops were expelled from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Russian forces entered Georgia unopposed, occupying the cities of Poti and Gori. A preliminary ceasefire, negotiated through the offices of the EU, was agreed on 12 August , which allowed a withdrawal of Russian troops to begin, although buffer zones were established around South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On 26 August, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with Russian troops being left in each by agreement with the respective governments.

Significance: The background to the war had been steadily intensifying tension between Russia and Georgia, dating back to the fragmentation and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This had nevertheless been intensified by growing links between Georgia and the USA, reflected particularly in Georgia's desire for membership of NATO. In this context, South Ossetia and Abkhazia became pawns in a larger conflict. What started as a war in South Ossetia was really a war between Russia and Georgia and, by extension, between Russia and the USA. Debates about 'who started the war', and about whether Russia engineered the circumstances that provided a pretext for action against Georgia, are, in a sense, immaterial. The real significance of Russia's war with Georgia was that it was a laboratory in which the great powers were able to test the limits of their strength. US policy since the end of the Cold War had aimed at preventing a resurgence of Russian power. To this end, the USA had supported action that would deprive Russia of control over its 'near abroad' (neighbouring regions in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia, which have traditionally been subject to Russian influence). This meant backing the eastward expansion of the EU and, more crucially, NATO, and a plan to site US anti-ballistic missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic. For Russia, the Georgian war marked the resurgence of its great power status, through Moscow's first military assault on foreign soil since the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan, which ended in 1989. Moreover, it did this confident in the knowledge that diplomatic condemnation from the USA and the West in general would not translate into military action in support of Georgia, thereby reflecting the limits of US power. Through the Georgian war, Russia therefore sent a powerful message to the USA as well as to other east European states contemplating closer relations with the West.

Does the Georgian war mean that a new Cold War has developed, or is developing, between Russia and the USA? How far may Russia go in flexing its new muscles? Talk of the revival of the Cold War is at best simplistic. Not only did the collapse of the Soviet Union bring to an end the ideological and economic dimensions of rivalry between Russia and the USA, but twenty-first century world order is also very different from the power vacuum in 1945 which allowed the USA and the Soviet Union to become superpowers, dividing the world between them. There is evidence, furthermore, that the Georgian war has led to a new accommodation between the USA and Russia, in which greater attention has been paid to Russian concerns and perceptions. This led, for instance, to the abandonment in 2009 of plans to site US missiles in Poland and Czechoslovakia and to a more cautious approach to the issue of NATO expansion. Finally, there are many issues on which the USA and Russia require each other's support, not least nuclear disarmament and countering terrorism.

advanced skills and production techniques has yet to be achieved. China's one child policy, introduced in 1979, also means that China has the most rapidly ageing population in the world, putting its future economic prospects seriously at risk. The most serious challenge facing China, however, may be how it reconciles tensions between its political and economic structures. While the Chinese political system remains firmly Stalinist, based on single-party rule by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), its economic system is increasingly market-orientated and firmly embedded in the global capitalist system. Although authoritarianism may have advantages in terms of managing large-scale economic change and, for instance, pushing through audacious infrastructure programmes, it may be unable to cope with the pluralizing and liberalizing pressures generated by a market capitalist system.

Russia's re-emergence as a great power has been evident in two major respects. First, since the sharp economic decline witnessed in the 1990s, associated with the 'shock therapy' transition to a market economy, a notable revival has taken place. This has largely been driven by the substantial expansion of oil and gas production, itself made possible by the fact that, at 7 million square kilometres, the Russian land mass is significantly greater than any other country and is still largely unexplored, and by steadily rising commodity prices. Although its economy is in serious need of diversification and remains heavily dependent on world commodity markets, Russia has emerged as an energy superpower. This allows it, for instance, to exert influence over the states of Eastern Europe and beyond by controlling the flow and price of oil and gas resources. Second, fuelled by growing economic confidence and strengthened nationalism, Russia has demonstrated a renewed appetite for military assertiveness, especially in relation to the so-called 'near abroad'. This was particularly demonstrated by the 2008 war with Georgia (see p. 232). Nevertheless, Russia's military spending lags a long way behind NATO's, with much of its equipment still stemming from the Cold War era, and extensive and exposed borders make Russia strategically vulnerable at a number of points.

