

CONTRIBUTORS

GRAHAM ALLISON, Harvard University

GEORGE BALL

JOHN H. BARTON, Stanford University

BARBARA A. BICKSLER, Institute for Defense Analyses

ROBERT BLACKWILL, Harvard University

MICHAEL BORRUS, University of California, Berkeley

DANIEL F. BURTON JR., Council on Competitiveness

BARRY E. CARTER, Georgetown University

MICHAEL W. DOYLE, Princeton University

RICHARD N. GARDNER, Columbia University

DAVID C. HENDRICKSON, Colorado College

B.R. INMAN

HENRY A. KISSINGER, Kissinger Associates

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

CHARLES A. KUPCHAN, Princeton University

CLIFFORD A. KUPCHAN, Columbia University

ERNEST R. MAY, Harvard University

JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER, University of Chicago

WILLIAM E. ODOM, Hudson Institute

PETER G. PETERSON, The Blackstone Group

ALAN D. ROMBERG, Council on Foreign Relations

THOMAS C. SCHELLING, University of Maryland

JAMES K. SEBENIUS, Harvard University

GREGORY F. TREVERTON, Council on Foreign Relations

PAUL D. WOLFOWITZ, Department of Defense

JOHN ZYSMAN, University of California, Berkeley

THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY
Columbia University

THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Rethinking America's Security

Beyond Cold War to New World Order

GRAHAM ALLISON

and

GREGORY F. TREVERTON

Editors

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY
New York London

Contents

Copyright © 1992 by The American Assembly

Chapter 8A, "Disorder Restored," copyright John J. Mearsheimer. Chapter 8B, "Balance of Power Sustained," copyright © 1991 Henry A. Kissinger. Chapter 8F, "The Unipolar Moment," copyright Charles Krauthammer.

All rights reserved.

Printed in The United States of America

First Edition

The text of this book is composed in Baskerville.
Manufactured by the Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rethinking America's security : beyond Cold War to new world order /
Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, editors.

p. cm.

At head of title: The American Assembly, Columbia University [and]
the Council on Foreign Relations.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. United States—National security. 2. United States—Foreign relations—
1989— I. Allison, Graham T. II. Treverton, Gregory F.

III. American Assembly. IV. Council on Foreign Relations.

UA23.R45B 1992

355'.093973—dc20

ISBN 0-393-03059-8 (Cloth)

ISBN 0-393-96218-0 (Paper)

W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110
W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 10 Copple Street, London WC1A 1PU

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Preface

DANIEL A. SHARP
PETER TARNOFF

13

Introduction and Overview

GRAHAM ALLISON
GREGORY F. TREVERTON

15

RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

- 1 National Security Portfolio Review
GRAHAM ALLISON
GREGORY F. TREVERTON

35

- 2 The Primacy of the Domestic Agenda
PETER G. PETERSON
with JAMES K. SEBENIUS

57

- 3 National Security in American History
ERNEST R. MAY

94

Disorder Restored

JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER

Many Americans and West Europeans believe that the prospects for creating a stable new world order are excellent. These optimists usually do not spell out the basis for their sanguine view, but instead, they tend to write and speak as if the prospects for international stability will automatically increase in the wake of the cold war. Nevertheless, close examination of the optimists' rhetoric reveals that it is based on a handful of key ideas about the nature of international relations.

Two of the optimists' most important beliefs challenge the very essence of the state system. First, some hold that the territorial state, the principal actor on the international stage since the birth of the European state system in 1648, is either a dinosaur flailing

JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER is professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago. He is also a consultant to the RAND Corporation. Professor Mearsheimer is the recipient of several distinguished awards and serves as officer to renowned organizations and associations. He has written many articles for leading publications and is the author of two books, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* and *Conventional Deterrence*.

about on its last legs, or at the very least, an organization with a severely circumscribed capacity for causing trouble. Second, others argue that the military competition between states, which has been a constant feature of international politics as well as a profound source of instability, is now a thing of the past, or at the very least, subordinated to economic competition, which according to the optimists' logic, rarely results in war.¹

Although these purported changes took place during the cold war, the optimists argue they were in large part blocked from view by the enduring competition between the superpowers, which failed to grasp the revolution taking place before them. However, with the cold war now relegated to the dustbin of history, those changes are rapidly becoming apparent to all. Most important of all, optimists believe these changes can serve as the basis for a more peaceful world in the twenty-first century.

In fact, however, there have been no fundamental changes in the nature of international politics since World War II. The state system is alive and well, and although regrettable, military competition between sovereign states will remain the distinguishing feature of international politics for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the conventional wisdom notwithstanding, there is likely to be more—not less—disorder around the globe in the wake of the cold war.

The Future of the State

Is the territorial state finished, or at least severely constrained? Three arguments usually underpin the claim that sovereignty is at bay.

Some optimists claim that powerful international institutions or "regimes" are emerging as important actors on the world scene, and that they have the capacity to seriously constrain state behavior. States, so the argument goes, are no longer the principal actors in the international system. The most frequently cited example of this phenomenon is the European Community (EC), which purportedly has coercive influence on the actions of West European states.

Other optimists emphasize that states have lost large amounts of

control over their societies because direct ties between individuals and organizations in different societies are growing at a spectacular rate. These transnational links shift the primary loyalty of citizens away from central governments toward actors in other societies, thus making it difficult for states to command their own citizens. States are anachronistic in a world that is fast becoming a global village.