Not all multipolar trends in twenty-first century world order are associated with the rise of emerging powers, however. Three broader developments have supported the fragmentation and pluralization of global power, and perhaps suggest that all state-centric models of world order (bipolar, unipolar or multipolar) and the distribution of global power are outmoded. The first of these developments is unfolding globalization. As all great powers are embedded to a greater or lesser extent in global economic arrangements and participate within an interlocking capitalist system, the pursuit of national self-interest can only mean, globalists argue, increased integration and cooperation. This implies that great power rivalry in terms of major geopolitical conflicts and certainly world war may be a thing of the past. In a context of increased interdependence and interconnectedness, economic rivalry may have displaced military conflict (at least amongst great powers). The second development is the growing trend towards global and sometimes regional governance. This stems from the fact that the principal challenges confronting states – climate change, crime, migration, disease and so on – are increasingly transnational in character and so can only be tackled through transnational cooperation, emphasizing that power is as much about collaboration as it is about conflict. (Such developments are discussed in detail in Chapters 18, 19 and 20.)

Finally, the trends towards globalization and in favour of regional and global governance have both had the effect of strengthening the role of non-state actors in world affairs. These non-state actors are many and various, ranging from transnational corporations (TNCs) (see p. 99) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (see p. 6) to terrorist networks and international criminal groups. For some, the emergence of global civil society (see p. 152) is in the process of bringing a form of cosmopolitan democracy into existence, thereby empowering previously weak or marginalized groups and movements (Archibugi and Held 1995), as discussed in Chapter 21. If global power is dispersed amongst a growing collection of great powers, as well as an expanding range of international organizations and non-state actors, the very idea of polarity is brought into question, meaning that world order may be acquiring a nonpolar character (Haass 2008).

Multipolar order or disorder?

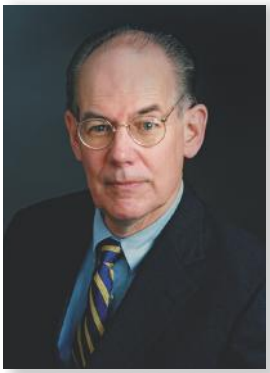
If twenty-first century world order has a multipolar character, what does this imply about the prospects for war, peace and global stability? Will the twenty-first century be marked by bloodshed and chaos, or by the advance of cooperation and prosperity? There are two quite different models of a multipolar world order. The first highlights the pessimistic implications of a wider diffusion of power amongst global actors. Neorealists have been particularly prominent in warning against the dangers of multipolarity, seeing a tendency towards insta-

Focus on . . .

Offensive or defensive realism?

Does uncertainty and instability in the international system encourage states to prioritize survival or to seek domination? Are states content with maintaining national security, or do they seek 'power after power'? Such questions have been at the heart of an important debate which has been conducted within neorealist theory about the primary motivation of states within an anarchic international order. So-called 'offensive realists', such as Mearsheimer (2001), argue that the combination of anarchy and endemic uncertainty about the actions of others forces states continually to seek to accumulate power, meaning that the primary motivation of states is to improve their position within the power hierarchy. In this view, all states are would-be 'hyperpowers' or 'global hegemons', meaning that perpetual great-power competition is inevitable.

On the other hand, 'defensive realists', such as Mastanduno (1991), argue that while states can be expected to act to prevent other state's from making gains at their expense, thereby achieving relative gains, they do not necessarily seek to maximize their own gains. In other words, the primary motivation of states is to guarantee their own security, in which case power is only a means to an end. This may, for example, have been evident in the USA's benign and essentially supportive response to the industrial advance of Japan in the post-1945 period. However, neither offensive realism nor defensive realism offers, on its own, a persuasive model of global politics. The former suggests endless war and violence, while the latter suggests that international affairs are characterized by peace and stability. It is almost the cornerstone of realist analysis that neither of these images is realistic.