Finally, some optimists argue that economic interdependence among states is growing, and that the resulting integration of national economies will eventually lead those states to political integration. Presumably, this integration will reduce the number of states over time, until there is eventually one giant super-state, which has no rival to fight with. The early evidence of this emerging trend, so the argument goes, can be seen in Western Europe, where ongoing economic integration is slowly but steadily eroding national boundaries.

On close inspection, each of these arguments is flawed. Let us first consider the empirical evidence, and then turn to their conceptual shortcomings.

There is what social scientists call a "selection bias" problem in the optimists' case. Specifically, proponents of the claim that states are either withering away or losing their autonomy invariably point to Western Europe alone as evidence for their position. Optimists cannot point to any other region of the globe, including the rest of Europe, where similar trends are at work. In fact, the state system is thriving outside of Western Europe. Virtually all Third World states are fiercely determined to maintain their sovereignty, and it is difficult to imagine the East European states allowing their independence to be challenged after forty-five years of Soviet occupation. Moreover, the number of sovereign states in the system continues to increase.

Even in Western Europe, however, the state system is intact. There has certainly been considerable economic integration in that region during the past decade, but there is little evidence that serious political integration is following in its wake. The Persian Gulf crisis was an important test of that trend. The European states failed to coordinate their responses, and acted very much like the sovereign actors they are. Also, the West Europeans have

not made much progress in their efforts to design a common security policy. There is certainly a lot of high-sounding rhetoric, but fundamental disagreements among the major powers have effectively stymied the development of concrete policies.

There are two conceptual shortcomings in the "sovereignty-at-bay" thesis that raise further doubts about it.

First, nationalism makes it likely that states will remain the principal actors in international politics. Nationalism is a political ideology that assumes the world can be divided into nations or tribes, and that each of these nations should have its own territorial state.² Nationalism has been an extremely powerful force for two centuries. It will be difficult to transcend the state system as long as nationalism is a potent force in world politics. There is little reason to think that nationalism is a spent force. Not only is it a thoroughly modern phenomenon, but as events in Eastern Europe make clear, a force with considerable staying power.

Nationalism is widely recognized to be a potent force in both the Third World and Eastern Europe, but it is thought to be absent from Western Europe, where ever-increasing numbers of citizens supposedly see themselves not as Germans or Britons, but as Europeans. In fact, nationalism remains a dominating force in Western Europe, and Margaret Thatcher's was not the only evidence of this phenomenon: German unification was another clear manifestation of nationalism—albeit in a benign form. German unification was predicated on the twin beliefs that underpin nationalism: there is a German nation and all members of the German tribe should be free to live in a German state. The recent controversy caused by some prominent Germans advocating a return to greater nationalism in historical education is further evidence that nationalism remains a force to reckon with in Germany, as it is elsewhere.³ Finally, it is difficult to imagine the French, who remain deeply committed to their own culture, allowing their nation to be subordinated to some greater European entity—especially since the Germans would probably play the dominant role in shaping that new polity.

Second, the sovereignty-at-bay argument fails to recognize that the cold war was largely responsible for the unusually high levels of economic integration and political cooperation in Western Europe over the past forty-five years. Old-fashioned balance-of-power

logic mandated cooperation among the Western democracies to meet the Soviet threat. Britain, Germany, and France no longer worried about each other because all faced a greater menace from the Soviets. In fact, each Western democracy had a vested interest in seeing its alliance partners grow more powerful economically and militarily, since each additional increment of power helped deter a Soviet attack. Furthermore, America's hegemonic position in NATO guaranteed that no EC state would threaten the others. For example, France did not have to fear Germany because the American presence in Germany meant that the Germans were not free to attack anyone.

Relations among the EC states will be fundamentally altered in the wake of the cold war. Without a common Soviet threat and without the American night watchman, Western European states will begin viewing each other with greater fear and suspicion, as they did for centuries before the onset of the cold war.

In sum, it is much too soon to cheer the passing of the state system in Europe, to say nothing of the rest of the world. States are likely to remain the principal actors in international politics for a long time to come.

The Future of Security Competition

States have historically competed with each other for military security in circumstances best characterized as a zero-sum game. That competition, which sometimes leads to war, has long been the defining characteristic of international politics. Many optimists maintain that states are becoming increasingly less concerned about security issues, and focused instead on economic concerns. Post-World War II Germany and Japan, not the United States and Soviet Union, are seen as the appropriate models for the future.

Optimists usually employ two lines of argument to support their claim about the shrinking importance of military competition among states. Some focus on the horrors of war to make the case that war is rapidly becoming an obsolescent enterprise. Others offer an economic argument based on the assumption that modern states are more concerned about prosperity than security.

The Obsolescence of War

Optimists often claim that war had become so deadly by the early twentieth century that it was on the verge of becoming an unacceptable form of state behavior.⁴ Like dueling and slavery, war was about to fall into the category of outmoded social activities that civilized states no longer pursued. States, so the argument goes, are inexorably learning that lesson and are therefore increasingly less disposed to "reach for their revolvers" when tensions develop between them. Consequently, states do not have to pay much attention to security issues, thus greatly ameliorating the traditional military competition among them.

It is certainly true that modern war can be extremely deadly. The horrors that would attend a nuclear war are well understood in the West and require no elaboration here. Conventional war can also be terribly destructive: for example, the U.S. fire-bombing campaign against Japan from March to August 1945 destroyed virtually all of Japan's major cities.⁵ The war on the Eastern Front in Europe (1941-1945) was even more deadly. Not only were many millions of combatants killed in brutal combat, but millions of prisoners of war and millions of innocent civilians were systematically murdered by the Nazis and their allies.⁶

As war has become increasingly destructive over time, it has become less frequent. War was more commonplace, for example, in the eighteenth century than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷ However, war is not obsolescent.

Consider the evidence. Since World War II, numerous statesmen have chosen to go to war. The United States has fought three major wars in this period: Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf conflict. Israel has fought major wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. Furthermore, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in 1973 knowing that the Israelis had nuclear weapons. In fact, there have been a number of wars during the past forty-five years involving a nuclear-armed state.

There is an important conceptual flaw in the obsolescence of war argument that points up why war remains a central feature of world politics. The claim that *conventional* war has become so costly

that states can no longer consider it a serious option rests on the assumption that all conventional wars must be long and bloody wars of attrition. It is evident from several wars since 1945, as well as several campaign-ending battles of the Second World War, that it is still possible to gain a quick and decisive victory on the battlefield and avoid the devastation of a protracted conflict. This point was certainly made clear in the Gulf War, where the United States and its allies won a stunning military victory against Iraq, and suffered remarkably few casualties in the process. As long as the possibility remains that states can win a conventional war at an acceptable cost, the threat of conventional war will remain a serious concern for states.⁸

The World War II cases described above support this point. Japanese leaders did not attack the United States in December 1941 thinking that in less than four years the American military would smash and strangle their country to the point of ruin. If they had known the war's outcome, they surely would not have struck at Pearl Harbor. Although many Japanese policy makers recognized the odds of victory were slim, they believed that there was still a reasonable chance that Japan could win a military victory against the United States. Moreover, they clearly saw continued peace leading to ruin under pressure of the U.S. embargo. Adolf Hitler and his lieutenants did not invade the Soviet Union in June 1941 thinking that Germany would suffer a devastating defeat in the ensuing war. In fact, the Nazi leadership thought that the Wehrmacht would win a striking victory against the Soviet Union, similar to the victories achieved against Poland in 1939, and France in 1940. The central point here is that conventional wars can sometimes be won rather cheaply, and national leaders occasionally recognize that fact, and as long as that situation obtains, states must pay careful attention to their security environment.

One might argue that this discussion about conventional war misses the fundamental fact that we live in a nuclear world in which war between great powers is no longer a viable option. Nuclear weapons surely reduce the likelihood of war between rival states, but there are two reasons why the threat of war remains a serious concern even in a world of nuclear powers.

First, there is always the possibility that a conventional war

might start between two nuclear-armed states because one side does not believe that the other side's threat to use nuclear weapons is credible. The logic is straightforward: if both sides have a robust nuclear retaliatory capability, there is little to be gained by going nuclear, and a powerful reason—avoiding incineration—for keeping the war conventional. Thus a state under pressure to go to war might be willing to bet that an adversary will not use nuclear weapons if attacked, but will fight conventionally.

Second, there is a well-developed body of strategic literature that lays out plausible scenarios where nuclear weapons are used in a war. Let us consider four of the most prominent scenarios. *Crisis Instability*: A heated crisis develops between two states with vulnerable nuclear forces. There would be powerful incentives for each side to strike the other's vulnerable nuclear arsenal before the other side struck first. *Preventive War*: One of two potential adversaries has nuclear weapons, but the other side is on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons. The state with the nuclear arsenal would have strong incentives to use nuclear weapons to destroy its rival's burgeoning nuclear capability before it became operational. After all, the victim would not be able to retaliate in kind. *Non-nuclear Adversary*: Again, we have two potential adversaries, but only one has nuclear weapons. If a major crisis broke out between them, and the conventional balance of power was roughly equal, the nuclear-armed state would surely think about using nuclear weapons against the non-nuclear state. *Nuclear Escalation*: In the event of a conventional war between two nuclear powers, there is always the danger of accidental or inadvertent escalation, or the purposeful use of nuclear weapons by one side to rescue a losing situation on the conventional battlefield.⁹

The claim here is not that these scenarios are likely, but instead that there is some small but reasonable possibility of nuclear use. That simple fact, coupled with the horrors that would attend a nuclear war, leaves states no choice but to worry much about their security environment.

The events of World War II on the Eastern Front highlight another reason why states must be deeply concerned about possible military threats. Modern nation states sometimes go berserk and murder vast numbers of noncombatants from the defeated

state. These massacres occur because powerful ideological forces—be they fascism, nationalism, or religious fundamentalism—can produce deep-seated hatred between states, and because modern nation states usually have the technology and organizational wherewithal to build formidable killing machines. Thus losing a war in the twentieth century might involve much more than simply getting beaten on the battlefield, or even bombed from the air. Military defeat can result in the death and destruction of a society. Had the Nazis won World War II, for example, Polish society, not to mention the Polish state, would have been eliminated from the face of the earth.¹⁰ Although such completely barbaric behavior is not commonplace, the fact that there are a number of similar cases means that no state can afford to take the chance that a potential rival might go berserk. This logic compels states to worry about their security, and thus to compete among themselves for advantage, or at least to prevent others from achieving advantage.

Economic Liberalism

Optimists also employ an economic argument to make their case that interstate competition for security has waned greatly in recent years. They start with the assumption that modern states are essentially welfare states, in which governing elites are prisoners of consumer oriented populations that demand economic prosperity. Prosperity, not security, is the principal goal of modern states, because wealth, not martial glory, is the chief aim of most citizens. At the same time, statesmen have come to recognize that prosperity can easily be achieved without conquest in an interdependent world. Indeed, they have learned that imperialism leads to overextension, which leads to economic decline, not prosperity. Japanese and German behavior in the cold war, in contrast to Soviet and American actions, shows clearly that conquest does not pay. By this logic, the key to achieving prosperity is to establish and maintain a liberal economic order that allows free economic exchange between states.