John Mearsheimer (born 1947)

US political scientist and international relations theorist. Mearsheimer is one of the leading exponents of offensive realism and a key architect of neorealist stability theory. In 'Back to the Future' (1990) he argued that the Cold War had been largely responsible for maintaining peace in Europe, warning that the end of Cold War bipolarity created the prospect of increased international conflict. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), Mearsheimer argued that, as it is impossible to determine how much power is sufficient to ensure survival, great powers will always seek to achieve hegemony, behaving aggressively when they believe they enjoy a power advantage over their rivals. Mearsheimer has been a vocal critic of US policy towards China, believing that this is strengthening China, ultimately at the expense of the USA. He was also an outspoken opponent of the Iraq War, arguing that the use of military force would strengthen anti-Americanism in the Arab and Islamic worlds. His other major works include (with Stephen Walt) *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (2007).

bility and chaos as the key feature of its structural dynamic. Mearsheimer (1990) thus lamented the end of Cold War bipolarity, warning that Europe's future in particular would be characterized by a 'back to the future' scenario. By this, he was referring to the multipolar world orders that, arguably, gave rise to WWI and WWII by allowing ambitious powers to pursue expansionist goals precisely because power balances within the international system remained fluid. In this view, multipolarity is inherently unstable, certainly by comparison with bipolarity. This applies because more actors increases the number of possible conflicts and creates higher levels of uncertainty, intensifying the security dilemma (see p. 19) for all states. In addition, shifting alliances amongst multiple actors mean that changes in power balances are likely to be more frequent and possibly more dramatic. Such circumstances, 'offensive' realists in particular point out, encourage restlessness and ambition, making great powers more prone to indiscipline and risk-taking with inevitable consequences for global peace.

In addition to concerns about the structural implications of multipolarity, a number of emerging fault-lines and tensions have been identified. The most common of these has been the possibility of growing enmity, and possibly war, between the USA, the old hegemon, and China, the new hegemon. Will China's rise continue to be peaceful? Those who are most pessimistic about the changing power relationship between the USA and China argue that hegemonic powers rarely adjust easily or peacefully to declining status, while rising hegemons will, sooner or later, seek a level of politico-military power that reflects their economic dominance. Moreover, there are a number of sources of potential Sino–US conflict. For example, cultural and ideological differences between 'liberal-democratic' USA and 'Confucian' China may provide the basis for growing enmity and misunderstanding, in line with the 'clash of civilizations' thesis. In this light, the peaceful transition from British hegemony in the nineteenth century to US global hegemony in the twentieth century was only possible because of historical, cultural and political similarities that allowed the UK to view the rise of the USA as essentially unthreatening. Conflict could also arise

Focus on . . .

To balance or to bandwagon?

Neorealist theorists tend to see the balance of power as a consequence of structural pressures generated by the distribution of power (or capacities) between and amongst states. How does the international system produce such a fortuitous balance of power? Confronted by the uncertainties and instabilities of international anarchy, states have to choose between 'balancing' (opposing a rising or major power by aligning themselves with other weaker states) or what can be called 'bandwagoning' (siding with a rising or major power). Neorealists argue that balancing behaviour tends, in most circumstances, to prevail over bandwagoning. This happens because, in a context of anarchy, rising or major powers are an object of particular fear, as there is no constraint on how they may treat weaker states. Quite simply, powerful states cannot be trusted. Structural dynamics within the international system therefore tend to favour the balance of power. This helps also to explain the formation of alliances between states that are political and ideological enemies, as in the case of the US–Soviet alliance during World War II.

from divisions that already exist over issues such as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights generally, as well as over growing resource rivalry in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. However, others have portrayed the rise of China in a far less threatening light. Not only are China and the USA bound together by the bonds of economic interdependence (the USA is China's main export market, and China is the USA's most important creditor), but, as the twenty-first century progresses, these two powers may create a new form of bipolarity, which, as neorealists argue, would usher in a higher level of security and stability. The USA, furthermore, has an interest in China assuming greater global responsibilities, both to share the burden of such responsibilities and to encourage China to **bandwagon** rather than **balance**.

Another possible source of global tension arises from the renewed power and assertiveness of Russia, leading some to proclaim the emergence of a new Cold War. Although Russia's GDP is less than a twenty-fifth of that of the combined NATO members, it is, because of its nuclear stockpiles, the only power in the world that could destroy the USA. US policy towards Russia has therefore attempted both to integrate it into the institutions of global governance (for example, through membership of the G-8) and to prevent the possible return of Russian expansionism and territorial influence. This latter goal has been pursued through backing for EU and NATO expansion into the states of the former Soviet bloc and by the agreement, later abandoned, to site US anti-ballistic missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic. These developments are, however, unlikely to generate a new Cold War, as the dynamics of US–Russia relations have changed significantly since the superpower era, as has the global context in which this relationship takes place. An alternative scenario has nevertheless been suggested by Kagan (2008), who proclaimed the 'return of history', in the form of deepening tensions between democracy and authoritarianism, the latter led by the rising power of China and Russia. The difficulty with such a view, however, is that tensions between democratic states (for example, tensions

● **Bandwagon**: To side with a stronger power in the hope of increasing security and influence; 'jumping on the bandwagon'.