The main flaw in this argument is that the principal assumption underpinning it—states are primarily motivated by the desire to

achieve prosperity—is wrong. States are surely concerned about prosperity, and thus economic calculations are hardly trivial for them. However, states operate in both an international political environment and an international economic environment, and the former dominates the latter in cases where the two come into conflict. The reason is straightforward: the international political system is anarchic, which means that each state must always be concerned to ensure its own survival.¹¹ A state can have no higher goal than survival, since profits matter little when the enemy is occupying your country and slaughtering your citizens. Therefore, when push comes to shove, international political considerations will be paramount in the minds of decision makers.

Germany and especially Japan were exceptions to this rule during the cold war. They mainly concentrated on achieving prosperity in the decades after 1945, while security was a second-order concern. This situation, however, was highly unusual and is likely to end with the passing of the cold war. The devastation inflicted on Germany and Japan in World War II, coupled with the intense superpower rivalry that developed in the late 1940s, forced the United States to provide security for both states, alleviating them of the burden of protecting themselves from the Soviet threat. At the same time, the United States had a vested interest in encouraging and fostering economic growth in Germany and Japan, since both states could be powerful cold war allies. Thus security concerns tended to take a back seat to economic concerns in Germany and Japan over the past forty-five years. That situation will change once the cold war order is torn down and Germany and Japan no longer rely on the United States to provide them with security, but must provide it for themselves.

Furthermore, economic interdependence, which is a central ingredient of a liberal economic order, tends to foster security competition among states. Interdependence is defined as a situation in which two states are mutually vulnerable; each is a hostage of the other in the economic realm. Interdependence, according to the optimists' logic, allows states to compel each other to cooperate on economic matters, much as mutual assured destruction allows nuclear powers to compel each other to respect their security. However, states will struggle to escape the vulnerability that interde-

pendence creates, in order to bolster their national security. States that depend on others for critical economic supplies will fear cutoff or blackmail in time of crisis or war; they may try to extend political control to the source of supply, giving rise to conflict with the source or with its other customers. Interdependence, in other words, will probably lead to greater security competition.

Finally, welfare states operating in an interdependent economy might be pushed toward war for prosperity reasons. Economic interactions between states often cause serious frictions, even when the overall consequences are positive. There will invariably be winners and losers within each state, and losers rarely accept defeat gracefully. In modern states, where leaders have to pay careful attention to their constituents, losers can cause considerable trouble. Even in cases where only winners are involved, there are sometimes squabbles over how the spoils are divided. At the same time, there will be opportunities for blackmail and for brinkmanship in a highly dynamic economic system where states are dependent on each other. For example, although mutual vulnerabilities may arise among states, the actual levels of dependence are likely to be unequal. A less vulnerable state will probably have greater bargaining power over its more dependent partners and might attempt to coerce them into making extravagant concessions. Furthermore, different political systems, not to mention individual leaders, have different capacities for engaging in tough bargaining. Elites under pressure to provide prosperity for a demanding populace, who feel that the actions of another state are undermining their efforts to provide it, might very well think about employing force to rectify the situation. It is not certain that the people, seeing their prosperity threatened, would oppose war. Again, we see evidence that interdependence is likely to promote rather than eliminate security competition.

The Future World Disorder

The foregoing analysis challenges the optimists' rosy assessment about the prospects for creating a stable world order. I shall now go beyond that critique and explain why the end of the cold war is likely to lead to greater international instability.

The cold war is *not* a period of unbounded peace and prosperity. There were many wars in the Third World, a few of which involved the superpowers in serious combat. Afghanistan, Korea, and Vietnam are the most prominent examples. Virtually all Third World conflicts indirectly involved the superpowers, since they both worked hard to gain client states in the Third World. These wars produced modest casualties for the superpowers, but large casualties for Third World nations. Furthermore, the cold war inflicted oppressive political regimes on the peoples of Eastern Europe, who were denied basic human rights by their forced membership in the Soviet empire. It also consumed national wealth by giving rise to large and costly defense establishments in both East and West.

On the other hand, there has been no great power war since 1945. Europe, which has been plagued by war throughout its history, and was the scene of two extremely costly world wars in the first half of this century, enjoyed its longest period of peace in the cold war. The early years of the cold war (1945-63) were marked by a handful of crises, although none brought Europe to the brink of war. Since 1963, however, there have been no East-West crises in Europe. It has been difficult—if not impossible—for the last two decades to find serious national security analysts who have thought there was a real chance the Soviets would attack Western Europe. Northeast Asia is the other scene of great power war in the first forty-five years of this century. Except for the Korean conflict, this region too has been remarkably stable during the cold war.

Given the vast violence and suffering that attends great power wars, the chief criterion for assessing the stability of different world orders must be whether they make such conflicts more or less likely. On that score, the cold war looks remarkably attractive, and one can safely conclude that the net human and economic costs of the cold war order have been far lower than the costs of the disorder that marked the period between 1900-1945. What about the future?

The next decades in a world without the superpowers will probably not be as violent as the first forty-five years of this century, but will probably be substantially more prone to violence than the past forty-five years. First, the prospects for great power crises and war

are likely to increase markedly in the wake of the cold war. Second, there is not likely to be any abatement in either the number or the ferocity of Third World conflicts. Third, nuclear proliferation, which has been contained reasonably well in the cold war, is likely to become a significant problem in the decades ahead, increasing the chances of nuclear war.

Great Power Conflict

This pessimistic assessment about great power conflict rests on the argument that the distribution and character of military power are the root causes of peace and war. Specifically, the comparative peacefulness of the postwar era flowed from the bipolar distribution of power in the international system, and the rough equality of military strength attained by those two polar states—as well as from a third cause, the appearance of nuclear weapons, which vastly expanded the potential violence of war, and so made deterrence exceedingly robust.

Bipolarity made both Europe and Northeast Asia a simpler place in which only one point of friction—the East-West conflict—needed to be managed to avoid war. The two blocs encompassed most of the states in these crucial regions, leaving few unprotected weak states for the Soviets to conquer.¹² As a result the Soviets have had few targets to bully in one-on-one encounters. They have also been unable to gang up with another major power against the few states that are unprotected, because their West bloc adversary has been their only potential gang-up partner.

Bipolarity also left less room for miscalculation of both resolve and capability. During the first fifteen years of the cold war the rules of the road for the conflict were not yet established, giving rise to several serious crises. However, over time both sides gained a clear sense of how far they could push the other, and what the other would not tolerate. A set of rules came to be agreed upon: an understanding on the division of rights in Austria, Berlin, and elsewhere; a proscription on secret unilateral redeployment of large nuclear forces to areas contiguous to the opponent; mutual toleration of reconnaissance satellites; agreement on rules of peacetime engagement between naval forces; and so forth. The

absence of serious crises during 1963-91 was due in part to the growth of these agreements on the rights of both sides, and the rules of conduct. These could develop in large part because the system was bipolar in character. Bipolarity meant that the same two states remained adversaries for a long period, giving them time to learn how to manage their conflict without war. By contrast, a multipolar world of shifting coalitions would have forced adversaries to frequently relearn how their opponents' defined their interests, to reach new accords on the division of rights, and to reestablish rules of competitive conduct.

Bipolarity also left less room to miscalculate the relative strength of the opposing coalitions. The composition of possible war coalitions has been clear because only two blocs have existed, both led by an overwhelmingly dominant power that could discipline its members. Either side could have miscalculated its relative military strength, but bipolarity removed ambiguity about relative strength arising from uncertainty about diplomacy.

The East-West military balance has been roughly equal throughout the cold war, which has further bolstered stability. This approximate parity strengthened deterrence by ensuring that no state was tempted to use force to exploit its power advantage. Parity, in turn, resulted partly from bipolarity. Because the two blocs already encompassed all the states of Europe and Northeast Asia, both sides have balanced mainly by internal means (military build-up), rather than external means (diplomacy and alliances); these more efficient means have produced a more nearly equal balance.

Nuclear weapons also played a key role in preventing great power war in the decades after World War II.

Western elites on both sides of the Atlantic quickly recognized that nuclear weapons were vastly destructive and that their widespread use in Europe would cause unprecedented devastation. Soviet leaders also recognized the horrendous results that a nuclear war would produce. Some Soviet military officers have asserted that victory is possible in nuclear war, but even they have acknowledged that such a victory would be Pyrrhic. Soviet civilians have generally argued that victory is impossible. Official rhetoric aside, the actual behavior of policy makers on both sides has been very

cautious in the presence of nuclear weapons. There is not a single case of a leader brandishing nuclear weapons during a crisis or behaving as if nuclear war might be a viable option for solving important political problems. On the contrary, policy makers have never gone beyond nuclear threats of a very subtle sort, and have shown great caution when the possibility of nuclear confrontation has emerged.¹³ This cautious conduct has lowered the risk of war.

Nuclear weapons also imposed an equality and clarity on the power relations between the superpowers. This equality and clarity represented a marked change from the earlier non-nuclear world in which sharp power inequalities and miscalculations of relative power were common.

Bipolarity will disappear with the passing of the cold war, and multipolarity will emerge in the new international order. Germany, France, Britain, and perhaps Italy will assume major power status in Europe. The Soviet Union will decline from superpower status but will remain a major European power, and probably be a force to reckon with in Asia as well. China, India, Japan, and perhaps Pakistan will be major powers in Asia. The United States will surely remain a great power, with the capability to influence events in both Europe and Asia. The other two dimensions of the new order—the distribution of power among these great powers, and the distribution of nuclear weapons among them—are not predetermined, and several possible arrangements could develop.

This new international system would suffer the problems general to multipolar systems, and would therefore be more prone to instability. There would be many possible conflict dyads across which war might break out. Power imbalances would be commonplace as a result of the opportunities this system would present for bullying and ganging up. There would also be considerable opportunity for miscalculation, since the new order might well witness shifting patterns of conflict, leaving insufficient time for adversaries to develop agreed divisions of rights and agreed rules of the road, or constantly forcing them to reestablish new agreements and rules as old antagonisms fade and new ones arise. The problem of containing German and Japanese power will emerge once again, but the multipolar configuration of power in Europe and Asia will make it difficult to form effective counterbalancing coalitions.

tions, for much the same reason that effective counterbalancing coalitions failed to form in the 1930s. Eventually the problem of containing the Soviet Union could also reemerge. Finally, conflicts may erupt in Eastern Europe, providing the vortex that could pull others into a wider confrontation.