● **Balance**: To oppose or challenge a stronger or rising power for fear of leaving oneself exposed.

between the USA and Europe) and between authoritarian states (notably between China and Russia) may be just as significant as those across the democracy–authoritarian divide.

However, there is an alternative, and more optimistic, model of multipolarity. In the first place, this suggests that the emergence of new powers and the relative decline of the USA may be managed in a way that preserves peace and keeps rivalry under control. The USA's established approach to likely rivals has been to accommodate them in line with enlightened self-interest and in order to discourage them from aspiring to a greater role. This was evident in US support for the post-1945 Japanese reconstruction and in consistent encouragement given to the process of integration in Europe. A similar approach has been adopted to China, India and, in the main, to Russia. Such an approach tends to encourage emerging powers to 'bandwagon' rather than 'balance', becoming part of the usually US-led global trading and financial system rather than putting up barriers against the USA. It also makes the prospects of a 'USA versus the Rest' conflict significantly less likely, as potential rivals are at least as concerned about each other as they are about the USA. The USA's drift back to multilateralism, following its early unilateralist reaction to the emergence of a unipolar world order, not only reflects its recognition of the importance and efficacy of legitimate power, but also enhances its ability to manage shifting balances of power while maintaining peace and cooperation.

SUMMARY

- Power, in its broadest sense, is the ability to influence the outcome of events. Distinctions are nevertheless drawn between actual/potential power, relational/structural power and 'hard/soft' power. The notion of power as material 'power over' others has been subject to increased criticism, leading to more nuanced and multidimensional conceptions of power.
- The Cold War was marked by bipolar tension between a US-dominated West and a Soviet-dominated East. The end of the Cold War led to proclamations about the advent of a 'new world order'. However, this new world order was always imprecisely defined, and the idea quickly became unfashionable.
- As the sole remaining superpower, the USA has commonly been referred to as a 'global hegemon'. The implications of US hegemony became particularly apparent following September 11, as the USA embarked on a so-called 'war on terror', based on a neoconservative approach to foreign policy-making. This, nevertheless, drew the USA into deeply problematical military interventions.
- Although neo-con analysts argued that the USA had established a 'benevolent global hegemony', critics, who included realists, radicals and many in the global South, particularly in Muslim countries, argued that the USA was motivated by a desire to ensure economic advantage and to secure control of vital resources, even acting as a 'rogue superpower'.
- Twenty-first century world order increasingly has a multipolar character. This is evident in the rise of so-called 'emerging powers', notably China, but it is also a consequence of wider developments, including the advance of globalization and global governance and the growing importance of non-state actors.
- For neo-realists, a multipolar diffusion of power amongst global actors is likely to create a tendency towards instability and even war. On the other hand, multipolarity may strengthen the trend towards multilateralism, leading to stability, order and a tendency towards collaboration.

Questions for discussion

- Why has the notion of power-as-capabilities been criticized?
- To what extent are global outcomes determined by 'structural' power?
- Has 'hard' power become redundant in world affairs?
- Did Cold War bipolarity tend towards stability and peace, or tension and insecurity?
- Was the idea of a 'new world order' merely a tool to legitimize US hegemony?
- What are the implications of hegemony for world order?
- How has the 'war on terror' affected the global status of the USA?
- Is China in the process of becoming the next global hegemon?
- Is tension between the USA and 'the rest' a growing fault-line in global politics?
- Should emerging multipolarity be welcomed or feared?

Further reading

Cooper, R. *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (2004). A stimulating interpretation of the implications of the end of the Cold War, based on the division between the pre-modern, modern and so-called postmodern worlds.

Kennedy, P. *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (1989). A classic analysis of the wider factors affecting shifts in global power that provides an useful context to contemporary debates.

Parmar, I. and M. Cox (eds) *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy* (2010). A wide-ranging and insightful collection of essays on the role of soft power in affecting the balance of world order.

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