It is difficult to predict the precise balance of military power that will emerge among the great powers, although there is potential for unstable power imbalances among them. Consider the balance of power in post-cold war Europe, where the future of Soviet power is hard to forecast. The Soviet Union might recover its strength soon after withdrawing from Central Europe. In this case Soviet power would outmatch German power. Conversely, centrifugal national forces may pull the Soviet Union apart, leaving no remnant state that is the equal of a united Germany. Finally, and most likely, Germany and the Soviet Union might emerge as powers of roughly equal strength. The first two scenarios, with their marked inequality between the two leading powers, would be especially worrisome, although there is still cause for concern even if Soviet and German power is balanced.

The end of the cold war also complicates the matter of nuclear deterrence. For example, the departure of the superpowers from Central Europe would remove the large nuclear arsenals they now maintain in that potentially dangerous region. This would thereby remove the pacifying effect that these weapons have had on European politics. Of course, the Germans do not have their own nuclear weapons, a situation likely to make them feel insecure and create powerful incentives to acquire them. The Japanese also have no nuclear weapons, and there too it is likely that as the American nuclear umbrella is removed from over their head, pressure will build to acquire nuclear weapons.

There are essentially three broad nuclear futures, none of which is likely to serve as the basis of a stable new international order.

Many Europeans and some Americans seek to eliminate nuclear weapons from the international system. Fashioning a nuclear-free world would require Britain, China, France, India, Israel, the Soviet Union, the United States, and presumably Pakistan and South Africa to rid themselves of these talismans of their sovereignty—an improbable event, to say the least. Those

who wish for it nevertheless believe it would be the most peaceful arrangement possible. In fact, a nuclear-free world has the distinction of being the most dangerous among the envisionable post-cold war orders. The pacifying effects of nuclear weapons—the caution they generate, the security they provide, the rough equality they impose, and the clarity of relative power they create—would be lost. Peace would then depend on the other dimensions of the new order—the number of poles, and the distribution of power among them. The geometry of world power would probably look much like it did between the world wars—a design for tension, crisis, and possibly war.

A more plausible order for the post-cold war world is one in which the existing nuclear powers keep their nuclear weapons, but no new nuclear powers emerge. This scenario sees a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, but leaves nuclear weapons on the European flanks. Neither Germany nor Japan acquire nuclear weapons in this scenario. This also seems unlikely, since many non-nuclear states will have substantial incentives to acquire their own nuclear weapons. Germany and Japan, for example, are likely to want nuclear weapons to protect themselves from blackmail by other nuclear powers. Moreover, Germany and Japan would have greater economic strength than either Britain or France, and therefore may well desire nuclear weapons to raise their military status to a level commensurate with their economic status. The minor powers of Eastern Europe will also have strong incentives to acquire nuclear weapons. Without them, the East European states would be open to nuclear blackmail from the Soviet Union and Germany (if the latter acquired its own nuclear arsenal), and the fact that no East European state could match their conventional strength gives these minor powers an additional incentive to acquire a nuclear deterrent. In short, a continuation of the current pattern of ownership without proliferation seems unlikely.

How stable would this order based on nonproliferation be? The continued presence of nuclear weapons in the hands of a few major powers would have some pacifying effects. Specifically, nuclear weapons would induce greater caution on their owners, would give the nuclear powers greater security, would work to equalize the relative power of states that possess them, and would

reduce the risk of miscalculation. However, these benefits would be limited if nuclear weapons did not proliferate beyond their current owners, to include the other great powers in the system. There are four main reasons for this conclusion.

First, the caution and the security that nuclear weapons impose would be missing from the center of Europe. The entire region between France and the Soviet Union, extending from the Arctic in the north to the Mediterranean in the south, and comprising some eighteen significant states, would become a large zone of "safety" for conventional war. Second, asymmetrical power relations would be bound to develop, between nuclear and non-nuclear states and among non-nuclear states, raising the dangers that attend such asymmetries. Third, the risk of miscalculation would arise, reflecting the multipolar character of this system and the absence of nuclear weapons from a large portion of it. A durable agreed political order would be hard to build because political coalitions would tend to shift over time, causing miscalculations of resolve between adversaries; and the relative strength of potential war coalitions would be hard to calculate because coalition strength would depend heavily on the vagaries of diplomacy. Such uncertainties about relative capabilities would be mitigated in conflicts that arose among nuclear powers: nuclear weapons tend to equalize power even among states or coalitions of widely disparate resources, and thus diminish the importance of additions or deductions from each coalition. However, uncertainty would still be acute among the many states that would remain non-nuclear. Fourth, Japan and the conventionally armed states of Central Europe would depend for their security in mass armies, giving them an incentive to infuse their societies with hypernationalism in order to maintain public support for national defense efforts.

The most probable scenario in the wake of the cold war is further nuclear proliferation. This outcome is laden with dangers, but it also provides the best hope for maintaining stability among the great powers. Everything depends on how proliferation is managed. Mismanaged proliferation could produce disaster, while well-managed proliferation could produce an order nearly as stable as that of the cold war. Unfortunately, a mismanaged proliferation process is the more likely outcome.

The dangers that could arise from mismanaged proliferation are both profound and numerous. There is the danger that the proliferation process itself could give one of the existing nuclear powers a strong incentive to stop its non-nuclear neighbor from joining the club, much as Israel used force to halt Iraq's nuclear program in 1981. There is also the danger that an unstable nuclear competition will emerge among the new nuclear states. They may lack the resources to make their nuclear forces invulnerable, which could create first-strike fears and incentives—a recipe for disaster in a tense crisis. Finally, there is the danger that proliferation, by increasing the number of fingers on the nuclear trigger, would increase the risk of nuclear weapons being fired by accident, or captured by terrorists, or used by madmen.

These and other dangers of proliferation can be lessened if the current nuclear powers take the right steps. To forestall preventive attacks, they can extend security guarantees. To help the new nuclear powers secure their deterrents, they can provide technical assistance. And they can help to socialize nascent nuclear societies to understand the lethal character of the forces they are acquiring. This kind of well-managed proliferation can help bolster peace.

Ideally proliferation should stop with Germany and Japan. Each has a large economic base, and thus can afford to build a secure nuclear retaliatory force. Moreover, Germany and Japan will no doubt feel insecure without nuclear weapons, and if they feel insecure their impressive conventional strength will give them a significant capacity to cause trouble. Different states in Asia and Eastern Europe may also come to want their own nuclear weapons. Since these states may be unable, even with superpower help, to build a secure deterrent, it would be best if they did not go nuclear. However, if the broader spread of nuclear weapons proves impossible to prevent without taking extreme steps, the current nuclear powers should let proliferation in Asia and Eastern Europe go on, while doing all they can to channel it in safe directions.

I am pessimistic that proliferation can be well-managed. The current members of the nuclear club are likely to resist proliferation, but they cannot easily work to manage this tricky process while at the same time resisting it. There is a natural tension be-

tween the two goals. There will be several motives to resist. The established nuclear powers will be exceedingly chary of helping the new nuclear powers build secure deterrents, simply because it runs against the grain of state behavior to share military secrets with other states. After all, knowledge of sensitive military technology could be turned against the donor state if that technology were further passed on to adversaries. Furthermore, proliferation in Asia and Europe would undermine the legitimacy of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and this could open the floodgates of proliferation worldwide. The nuclear powers would not want that to happen, and so they will probably spend their energy trying to thwart proliferation, rather than seeking to manage it.

The best time for proliferation to occur would be during a period of relative international calm. Proliferation in the midst of a crisis would be especially dangerous, since states in conflict with the emerging nuclear powers would then have a powerful incentive to interrupt the process by force. However, proliferation may not begin until the outbreak of crisis, because the opposition to it within potential nuclear powers would be so vociferous, and the external resistance from the nuclear club would be so great. Thus it may take a crisis to make potential nuclear powers willing to pay the domestic and international costs of building a nuclear force. All of which means that proliferation is likely to occur under international conditions that virtually insure it will be mismanaged.

Third World Conflict

There is a popular belief that most wars in the Third World were caused by the superpowers, which competed with each other across the entire globe. The United States and the Soviet Union, after all, fought battles with proxies on different continents, and they destabilized Third World governments, which led to greater regional instability. With the demise of the cold war, and the shrinking of the superpowers' power projection capabilities, some students of international politics expect that there will be a significant reduction of Third World conflict.

There was an intense superpower competition in the Third World that contributed to the instability that plagued the less de-

veloped regions of the world. However, this is not the whole story about the origins of Third World conflict. There are two other dimensions to this phenomenon, which point toward a more pessimistic conclusion about the post-cold war prospects for peace in the Third World.

First, the root cause of Third World conflict has been intense hostility between and within the regional states themselves. The traditional sources of great power conflict—balance-of-power logic, ideological antagonism, nationalism, territorial disputes—are also the main source of war in the Third World. This situation is hardly surprising since states are the principal actors in the industrialized world as well as the Third World, and there is little reason to expect, at either the domestic or the international level, fundamental differences in how these two categories of states behave. Although the superpowers often exacerbate tensions between Third World states, the root causes of trouble are invariably local. A simple rhetorical question illustrates this point. Is it likely that the Arab-Israeli conflict, the India-Pakistan conflict, or the Iraq-Iran conflict would not have occurred, or even been less intense, if the superpowers had confined their competition solely to Europe? I think not. In short, Third World feuds were not caused by the superpowers, and therefore they are not likely to disappear in the wake of the cold war.

Second, although the superpowers often made a bad situation worse in the Third World by exploiting it for selfish purposes, they sometimes worked to keep a crisis between Third World states from escalating into a war. The Soviets, for example, tried to discourage the Egyptians from going to war against Israel in 1973. After the war broke out, the Soviets and the Americans stopped it before Israel could destroy the Egyptian army. There was concern at the time that the superpowers might come to blows over this war. The fact is that the superpower competition sometimes had a dampening effect on Third World conflict because both the Americans and the Soviets feared that a regional war might escalate to a world war that neither wanted.

The bottom line is that while superpower involvement in the Third World often led to instability, it was not the root cause of regional trouble, and, in fact, it could work as a stabilizing as well

as destabilizing force. Thus there is no good reason to expect the demise of the cold war to lead to a more stable Third World.

There are two additional reasons for pessimism about peace in the Third World.

It is likely that the great powers that dominate the new multipolar world will intervene in the Third World. A cursory glance at the history of imperialism makes clear that Third World intervention did not start with the superpowers, but was a refined practice long before the cold war. The United States, for example, intervened in Latin America on numerous occasions before 1945. The great powers will surely find reasons—good and bad—for military intervention. Protecting resources like oil will be a rationale. After all, the Persian Gulf war was a post-cold war crisis, and it was driven in part by concern about the control of oil. Border disputes like the one between China and Vietnam will also be a problem in the post-cold war world. The power projection capabilities of the great powers will not reach superpower levels, but that limit in reach will be compensated for by the increase in the number of major powers that will be active in the Third World.

Finally, there is the issue of nuclear proliferation. It is likely to accelerate. The growing technical capacities of Third World states will boost proliferation, but the crucial driving forces will be political not technical. Specifically, the cold war order had an important dampening effect on proliferation, which is about to be lost.¹⁴

The two superpowers opposed nuclear proliferation, preferring instead that they alone had nuclear weapons. The superpowers had such a clear-cut preponderance of military power that they were able to place smaller states with acute security problems under their nuclear umbrellas. The Soviets, for example, assuaged Syrian concerns about the Israeli nuclear threat, and also provided nuclear deterrence for European allies like Poland. The United States extended nuclear deterrence to worried allies like Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. These superpower guarantees reduced the incentives for smaller states to acquire their own nuclear weapons. The superpowers also derived good old-fashioned bargaining leverage from their many alliances with smaller powers that enabled the superpowers to pressure their allies not to go nuclear.

These barriers to proliferation are coming down with the demise of the cold war order. First, none of the great powers in the new multipolar world is likely to have the preponderance of military power necessary to extend its nuclear shield far and wide, like the Americans and Soviets did in the cold war. Second, great powers will face credibility problems if they attempt to extend nuclear deterrence. Alliance patterns are typically much more fluid in multipolarity than in bipolarity, where rigid alliance structures are the rule. The reason is: there are more potential alliance partners in a multipolar system to pick and choose among, which allows states to change partners over time. Consequently, "fair weather" friends are more commonplace in a multipolar than a bipolar system, a situation that will work to reduce the credibility of nuclear commitments proffered by great powers. Third, future great powers will not have as much bargaining leverage vis-à-vis Third World states as the superpowers did in the cold war. The new great powers, after all, will not have the military might of the Americans and the Soviets, and they will be plagued by the credibility problems described above.

Widespread nuclear proliferation is laden with dangers for the Third World. Not only will there be powerful incentives for nuclear powers to strike against non-nuclear powers about to acquire nuclear weapons, but resource-poor Third World states are not likely to build survivable retaliatory forces, the *sine qua non* of nuclear stability. Furthermore, it is possible that some Third World leaders might not fully appreciate the destructiveness of nuclear weapons. Finally, the precarious state of most political systems in the Third World increases the risks that nuclear weapons might be fired by accident, captured by terrorists, or used by madmen.

Conclusion

The passing of the cold war does not spell the end of the state system, nor does it mean that states will have to worry less about security than they did during the cold war. International politics will remain a fundamentally competitive activity involving states that have the capacity to inflict massive harm on each other. States invariably understand that they are involved in a competition that

can have deadly consequences if they adopt flawed security policies. The problem states face, however, is that in a world of imperfect information, where only those with the benefit of hindsight have 20-20 vision, it is often difficult to figure out the best military policy for dealing with potential threats.

This problem will be especially acute for the United States, as it moves from the simplicity and stability of the cold war's bipolar order to the complexity and instability that is likely to attend the coming multipolar world. What should be the guiding principles of American national security policy in the decades ahead?

The main goal should be to prevent great power war by quickly and forcefully balancing against potential aggressors. Great power wars are very dangerous because the United States usually gets drawn into them, as happened in both world wars, and because of the threat of great power nuclear war, which would probably have terrible consequences for the United States, even if it was not a direct participant in the conflict. Support for such a commitment will be difficult to mobilize, because its principal purpose would be to preserve peace, rather than to prevent an imminent hegemony in Europe or Asia, and the prevention of hegemony is a simpler goal to explain publicly. Moreover, it is the basic nature of states to focus on maximizing relative power, not on bolstering stability, so this prescription asks them to take on an unaccustomed task. Nevertheless, the American stake in peace is real, and thus it should be possible to lead the American public to recognize its interest and support policies that protect it.

The other goal of American security policy should be to avoid Third World military intervention. The Third World is strategically unimportant, not only because Third World states cannot threaten the security of the United States, but also because it is largely a myth that great power rivals can gain important strategic advantages over the United States through expansion in the Third World. This was true during the cold war, when there was a Soviet threat that could plausibly be used to justify American involvement in the Third World, and it is certainly the case now that the Soviets have lost their superpower standing.¹⁵ Furthermore, American military involvement in the Third World is more likely than not to exacerbate regional conflicts, causing greater casualties and prolonging the war.

In short, the United States should maintain robust military forces to help keep peace among the great powers, while going to great lengths to resist the temptation to get dragged into Third World conflicts.

Notes

¹ Optimists offer a third key line of argument: ever-increasing numbers of states are becoming democratic, and democracies do not fight wars against each other. I have challenged this "theory of peace-loving democracies" in Mearsheimer (1990a) and (1990b).

² See Gellbier (1983).

³ See Evans (1989) and Maier (1988).

⁴ See Mueller (1989). Also see Kaysen (1990).

⁵ See Caidin (1969), especially pp. 159-160, for a graphic description of the effects of the strategic bombing campaign on the Japanese homeland.

⁶ Among the best overviews on the German killing machine are Kershaw (1989), chapters 5, 8, 9; Mason (1981), pp. 90-113; and Mason (1988), pp. 542-569.

⁷ See Levy (1983).

⁸ See Mearsheimer (1983).

⁹ See Posen (1991).

¹⁰ See Lukes (1986).

¹¹ See Waltz (1979).

¹² The one exception to this rule was the blossoming of the Sino-Soviet competition in the 1960s.

¹³ See Adameit (1982); Betts (1987); and Bundy (1988).

¹⁴ For a more elaborate discussion of the themes discussed below, see Benjamin Frankel, "The Brooding Shadow: Nuclear Proliferation in the 1990s," unpublished manuscript.

¹⁵ See Van Evera (1990) and Walt (1989).